

Aikido

world

A Quarterly Newsletter

January 2006

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A Letter From Headquarters

Every year on December 31st, Toyoda Shihan would host Etsunengeiko. The word "etsunen" means to cross over the year. "Keiko" or in this case "geiko" is practice. During New Year's Eve, it is a Japanese Shinto tradition to meticulously clean the house (or dojo) from floor to ceiling. The idea is that you are not just cleaning the dojo, you are cleaning your own soul.



In the typically chilling winters in Chicago, students at Tenshinkan often ask, "Sensei, can't we just have it on January 2nd? I want to go to watch the fireworks tonight." Or, "I want to watch the ball drop on TV." Whatever, their reason: the desire to attend a party, family obligations, etc. My answer is always "No." December 31st, is the day for Etsunengeiko, this is the traditional date. It would seem quite odd to open our Christmas presents on December 26th, would it not? It is understandable if people can not stay for the midnight practice or the party afterwards, but what about showing up to help clean? This is shugyo.

What is shugyo? If a person is a piece of steel, and their Sensei, a hammer, Shugyo would be the individual's internal fire. The combination of student, Sensei, and fire allows the raw steel to be turned into a gleaming sword that is able to cut through any obstacle.

Practicing simply how to throw someone is not a real "-do." Toyoda Shihan felt very strongly that it is important to learn about Japanese culture. What is culture, but a set of beliefs of how do things..."-do"? Ask most people the definition of Aikido and most likely they will recite an answer similar to this: "Aikido is a Japanese martial art, founded by Morihei Ueshiba. It uses your opponent's energy back against them." This is not incorrect, but to fully appreciate and receive the essence of Aikido you must make it your own way. Your way to practice, to eat, to drink, to breathe, and yes, even, to clean. This is harmonizing with everything around you. Toyoda Shihan said, "My goal is to teach the Aikido principles."

To clean the entire dojo is a formidable challenge. Its large space has most likely attracted dust in all sorts of unimaginable places throughout the year. The hard work and attention to detail to clean requires much energy and intent. It is this intensity we show once a year, that we must strive to make a part of daily life. But what if we never show full intensity in the first place? Can we grow if we have no reference point on which to build upon? Can we succeed in our resolutions if we are unable to enter the dojo and pick up a broom and start the year strong?

I encourage you, no matter what your situation, to place yourself in the fire. Do not avoid obstacles that seem difficult. It is only through this that you will understand that Aikido is not about avoiding conflicts; rather, it is about resolving them.

Happy Holidays,
Tatsuo Toyoda
Executive Director
Aikido Association of Aikido
Aikido Association International

The Legacy of Toyoda Shihan



Toyoda Shihan always lived bigger than life, and what he accomplished in such a short time is beyond measure.

He arrived in the United States not speaking English, with only a suitcase and a little money. From there he went on to found national and international Aikido organizations that together number more than 200 dojo worldwide, and lived to see the completion of a new international headquarters training facility in Palatine, Illinois.

As we entered the new millennium, Toyoda Shihan continued to build upon and stress what have become the hallmarks of his instruction: powerful, effective technique, clear instructional methodology, the importance of instructor certification and training, and the spirit of budo which must

inspire and motivate all of our activities.

Toyoda Shihan was determined that we be at the center of the growth of Aikido, supporting and respecting the art's origins in Japan, while at the same time creating our own expression and strong art here where we stand.

Toyoda Shihan left his family and students with a remarkable legacy and with a remarkable dream to carry on. His teaching will have effects for generations to come.

AAA and AAI proudly move forward under the legacy of the man whose dream created them, and has driven them so successfully.

Aikido International Foundation

A year in review

by Tim Spies

The Aikido International Foundation is a non-profit 501-c3 educational organization created by Toyoda Shihan.

The mission of the AIF according to Toyoda Shihan is:

- *"to strengthen and preserve the successful transmission of Aikido to future generations"*
- *"to become the premier coordinating body for the development and practice of Aikido worldwide"*
- *"to promote Aikido to Aikido related and non-related individuals, groups, and organizations in a non-discriminatory manner"*
- *"promote the principals of Aikido to local, national, and international communities"*

Since Sensei's passing, the AIF has had its share of struggles and transition. Through it all

however we have endeavored to move forward and remain true to this vision of Toyoda Shihan.

In 2005 we had several notable events. Here are just a few of them:

The AIF provides Aikido instruction to the Lake Forest College Aikido Club. This year one of the students spent his summer as uchideshi at Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago. Next summer we expect another of the students to do the same.

The AIF hosted several all day classes at local high schools in the Chicago area. Glenn Iwaoka Sensei and myself visit the schools as part of their P.E. classes and taught conflict resolution through Aikido Principals.

We also visited two local elementary schools to talk about the Japanese Culture and demonstrate Aikido. This was part of their study of Japan.

The AIF also has provided Aikido instruction at a local high school for

their Aikido club. Four graduating seniors have gone on to continue their training at Ryoshinkan dojo from that club.

In October the AIF held it's first annual "Toyoda Ride and Roll." Several people from the Chicago area participated in this fun but tiring event. You can read more about it elsewhere in the newsletter.

As you can see the AIF is not only having a positive impact in the community but we are bringing students into the larger Aikido community as well. It is a slow but steady process of increasing the public's awareness of the benefits of Aikido.

Our next step is to begin bringing Aikido to the community through the local corporations. We are in the process of preparing an Aikido based conflict resolution program. This program will be taught at the corporate level to foster team building, conflict resolution, and stress reduction.

I am often asked, "Why should I help the AIF?" or "What has the AIF done

for me?" My answer to that is "probably not much." Especially if you think in terms for yourself or your dojo. For the past several years a few people have struggled to just keep the AIF going.

Why? Because we see the tremendous possibilities of what the AIF can do. To be sure we are not here for any one person or dojo. We are here for the community, but we can all reap the benefits of a strong AIF. If you look at the small effect that the AIF has had in the Chicago area it should be easy to see the big picture. Expanding this program to national and eventually an international level you can understand the potential for the AIF. Toyoda Shihan saw this, and it is why he created the AIF. I believe that it is our responsibility to continue his work in furthering his vision. We have all heard the stories of what Toyoda Shihan said, what he believed, or how he acted, but if we do not pick up the torch and do our best to continue his vision, then, in my opinion, we are only giving lip service to his nearly 30 years of teaching. Please go back and re-read the mission at the top of this article. The statements are in quotes because these are Toyoda Shihan's words, not ours.

Those of us that have been involved in the AIF challenge you to think in terms of how we can truly bring Aikido to the community through AIF, instead of thinking "What do I get out of AIF?". By doing this we all benefit. AIF is meant to be international, not Midwestern. It is meant to be for all of us, not just the Chicago area. But most importantly, our benefits come from the awareness the public receives about Aikido. Not the other way around.

How can you help? Right now we need donations. We are still digging ourselves out of a hole that was created when Toyoda Shihan passed and the subsequent transitions of the following years. But we are moving forward. Yes, the things that we have done in the past couple of years are small and local in nature but we are making a difference, that is a fact. It

has taken a few people countless hours of hard work to forge ahead as we have. Instead of just a few of us running ourselves dry why don't we all pitch in just a little and get the AIF where it is supposed to be and continue to do what it is supposed to; bring Aikido to the community.

At the instructor's seminar this year, Glen Matsuda, Shihandai presented a \$750 donation to the AIF. He talked to his students about the benefits of the AIF and most of them donated \$25. Several donated more. I personally want to thank Matsuda Sensei for this generous donation and for his continued support of the AIF. Think where we could be if all of the AAA dojo did the same thing.

In January we will send out letters for our annual appeal. Please consider donating to this cause.

Finally, all the members of the AIF board want to wish you and your family a safe, happy and joyous holiday season.

Tim Spies is Sandan and Dojo-cho of Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL

Dr. Frank Gallo Sensei Tactical Seminar at Ryoshinkan Dojo

by Matthew Handler

When I first heard that there was going to be a tactical seminar in the Chicago area, I became excited at the prospect of learning a new spin on Aikido. At the seminar, I hoped to learn more versatile and direct techniques, techniques that would be easier to perform in a wider variety of daily situations. As a 7th kyu, I know my Aikido may not hold up in a realistic situation, so I anticipated learning techniques that would directly address that issue.

I spent the drive from Tenshinkan to Ryoshinkan with Toyoda Sensei, with a stop at Lake Forest College on the way, curious as to what the weekend of tactical Aikido would hold. Once I

arrived at Ryoshinkan, I knew that I was in for a great experience. The full locker room had a different feeling than normal. I felt a sense of muted excitement, as if something important was about to occur.

As I stepped onto the mat, I faced the dual novelties of both my first tactical seminar as well as training for the first time at Ryoshinkan Dojo. Seeing



Ryoshinkan for the first time was definitely an awe inspiring experience. The size of the mat was at least three times larger than that at Tenshinkan, making me feel even more of a novice than my 7th kyu belt indicated. The large display for the shomen also gave the dojo an air of great importance. On top of that, I was about to learn Aikido from Gallo Sensei, a man who has 17 years of police experience, has served as a member of the S.W.A.T. team, was a bodyguard for a Vice President of the United States, and currently teaches Aikido in Rhode Island. In addition, he recently earned a Ph.D. in Criminal Psychology. Needless to say, Gallo Sensei was quite qualified to teach a tactical Aikido seminar, and I was intimidated, to say the least.

However as soon as the seminar began, I was put at ease. Gallo Sensei was not a military drill sergeant as one

might imagine a man of his background to be. Instead, I immediately noticed a kind, humorous man who readily smiled and spoke with a thick East coast accent, conveying a relaxed attitude that lowered my guard. But this calm demeanor did not mean that our Aikido would be relaxed.



Directly following stretches, we were faced with a practical scenario that challenged our bodies and minds. Instead of warming up with normal mae ukemi and ushiro ukemi, we were given the scenario of someone attacking or pushing us, causing us to perform a roll. Usually, when performing mae ukemi, we face forward, roll, and finish facing forward. But if someone were attacking us from behind, we would not want to keep our back turned to them as we stand up, we would want to face our attacker. So we were presented with the challenge of doing a forward roll, but turning our heads 180 degrees so that the entire time we were facing the direction in which we came. Seems easy, right? Just a slight turn of the head, that's it? My eyes and mind thought it was an easy task, but unfortunately my body did not oblige. Every time I tried to roll, a thud could be heard when my back splayed across the mat with full force, knocking the wind out of me. Doing tactical ushiro

ukemi was even more difficult. My body was not happy with me, and this was only the first half-hour of the first day.

Although the training was often challenging, the three days of the seminar seemed to fly by. Gallo Sensei would take a technique such as gokyo, and both teach us practical applications and help us to understand the very concept of gokyo by teaching us variation after variation. Thus, we would constantly be learning new applications but always using the same core concept. This helped us understand the idea of the technique as well as improving it through repetition.

On Saturday, Gallo Sensei brought to our attention that we had just done three hours straight of gokyo; it hardly seemed like any time at all. We also experimented with unconventional applications such as chokes, how to handcuff someone who is both standing and pinned, baton use, and diffusing someone who holds a gun to your back. Each situation required a combination of dexterity, timing, and patience; a small slip-up would mean great harm in each scenario.

Many of the techniques worked not only due to the methods used in Aikido but also due to conditions that can be exploited due to the way the human brain functions. Gallo Sensei has the unique combination of being adept in Aikido and in the workings of the human mind. He intertwined his teachings on Aikido technique with scientific teachings on why certain actions were used in tactical situations; such as police giving graphic descriptions of what would befall their subjects if they did not follow commands.

Throughout the weekend, you could hear all the nage yelling "Down! Down! Down!" as they applied gokyo and brought their uke to the ground. This procedure makes it easier for one to take down an alleged perpetrator. Gallo Sensei also emphasized anticipating how someone would react to the application of certain

techniques. In this way, you could lead someone to put their body in a certain position, so it could be exploited for an even stronger technique.



Gallo Sensei had so much to teach us, he would often go over the allotted time, extending into our lunch or dinner breaks. Each time he did this, however, he would ask the Aikidoka whether we minded learning one or two final techniques. Each time, we sincerely answered "No!" because we were all having so much fun and wanted to learn as much as possible to take advantage of this annual opportunity.

While I do not have a perfect recollection of all the techniques I was shown, I did take away a few important lessons. The situation we started off with, imagining someone was attacking and pursuing us, was a theme used throughout the entire seminar. I learned never to practice Aikido as if once I completed something, I was safe. Gallo Sensei emphasized considering every situation as if it was randori. When dealing with a real situation, there is no uke and nagae, both working harmoniously who return to their places once the technique is completed; there is potential for many attackers. Even though we may know what is coming while practicing, we

must be aware that things do not always occur so smoothly, and expect danger at every turn.

Attending the tactical seminar only served to whet my appetite for this new take on Aikido. By imagining different realistic situations, we were able to apply our Aikido in ways I had never experienced, ways which are directly applicable to daily situations. The combination of learning tactical Aikido and how it related to the mind was something that I feel very privileged to have been able to participate in. Gallo Sensei seemed to have all the answers and to be everywhere at once on the huge mat, answering questions both technical and psychological just as easily for 7th kyu as for yudansha, making the experience equally enjoyable for all. The only drawback is that we will have to wait another year for the next tactical seminar. I would like to thank Gallo Sensei for being so generous in sharing his knowledge with us. I would also like to thank Toyoda Sensei for organizing this thrilling event. I think I can speak for everyone there when I say we all had a wonderful time.

Matthew Handler is 7th kyu at Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago, IL

Learning from Aikido

by Saori Nozaki, Mariko Yatsu,
and Toshi Kimura

It was a beautiful day in late May when we first entered Ryoshinkan dojo. We were so nervous to attend class and meet new people, but we were also so excited to start something new.

Even though all of us are Japanese, we were not familiar with Aikido. We had an interest in taking Aikido classes, because of a friend, but had no idea what it was really like. All we knew was Aikido was useful for "self defense."

As we started practicing, we soon realized that Aikido was not as easy as we imagined. At the first few classes

we were totally lost. Sensei showed us examples. His movements were so smooth, so it looked easy to follow but actually it was not. Sensei always told us "move your whole body." Not so easy! We could mimic a part of his movement but could not follow the whole movement. We became like awkward robots.

After practicing for some time, we noticed that we learned one important lesson from this; "Seeing the whole without seeing a part" and we could start to apply it to our daily attitude.

When we face a difficulty, we tend to focus on a small part of a thing and cannot ascertain what is the most fundamental problem. Too much focus for one thing without seeing other important parts results in further problem. Just as we need a balance of body, it is important to balance our mind.



Halloween fun at Ryoshinkan dojo

Gradually, we've noticed that all other Aikido teachings are also useful lessons for our life. Sensei always says how important it is to use the Aikido teachings in life. For example, when we are practicing body movement, Sensei says to us "do not think anything before you attack. Just do it." When we attack or even defend, we tend to think wonder about doing the right movement. This little hesitation gives an instant chance for an opponent to take advantage.

In our daily life we also think too much before starting something. We may miss many chances for success because most of the times we are too afraid of failure. Even though we know there is nothing to lose, we still hesitate to move, controlled by nihilistic fear. If we take a chance without feeling fear, we could reach our goals faster and our life would be more fulfilled.

That is just one example we learned from Aikido. During everyday practice, we learned many things like that. Aikido is not only for physical exercise but definitely for spiritual development. What we learn from Aikido is immeasurable.

Our Sensei is very courteous and respects the words of Toyoda Shihan and the spirit of Aikido. But he also has a sense of humor. We are serious during practice, but once we step off the mats there are many laughs. The atmosphere makes us feel comfortable and happy to be members of Ryoshinkan dojo.

In October, we took our first Kyu test. We were excited and nervous before taking the test. As the test approached, we became more confused about what we were doing even though we practiced the same techniques so many times. We almost lost confidence, but as Sensei taught us before, we tried to keep our strength of mind to take the test. Yes, there is still so much progress we need to make, but we did our best.

We love our Sensei, we love our dojo mates, and we love our dojo. Time spent in the dojo is precious. We are always comfortable surrounded by people who we think of as family. We are just beginners but we will keep practicing and learning. And someday, maybe we can teach the lessons of Aikido to the other people.

*Saori Nozaki, Mariko Yatsu
and Toshi Kimura are 7th Kyu at
Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL*

Annual Toyoda Ride and Roll

by Tim Spies

On Saturday October 7th the AIF held it's first Annual Toyoda Ride and Roll. The event consisted of training at four different dojo in the Chicago area in succession. Participants were asked to get people and /or corporations to sponsor them in this event. Here are some of my thoughts on the day:

It's 12:30 am on Saturday morning, and I lay in bed staring at the upcoming four hours sleep. I run through all of the preparations for our first Annual Toyoda Ride and Roll. All dojo have been properly notified, instructors are set, food and drink is ready, gi is clean, and paperwork ready, etc. Then I begin to wonder, will this event turn out ok? Will enough people show up? Have we left enough time to complete the journey? Will we be free from injury? Will it be fun? Blah blah blah. I finally decide that what ever happens is going to happen; just the release I need to fade off to sleep. Suddenly the alarm blares in my ear. Damn. I thought I just fell asleep. It's 4:30am and the first class is at 6:00am. Why the hell did I agree to do this? I stumble downstairs. Even my dog won't get up. I turn on the coffee and head out to the garage to warm up the bike. It's dark and in the 40's. Better get the winter gear out. No stars in the sky. Better bring the rain gear. Time to hit the road.

Our first class is at Ryoshinkan and I pull up at 5:45 am "Sensei I thought you were going to be here at 5:00" Kelly asks. "Shhh I am still sleeping" I respond. Chuck offered up "I got Krispy Kremes." "Thanks Chuck for the Aikido Power food." Bob Garza Sensei climbs out of his new BMW Z3. I ask, "Sensei that is a nice ride but where is your bike?" Sensei mumbled something that I did not quite understand, but I am sure that it was for a really good reason that had nothing to do with the cold or the threat of rain.

As the sun started to rise I could see the cloud cover. "yeah I'm gonna get wet" I thought. After the first class I'll decide whether to keep going on the bike or scream home and get my car. Just then Toshi pulls up on his bike...no choice now...I have to ride. There, ready to train was Kelly Grosse and Chloe Goya both from the Lake Forest College Aikido Club; Jacek Skalski, Chuck Scates, Shawn Hutchings and Toshi Kimura from Ryoshinkan.

Garza Sensei taught the first class. He has recently learned some Aiki Toho Iaido kata that he wanted to share. With a belly full of doughnuts and our eyes still only half open, this was a great way to get started. The second half of the class was spent on Taijutsu. Before we knew it was 7:00am and we had to move on. As I walked out to the lot I gathered everybody around to go over the route to our next stop, Soshinkan. "Where is Garza Sensei?" I asked. Nobody knew...he was gone. "Well it is 7:30 and time to go...next class is at 9:00 am" I told everybody. Off we went.

We arrived at Soshinkan at 8:30 right on schedule and as I peered into the window, there was Garza Sensei leading an Iaido Class. "How did he do that?" I thought. Oh well...must be a Yondan thing. Time to get ready. Many of Garza Sensei's students joined us for class. There were eighteen students on the mat and we worked on munetski five arts demonstration. It was the last class that I had the pleasure of taking from Toyoda Shihan just before he left for Greece. Hopefully it was a fitting tribute. When we got outside to leave, my bike was parked next to Garza Sensei's car. Before I could say anything to him Sensei offered up: "Spies Sensei, I will put my convertible top down, turn off the seat warmers for my leather seats, turn down the heat, and not drink my latte on our way to the next stop. This I will do in your honor." As I zipped up my coat I replied "No. Please Sensei. Do not let your latte get cold." Our next stop was Tenshinkan.

At Tenshinkan the first half hour was with the kids class. This afforded us the opportunity to catch our collective breath. When their class ended Garza Sensei took us through some more self defense oriented techniques which are always fun. As usual whenever Garza Sensei has a class of this nature he shows the secret "pinch to the back of the thigh" technique. I'm told that when this technique is done properly, it is even more deadly than the "five finger points of death, exploding heart" technique made famous by Kill Bill Vol. 2. Apparently none of us got it right.

Our final class was held at Lake Forest College. I decided it was time for the students to have a crack at it. Each student was given ten minutes to teach the technique of their choice. It turned out to be a fun way to end the training for the day. One more stop to go...

Finally, it was back to Ryoshinkan for some burgers on the grill and libations. We arrived at about 6 pm after 12 hours of riding and rolling, beer never tasted so good. A chance to relax and laugh about all that happened during the day.

This was the first time that we had an event such as this and next year we hope it will be even bigger. We were able to raise just under \$2300 for the AIF.

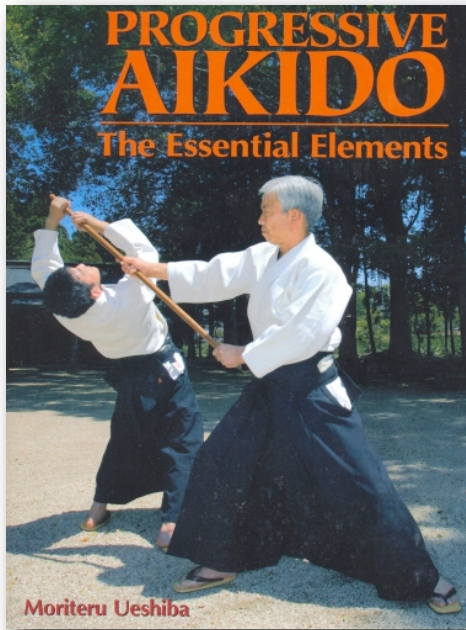
Tim Spies is Sandan and Dojo-chi at Ryoshinkan Dojo in Palatine, IL

“Progressive Aikido” Book Review

by Peter Ogbac

When my Sensei, Toyoda Sensei, first approached me to write this book review, I was a bit apprehensive in taking on the assignment for a couple of reasons. For one, I have never written a book review for a publication. The other was my relative inexperience and little knowledge I had of Aikido. I suppose Toyoda Sensei wanted a fresh insight from a beginner with a little bit of experience

behind his belt. The book was an easy read because most of it contained images, so it did not take very long.



The author of the book is Moriteru Ueshiba. For most Aikido practitioners, his name should be very familiar and come as no surprise. He is the grandson of the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, and son of the late Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the second Doshu. He graduated from Meiji Gakuin University in 1976; became master of Aikido World HQ in 1986; and chairman of the Aikido Foundation in 1996. He became the Aikido Doshu after his father passed away. He is an authority on Aikido with the credentials to back it up.

Ueshiba wrote the book with beginners in mind, but I am sure the more experienced students will find it a good source to brush up on old techniques. It opens with a brief description about the principles and characteristics of Aikido examining how it can be involved in many aspects of life other than as a martial art, combining both the spiritual and physical worlds. There is also a description of some terminology used in defining the techniques.

After a brief introduction to Aikido, the author discusses the fundamentals: the two stances used in training,

various break falls, the use of the hand-sword, and basic body movements. The rest of the book goes through the various techniques employed in Aikido. He starts with the basic nage-waza and katame waza. He then follows with variations to the above. Advanced techniques in nage-waza, katame-waza, tanto-dori, and futari-dori are presented in the last set.

The book ends with training procedures of the Aikido dojo; protocols of the dojo, various stretching exercises before and after training, and the uniform worn by every student.

There is an inherent difficulty in capturing dynamic movements in a book, but the black and white stills with brief frame-by-frame description of each maneuver were helpful, as well as the tips to execute the techniques effectively without injury to self or uke. It was much easier to follow than the techniques illustrated in "Aikido: The Dynamic Sphere." I did find it odd that the author reserved the training procedures for the end of the book and not at the beginning. This is a relative minor issue given the scope and intent of the book.

*Peter Ogbac is 5th kyu at
Tenshinkan Dojo in Chicago, IL*

Midwest Regional Update

by John Bieszk

On Nov. 18 – 20, Frank Gallo Sensei taught a police tactics seminar at Ryoshinkan dojo in Palatine, IL. This seminar was a way of looking at traditional Aikido in a new light, describing real life situations faced by police officers, security officers and other people in protection and security professions. Gallo Sensei showed us that Aikido is well suited to controlling an attacker, and I gained a new insight and respect for gokyo techniques.

One of the most important things taught by Gallo Sensei was awareness.

Awareness is essential whenever you may be in a threatening situation. If someone pushes you, you should do ukemi and at the same time look at the attacker to see if they are continuing to attack, possibly with a weapon. If you do get knocked down, Gallo Sensei showed us a new approach to randori, more ground-based.

One of many more techniques was how to control someone's balance during a search for weapons or a handcuffing. Being handcuffed is definitely a new experience, not usually experienced in a traditional Aikido seminar. In summary, Gallo Sensei's seminar is a very worthwhile experience for anyone interested in expanding their Aikido boundaries beyond traditional classes, increasing awareness of real world situations, and developing law enforcement and security techniques.

*John Bieszk, Godan, is the Midwest
Regional Director for AAA*

Aikido on the Web: An Interview with Jun Akiyama of aikiweb.com

by Peter Mavrikos

It's 2006. The internet is becoming more and more a part of daily life for millions of people, and Aikidoka are no exception. Personally, my journey with Aikido started on the internet, looking around for the names of dojo and trying to get some sort of background on what exactly Aikido is.

Of course, no single source is a perfect place to learn about Aikido, but that's the beauty of the internet. Around every corner there's another web site that you might learn something from. The goal of this column, which I hope to make a regular feature, is to tell you about a place on the web that provides great Aikido content. If you have a recommendation, please let us know at aaa.aikido.world@gmail.com.

Our featured site this month is <http://www.aikiweb.com>. AikiWeb was the first place I went to search for dojo in my area. After talking with a few other Aikidoka, they all said the same thing. But in my opinion, it's the user forms that make AikiWeb so special. Literally thousands of people all gather together to discuss Aikido. Have a question? There's probably an answer somewhere in the forums. Want to rant or rave about something? You'll definitely find a kindred to commiserate or celebrate with.

I contacted Jun Akiyama, the site administrator, who was kind enough to grant me an interview to discuss the site, his relationship with it, and some thoughts on the relationship between Aikido and the internet. I hope you enjoy this first of many articles about Aikido and how it's coming into a life of its own out there in the internet.

Peter: How and why did AikiWeb get started?

Jun: I started working for a San Francisco Bay Area computer technology company in 1993 that was quite hooked into the internet scene. We were working with "emerging" technologies such as running the largest ftp site in the world, running FreeBSD on our desktop computers, and working with a new operating system called Linux. Even before then while I was doing research in computational linguistics in Tokyo, I was using the internet for e-mail and information retrieval (through gopher, Usenet, and ftp). I was already quite comfortable with how information could be shared over the medium of the internet and I subscribed to the notion that information should be "free," both in the sense of "free beer" as well as "free speech."

Back in 1997, there were relatively few Aikido websites out there, even taking into account websites of Aikido dojo much less "general" information Aikido websites. Kjartan Clausen's Aikido FAQ site was really about it -- back then, it was still being hosted at his university at uib.no rather than its current address. Coupled with my

involvement in the Aikido-L mailing list (which I joined shortly after starting Aikido), I started wanting to put together a different sort of website more focused on allowing people to share information about Aikido without a focus on a single "slice" of the large Aikido world. This is when I came up with the idea of constructing a site called "AikiWeb" -- a sort of play on the word "Aikido" in that I wanted to create many interconnections between people, dojo, and organizations (like a web) rather than a sort of linear "path" or "-do." I felt that a greater sense of community throughout the Aikido world would help move the art in a positive direction.

At first, I started collecting postings and such that I personally liked from Aikido-L, dojo/organizational newsletters, and such. I owe a lot to all of those folks who gave me permission to share their thoughts on AikiWeb -- thank you! In December, 1997, I had the great fortune and responsibility of inheriting the internet Aikido dojo listings from Cindy Paloma. This I turned into the AikiWeb Dojo Search Engine (<http://www.aikiweb.com/search>) which is the largest database of Aikido dojo in the world with over 3,700 dojo in 106 countries listed as well as having served over 1.1 million searches so far.

Then in 2000, I started up the AikiWeb Forums (<http://www.aikiweb.com/forums>) -- a place where members from all around the world are exchanging their thoughts, experiences, and ideas about Aikido. I think it's a very exciting place! Sometimes, the emotions run high in people's discussions, but I think there are a lot of wonderful information being shared there. Around the same time, I opened up the front page of the site to allow anyone to submit Aikido news items (<http://www.aikiweb.com/news>); this has provided many people with a great way to announce their seminars, dojo happenings, promotions, and other Aikido news to the entire Aikido community.

Since then, there have been other additions to the site such as the monthly columns (<http://www.aikiweb.com/columns>), the freely editable AikiWiki (<http://www.aikiweb.com/wiki>), the image gallery (<http://www.aikiweb.com/gallery>) and the equipment/videos/books review section (<http://www.aikiweb.com/reviews>).

P: Tell us about your association with AikiWeb (what do you do for it) and also your relationship with Aikido.

J: I'm pretty much "it" as far as being the administrator for AikiWeb goes. Everything from the HTML to the php/perl scripting to the back-end database can be blamed on me. I monitor the forums (to make sure everyone is behaving well), think up the weekly polls, process the seminar and dojo updates, and even pack and mail the few pieces of AikiWeb merchandise I sell in the store. I've also had to replaced dead hard drives in the server, recompiled the kernel, reconfigured apache, and tinkered with DNS zone files, all in the wee hours of the morning...

With all of that said, I'm glad I have wonderful people supporting me who participate in the forums, write wonderful columns each month, provide detailed reviews of items, submit seminar/dojo updates, and everything else; otherwise, you'd probably just be reading my own blatherings about Aikido. Actually, you'd probably not be reading such, since the site would probably show up on page 1,093 on the Google search for "Aikido" and you'd never find the site.

Outside of being all of that for AikiWeb, I try to train in Aikido whenever I can. Everyday in every way, I'm trying hard to become more "adept" at Aikido, although it seems that I'm doing my best to learn through the process of elimination; some day, I hope I'll run out of the wrong ways of doing techniques so that I can get one of them "right." Until then, I seek to not embarrass my teachers too much by

wearing disguises to seminars; I'll be the one in the black ninja suit at your next seminar...

P: Tell us a little about how many members you have and how many visitors regularly hit the site. If you can, scope out the demographic of the community on AikiWeb.

J: Currently, there are over 9,400 people registered on AikiWeb. With over 124,000 messages exchanged in the Forums, the site looks to be the most active Aikido discussion board in the world.

Of course, many more thousands of people visit the site without registering, so it would be very difficult to get a proper demographic. In the Forums, though, I'm happy to see that there is a good mixture of people from all over the world, from different organizations, and with varying amounts of experience from the first day beginner to the folks with over 50 years of experience in budo and Aikido. I'm glad that we have the open-minded experienced folks sharing their experiences and the newer students providing a fresh look at Aikido.

P: AikiWeb is almost seven years old now. From your point of view, how has the interaction between Aikido and the internet changed over time?

J: Phew -- good question.

Just as it has in many other fields, I believe that the internet has helped remove or at least lowered many of the barriers set up in the world of Aikido. Personally, I think this has been a good thing. With discussions on such places as the AikiWeb Forums and other online discussion groups which cater towards a general Aikido audience (rather than a single style or organization), I have seen communication from different dojo and organizations become facilitated and, therefore, increase. I have seen ideas being "cross-pollinated" amongst people practicing within Aikikai, Yoshinkan, Tomiki, and Ki Society.

In the same way, personal relationships have formed amongst people in the AikiWeb community, with some visiting others' dojo when they travel or attending each others' seminars. I believe such connections are very important in the Aikido community, especially in this day and age that there has been so many artificial schisms created between this organization and that, between so-and-so shihan and so-and-so sensei. I believe we're beginning to enter a transitional period where the number of original students of the founder is diminishing, one by one, year by year. The more that we can share what we know with each other, the more complete a picture we can see of Aikido.

I believe that the principles of Aikido are universal and that there is no benefit for hiding such from others. By sharing our experiences openly, I believe the entire Aikido community benefits. The internet, by its nature, enables us to realize this philosophy in a very efficient and global manner.

Personally, I have been able to attain a wider viewpoint regarding the art of Aikido as a whole that would have been otherwise unattainable had I not been involved on the internet. Being able to come to an understanding through online discussions why certain approaches of Aikido differ from other approaches has certainly been a very important part of my experience in the internet Aikido scene. I have also met many people from all around the world whom I consider to be my friends. For example, I had the pleasure of training with Toyoda Shihan several years back through a friend in New York whom I had met on the Aikido-L mailing list. Due to these friendships and connections that I made through the internet, I have had the good fortune to be able to experience many different approaches to Aikido from many different people. This has, in turn, help shaped my approach to Aikido in that I now understand that there are many, many different ways of training and that each provides many wonderful methods to delve into and enrich the art of Aikido. I don't know if I would

have been able to come to such a conclusion without my experiences with AikiWeb and the internet.

I am looking forward quite a lot to see just how the interaction between Aikido and the internet will evolve in the future. I hope the relationship will continue to grow in a positive manner to provide more depth and understanding into the art of Aikido.

P: What things are new on AikiWeb, and what's in store for the future?

J: I'm pretty excited about the AikiWiki (<http://www.aikiweb.com/wiki>), a sort of "encyclopedia" for Aikido which allows registered members to add and modify information on Aikido. It's an online collaborative effort designed to bring together information from people of many different "walks" of Aikido.

There's also the AikiWeb Columns (<http://www.aikiweb.com/columns>) where monthly articles from featured authors are published. Each article also often sparks off a good discussion in the forums, too, where the readers get to interact with the authors to ask for clarifications, offer counter arguments, or share their thoughts on the subject.

A couple of years ago in 2004, AikiWeb hosted its first AikiWeb Workshop with three wonderful instructors. I'm hoping we'll be able to do the same this year in 2006 some time. It should be an exciting weekend!

I have so many ideas for AikiWeb running around in my head, but with my holding a full time job, being at the dojo, and trying to have some sort of social life, these ideas have been wearing down their shoes for quite some time. I'm hoping to be able to tackle some of these ideas this year, so stay tuned...

All in all, I have to say that the website wouldn't be what it is today without the help of those who contributed articles, submitted dojo information updates, shared their thoughts in the forums, and supported the site in many

various ways. I want to thank everyone who has been a part of the AikiWeb community, as the website surely wouldn't be as deep, insightful, and diverse a place without you; I appreciate everything that everyone has done for AikiWeb.

P: Thank you Jun for taking the time to provide insight into one of the most valuable Aikido websites on the internet.

J: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share all of this. I appreciate it.

Again, you can find AikiWeb at <http://www.aikiweb.com>

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The image shows large, bold Japanese characters. On the left, the characters '一', '十', and '一' are stacked vertically. On the right, the characters '日', '本', and '語' are stacked vertically. Together, they read 'Nihongo Hongo' (Japanese Language).

Nihongo Corner: Counting

by Peter Mavrikos

A million people have found Aikido in a million different ways. Never have I had the chance to meet such a wildly diverse group of people. And I'm only speaking of my home dojo. We all arrived for one reason or another, but I'm constantly amazed at how different the stories are. Personally, I came to

Aikido because of Nihongo, or the Japanese language.

In 1978 Toyoda Shihan founded the Japanese Culture Center, Tenshinkan Dojo, in the area of Chicago we now call Lakeview. For years I passed by the doors, always peeking inside to figure what they were doing. Finally, in 2004 I decided to take a Nihongo class. Almost two years and a lot of studying later I'm able to speak pretty well. But I found Aikido because I was at the dojo; because Toyoda Shihan created a place where people could come and do more than Aikido.

How many of you were confused at first by the hundreds of Japanese terms we use on the mats? Katatekosa-what? Yokomen-who? What's the difference between uke and nage again? I had a million questions, and still do.

To explore some of these questions in my head, and any you'd like to send along aaa.aikido.world@gmail.com, this column will be about Aikido and the Japanese language.

We'll start with counting, one of the most basic things we do. And I'll let you in on the biggest secret to counting in Japanese; if you can memorize the numbers from one to ten, all you need are a few more words and you can count as high as you can think. But for now we'll stick to counting from 1 to 99.

First, let's talk about vowels. The beauty of Japanese vowels is that they almost always sound the same. A good sentence to remember for their approximate sounds is "Ah, we soon get old." a i u e o, in that order. Note that in Japanese, i sounds like the e in "we".

The words in parenthesis are the approximate pronunciation using English words.

- 1 - ichi (ee-chee)
- 2 - ni (knee)
- 3 - san (sahn)
- 4 - shi/yon (she/yawn)
- 5 - go (go)
- 6 - roku (row-coo)

- 7 - shichi/nana (she-chee/nah-nah)
- 8 - hachi (ha-chee)
- 9 - kyu/ku (cue/coo)
- 10 - ju (jew)

There are two different pronunciations for 4 and 7 along with a slightly different one for 9. As they come up, I'll point out when to switch to the second one. For counting from one to ten, the first pronunciation is usually used; ichi, ni, san, shi, go, roku, shichi, hachi, kyu, ju.

That's pretty much all there is to it to get to a hundred. How? Well, let's say you want to say 11. All you need to do is say the word for 10, then say the word for 1.

- 11 - juichi (jew-ee-chee)

That works until you get to 20. But that's easy too. Just say two-ten. And 30 becomes three-ten. 35 is three-ten-five. And so on clear to 90.

- 20 - niju (knee-jew)
- 30 - sanju (sahn-jew)
- 35 - sanjugo (sahn-jew-go)
- 50 - goju (go-jew)
- 80 - hachiju (hah-chee-jew)

At 40 and 70, you normally use the alternate pronunciation.

- 40 - yonju (yawn-jew)
- 46 - yonjuroku (yawn-jew-row-coo)
- 70 - nanaju (nah-nah-jew)
- 73 - nanajusan (nah-nah-jew-sahn)

Some people also use the alternate 4 and 7 when it's used as the last digit:

- 27 - nijunana (knee-jew-nah-nah)
- 34 - sanjuyon (sahn-jew-yawn)
- 67 - rokujunana (row-coo-jew-nah-nah)

And there you have it. You can count from 1 to 99 easily if you memorize just a few words.

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Dan Rank Promotions for 2005

The following list was compiled at the time of publication of Aikido World based on all completed paperwork

Godan

Martin Katz, Ryushinkan Dojo USA

Yondan

Roberto Garza, Soshinkan Dojo USA

Sandan

Joe Anshel, Aikido of Southern Orange County USA
 Michael Black, Shinjinkan Dojo USA
 Robert Caron, Zenshinkan Dojo USA
 Jay Carvalho, Mushin Aikido Dojo USA
 Nigel Casey, Tenshinkan Dojo USA
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 Jon Drew, Seibukan Dojo USA
 Mark Dring, Soshinkan Dojo USA
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 Ronald Shereyk, Soshinkan USA
 Daniela Vaskova, Zendokan Dojo Bulgaria
 Yulian Yordanov, Tendokan Bulgaria

Nidan

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 Serguey Alitchkov, Zendokan Bulgaria
 Jennifer Caron, Zenshikan Dojo USA
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 Dimitar Gardev, Zendokan Dojo Bulgaria
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 Kirsten Sims, Jyushinkan Dojo USA
 Juan Torres, Aikido Dojo Del Norte Puerto Rico
 Tatsuo Toyoda, (Stephen) Tenshinkan Dojo USA
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Shodan

Scott Allen, Zenshikan Dojo USA
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 Thomas Chang, Zenshikan Dojo USA
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 Evan DeMonte, Tumbleweed Aikikai USA
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 Maiko Kasuya, Ryushinkan Dojo USA
 Nikolaos Kokkinos, Aikikan Greece Greek
 Alfredo Lamparelli, Northeast Aikikai USA
 Chad Lanier, Kure Beach Aikido USA
 Melita Ljilja, Eidokan Dojo Croatia
 Timothy Lykke, Shinjinkan Dojo USA
 Davor Majer, Eidokan Dojo Croatia
 Teodor Maksimovic, Eidokan Dojo Croatia
 Rod Pallett, Yushinkan Dojo USA
 Patrick Shannon, Northeast Aikikai USA
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 Kizie Tasher, Tendokan Dojo Bulgaria
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