

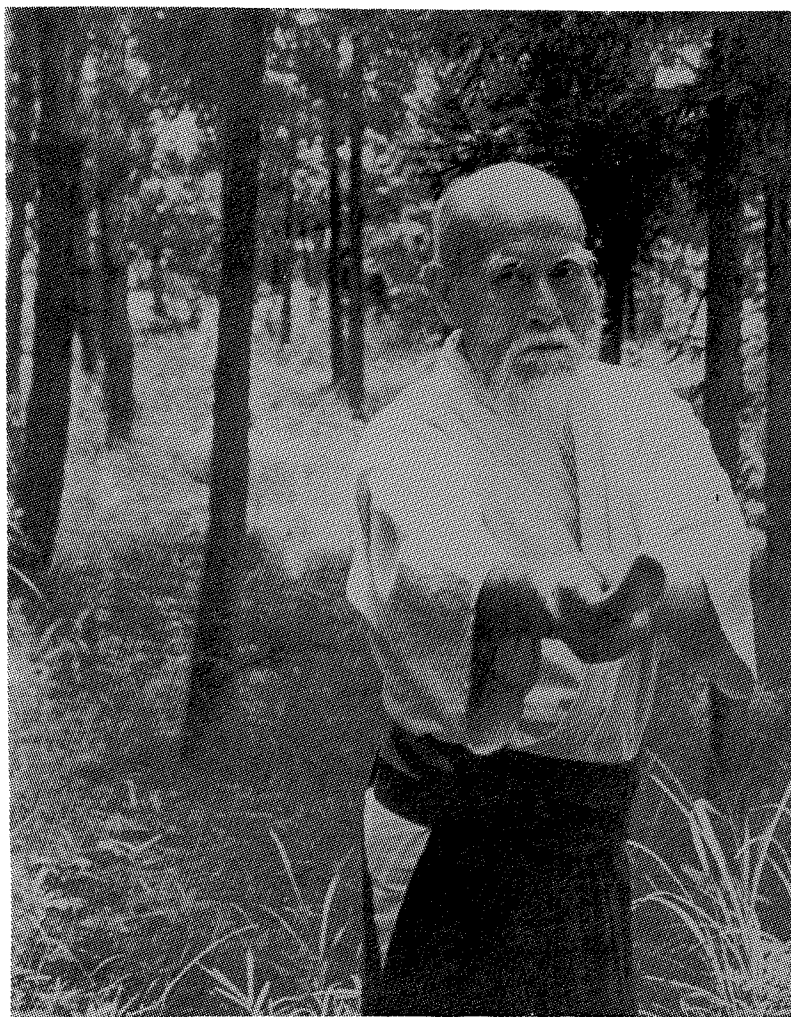
# **AIKIDO FORUM**

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A JOURNAL OF AIKIDO  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Published by Victoria Aikikai

Number 10, March 1991



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# EDITORS MESSAGE

**Ralph Kopperson**

For this issue we have a continuation of the technical article by Kawahara Sensei. We also have the transcription of a talk given by Ishiyama Sensei at a recent Seminar. There is a review of Doshu's book "The Spirit of Aikido" and a mix of thoughts and impressions of Aikido covering such diverse areas as dreams, conversations, summer camp and the making of a jo.

Also for this issue we have adjusted the price of the 2 and 4 issue subscriptions. An increase in price has been inevitable for some time. This is the second price increase in our 5 year history. It is necessitated by rising production costs.

The last few issues have all been somewhat late in production. For this we apologise. All involved in the effort are volunteers who fit this work into already busy schedules. Keep in mind that subscriptions are tracked by issue, rather than by year, so slow timing does not mean issues lost to the reader. It does mean loss of pace and immediacy. For that reason we are working towards a more consistent timing on our twice yearly schedule.

## **EDITORIAL STAFF**

<b>Editor</b>	Ralph Kopperson (Victoria)
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Our thanks to Liz McKinlay in Vancouver, Wayne Sheldrick in Toronto, and others who assisted with the distribution of the last issue of the Forum. Also, thanks in advance to Jim Barnes in Toronto for his support and promotion of the Forum.

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The intent of the Aikido Forum is that it be a place for discussion on matters relating to the practice of Aikido. To that end, **articles are invited** from Aikido practioners throughout the Aikido community. Articles can be submitted on paper or MS-DOS diskette. Please provide a paper copy to ease our frustration in the event we cannot read the disk.

As well as articles, **Aikido graphics are invited**. We'd like to present some of the visual impact of Aikido within these pages. We are particularly interested in graphics suitable for scanning and reproducing as small (2" x 2" or less) images for visual impact in white space.

Most of all, our aim is to provide a "participatory forum" for the exchange and growth of information and understanding of Aikido. We invite participation from authors, artists, new subscribers, readers, criticizers, subscription promoters, distribution helpers, and whomsoever else might have something to offer the Forum or the Aikido community in general.

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#### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

2 issues:

- (CDN\$) 10.00, Outside Canada - (US\$) 8.00

4 issues:

- (CDN\$) 15.00, Outside Canada - (US\$) 12.00

6 issues:

- (CDN\$) 20.00, Outside Canada - (US\$) 15.00

Single issues/Back issues --- \$8.00 CDN/\$6.00 US

## TECHNICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

### Y. Kawahara

Kawahara Shihan teaches at Vancouver Aikikai and UBC Aikikai and serves as Technical Director of the B.C. Aikido Federation. He travels extensively across Canada to give seminars as well as teaching at various Aikido training camps in Canada and U.S.A.

Ushiro-ryotekubi-tori Kokyu-nage:

This technique needs to be practised in two ways. One way is to let uke attack from behind, while the other is to face uke first and let him come behind. The static ushiro attack is more basic in terms of cultivating an expression of kokyu-power. The key point is to develop intuition and sensitivity to the space behind your body.

Try not to stop in this technique.

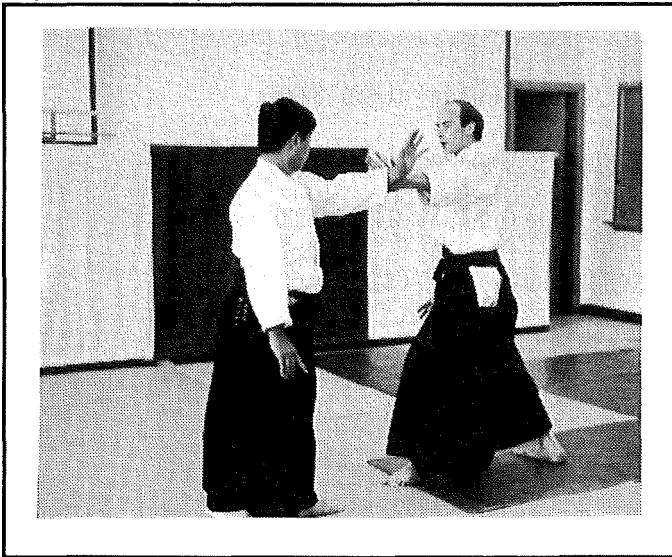


Figure 1

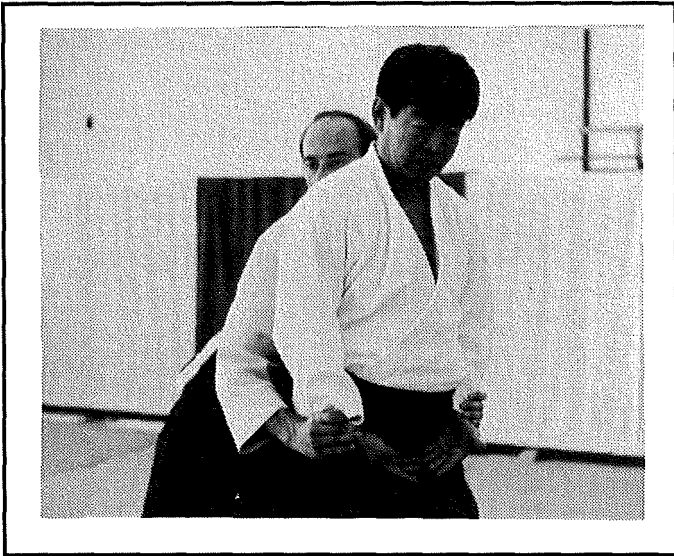


Figure 2

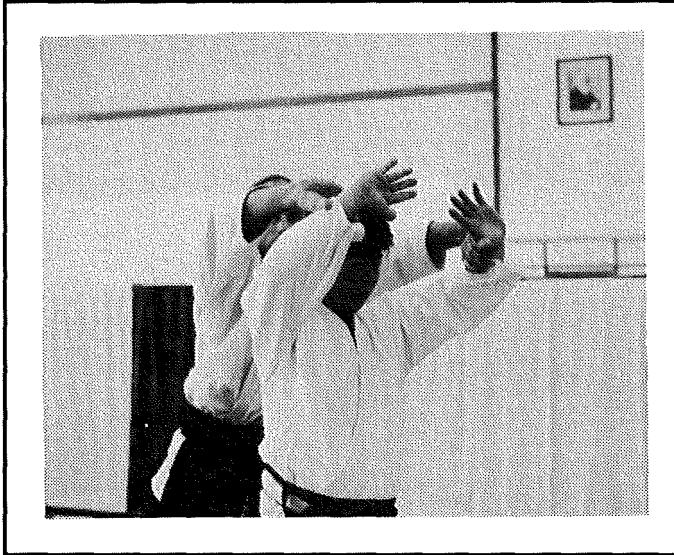


Figure 3



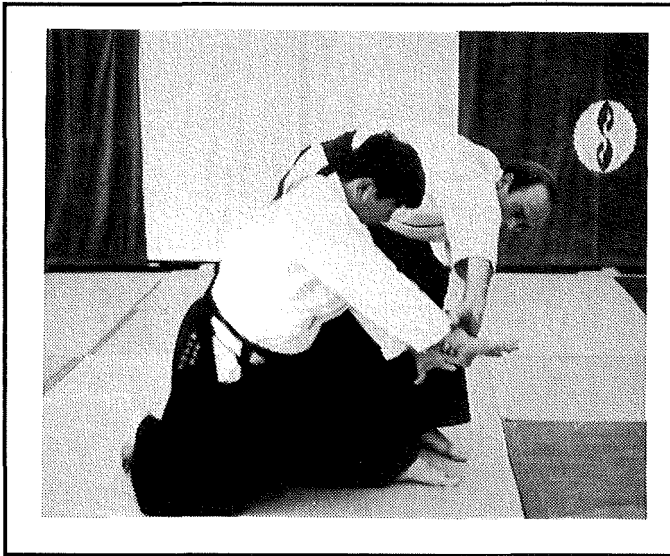


Figure 4

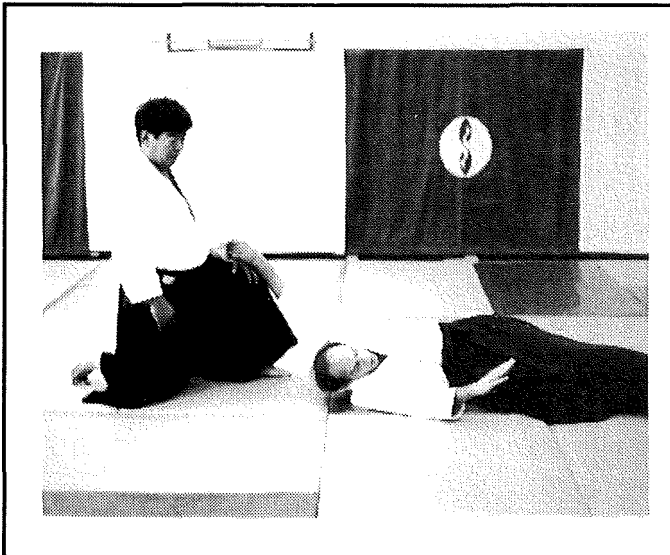


Figure 5

# APPRECIATION FOR TRAINING

## I. Ishiyama

(Transcribed by Bruce Riddick from a Seminar talk by Ishiyama Sensei)

Aikido is a technical and philosophical martial art. Aikido is an art of appreciation rather than for destruction or control of others. Where there is an element of control, it really means there is control of the ego or of our small selves.

The essence of Aikido is to teach us to appreciate – to appreciate ourselves and others. When we bow we clasp our hands. It is a symbol of unification called *gassho* which means putting palms together and symbolizes all conflicts have ceased at the moment of the left and right hands coming together. There is peace – the unification of Yin and Yang, unification of opposites.

Of course it is important to be strong technically in Aikido, but if this was the only and foremost focus of training it would be an empty, shallow training without much educational value. It becomes more of a technical training rather than a holistic training.

Let's reflect on how we improved and what got us interested in Aikido in the first place. Who helped us technically and emotionally when questioning ourselves or feeling down? We all recognize a number of people who contributed to our progress and interest in Aikido, including our teachers and friends.

We often forget to thank people – especially when

we are under the illusion of grandeur, the illusion that we are special and much better than others. Sometimes we see the world and relationships from a defensive perspective, thinking that others will surpass us unless we beat them first, that others will take advantage of us when we are humble and thankful. Instead of rejoicing in others' progress and promotion, we may see them as obstacles to overcome, rather than helpful guides.

Even though thankfulness and appreciation are not demanded of you by others, it is an important form of expression on your part, recognizing that you are not totally self-made. This is the beginning of martial art training.

The mastery of the martial art, (according to what many masters have said), takes one closer to nature and makes one appreciate it. Not many masters of the Way have said that they were better than nature or that they have conquered the universe.

We begin the expression of appreciation with teachers, colleagues, the dojo and anyone or anything that contributes to our development. Sometimes when people take a test they feel very appreciative when they pass. When they fail they become angry, resentful and moody. Appreciation comes and goes. That is not enough. In practice, when you bow to O Sensei, you are bowing to a number of people who have helped you.

One of the goals of any martial art training is becoming free from physical attachment and being self-centred in your behaviour. When we talk about freedom, it is not really freedom from oppressors or from financial

debt or misfortune. It is more of a freedom from attachment. It is hard to attain this freedom from attachment in a mindful, willful way, but another, more approachable side of the same coin is to actively thank people. When you scincerely thank people and nature you become free from attachments at that moment. That's why we stress bowing – not just the physical bowing, but the mental bowing.

Think of how many people have contributed to your Aikido progress. People who helped you get through some tough moments or prepare for a test. Thanking them does not end at any point, it goes on .

When you watch people improve or progress technically, you notice that some become more preoccupied with self. When they attain a certain level they think they are as good as their own teacher. As we say in Japanese, their nose has grown taller, and they become self-ful. They may be better technically, but the worst thing is that they forget that they are still indebted. Whether they are technically more advanced, the sense of indebtedness or healthy appreciation does not have to disappear.

I'm in the field of counselling psychology. We deal with unhappy and emotionally disturbed people. Most neurotic people do not thank others. They think that they are victims. They think have got the raw deal in life. Of the negative and positive things, they remember all the negative things. They are more resentful than thankful. When they talk about their past experiences, most of them say that they were mistreated by their parents and others even though that's not entirely true. They may

remember that their parents worked hard and brought food to the table, and stayed up late with worry when they were sick. Instead of looking at the positive and thanking them and appreciating, they conveniently forget or omit it and try to hang on to their selective attachments.

Coming back to Aikido practice, one of the teachers I most respect is my high school Japanese Calligraphy teacher. At the time he was nidan. I became shodan in less than two years. Now I am 5th dan and he is sandan. But to me he is still my teacher. Technically I may be more advanced in some areas, but he taught his deep appreciation and understanding of aikido to me. To me, no matter how advanced I get, he is my teacher and I will always honour him.

It is not a military sense of who is higher. We need to have a sense of appreciation, not aggressive competitiveness. When you practise with people (many of you are from different dojos and have different instructors), it is not a question of whose instructor is better, or of who is more advanced or not.

Thankfulness is like ki – the more you give the more you get. Narrow-minded people are stingy about thankfulness. They calculate whether they are giving others power over them. That is a type of neurotic behaviour. People like you who are fit and healthy – you don't lose anything by thanking others. I think that people who are on the other side – the receivers of thanks – will feel very positive and feel even more committed to your advancement when you show them thankfulness.

O Sensei said that the ego is the worst enemy.

You should conquer your ego and not your opponent. You opponent is a mere projection of your egoistical attachment.

It is not because of your own effort, but rather through direct and indirect ways you have probably benefitted from previous/present instructors and others. When you get promoted you get more humble. The more you advance, the more indebted you get. Without others' help, you cannot advance.

This applies to the appreciation of nature too. You think that you are self-reliant, but if the trees stop generating oxygen, how can you claim to be self-reliant?

So that's how connectedness with nature starts. You feel appreciative. You say, "Thank God there's enough oxygen to breathe." That's the attitude cultivated through Aikido training. But humans are selfish. We are all selfish sometimes to some extent. When we find ourselves, we have to correct ourselves. That's an indication of maturity. Maturity is not freedom of error, but the ability to correct errors, to notice errors. That's the difference between self-reflective people and self-absorbed living people.

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Dr. Ishiyama, 5th degree black belt, is Chief Instructor at Vancouver West Aikikai at the Kitsalano Community Centre in Vancouver. He teaches counselling psychology and conducts research at the University of British Columbia.

# IMAGES

## C. Riddick

(Drawing by G. Kopperson)

### Morning Aikido Lesson – Gabriola Island

Linh is standing in the middle of the dojo

Ichi (1) she raises her arms, stretches, to the right  
the summer light springs through the trees

Ni (2) she raises her arms to the left  
the camp remains still

San (3) she bends her arms to the right  
she sees the path to the sea

Chi (4) she bends her arms to the left  
a bunch of birds are twittering

Go (5) her arms and hands spread out  
the shore is bare as the tide lays low

Roku (6) arms and hands on the reverse side  
here are the rocks, where crabs and starfish hide

Shichi (7) she rolls in in a swift move  
from far away the tide is coming

Hachi (8) here she is rolling back  
the waves running in the ocean

Ku (9) she then looks for a partner  
She becomes this wave rolling

Ju (10) she faces her partner  
she looks at him in the full light



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Chung Riddick does not practise Aikido, but has been closely associated with Aikido practise through her husband and three children. Her youngest daughter Linh has practised with Victoria Aikikai for three years.



**BOOK REVIEW:  
THE SPIRIT OF AIKIDO,  
KISSHOMARU UESHIBA**

(Translation of 1981 Aikido no Kokoro)

**G. Hewson**

Some time ago I reviewed another book by Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the Aikido Doshu (Leader). At that time I promised to review The Spirit Of Aikido. It has taken me two years and three readings to come to grips with this book and the concepts that it addresses. My conclusion is that it is the finest brief statement of the essence of Aikido so far available in English. Like the techniques of Aikido, it is at once direct yet subtle, mundane yet profound. It will reward any thoughtful reader through it's insight and inspiration. Allow me to summarize it's content while adding a few comments of my own.

Foreword

The translator of The Spirit of Aikido is Taitetsu Unno, a bilingual Japanese-American professor of English literature who is also a student of Aikido and Zen. His translation is lucid and beautiful. It reveals his knowledge of the two languages and cultures as he assists the anglophone reader through some difficult passages by offering various explanations of complicated notions that are sometimes alien to occidental thinkers.

He provides an excellent start to the book when he comments on the transformation of fighting techniques into a system of integrating body, mind, and

spirit so that the ego self may become the egoless self. He notes the physical, psychological, and spiritual mastery are one and the same and then summarizes Doshu's theme:

"His concern is that the pure essence of Aikido, unadulterated by competitive egos, either personal or national, be kept firmly at the centre of training."

Professor Uno helps to put Aikido into the Asian philosophical and religious traditions from which it is derived and provides a concise statement of the purpose, method, and sequence of training. This four page foreword is a gem.

### Preface

In the Preface, Doshu articulates his purpose and rationale for writing Aikido no Kokoro: he wishes to preserve the purity of O-Sensei's ideals and furnish an explanation of some of the background ideas and experiences that lead to the creation of Aikido, which he describes as a "martial-aesthetic-spiritual art." The nature and aim of Aikido are summarized thus:

"Aikido manifests the ultimate reality: the flowing spontaneous movements of nature within which is packed the unmatched power of ki. It's goal is the formation of the ideal human self unifying body and mind, realized through vigorous mental and physical training, and the attainment of dynamic life in both activity and stillness."

Pointing to the vacuity of merely material pursuits and the threat of global disaster that have rendered so many people restless and insecure, Doshu draws our

attention to the function of Aikido that is at once human and divine:

"In this age of radical dehumanization Aikido has a special attraction. Especially appealing is the fact that each person, regardless of age, sex or athletic ability, can realize through practice the unification of the fundamental creative principle, ki, permeating the universe, and individual ki, manifested in breath-power. This unification is the source of life energy, which not only fills the spiritual vacuum but provides daily living with real substance and meaning."

### The Ki of the Universe and Universal Ki

The first chapter develops further the idea of ki as complex, intuitive and having important implications for contemporary life. For those seeking its significance Doshu argues squarely against competition:

"...only through actual training in Aikido does one become aware of the crucial dimensions of Budo--- constant training of mind and body as the basic discipline for human beings walking the spiritual path. Only then can one fully appreciate the rejection of contests and tournaments in Aikido and the reason for public demonstrations being a display of constant training, not of ego accomplishment."

The oft-repeated theme returns: "Real problems may arise unless we return to the original teaching of the Founder and clarify the essential meaning as fundamentally a matter of the spirit."

Through dealing with ki historically and philosophically, Doshu furnishes an interesting summary of Asian views of this mysterious concept. As a result, this chapter may be difficult for those not familiar with East Asian thought. Perseverance is recommended, however, because the abstract notions are soon related to concrete participation in Budo: "Ultimately, the proper understanding of ki must be experiential as well as intellectual, and intellectual as well as experiential." That is, one must try to understand what is being practiced and why. It is crucial that the development of a cerebral comprehension through analysis be accompanied by the physical and psychological training of regular practice in the dojo.

How is it to be measured? "...the degree of mastery is dependent upon the degree of unifying ki-mind-body, and this is the sole basis of evaluating proficiency in Aikido." Here Doshu is offering a guide to test evaluation where more experienced followers of the Way can offer constructive criticism to newer aspirants. Promotions then become not a vehicle for self-congratulation, but a re-focusing of goals. Tests remain what they should be, i.e., a means, not an end.

In wrapping up this first chapter, Doshu offers an intriguing hypothesis about the scientific verification of ki and then observes that ki is ultimately beyond science. It is the metaphysical level that must be considered.

### Entering and Spherical Rotation

This chapter introduces the concept of "nen" (concentrated or onepointedness), what we usually refer to as being centred or focused. It is of fundamental importance: "...nen is the line that connects ki-mind-body

with the universal ki." After this highly philosophical section, Doshu states that Aikido movements were developed explicitly "to overcome and control the strength of the opponent" and thus raises one of the central paradoxes of Aikido, viz., that practical techniques to subdue an attacker are also tools for building a spiritual home. Throws and pins are to be effective on a self-defence level, while simultaneously leading to a philosophical goal. In my opinion, this is O-Sensei's great legacy to us: that his techniques work on various levels at the same time.

Doshu concludes this section with practical suggestions on entering, turning, striking, blending and leading in performing all techniques.

### Daily Practice, the Way to Perfection

Throughout the book, Doshu emphasizes that Aikido is meant for people of all nationalities and races. In this chapter he comments on children and encourages us to retain the spontaneity and joy that characterize their practice. He also notes that adults bear the responsibility for juvenile delinquency and that they should use Aikido as a means to understand and assist young people.

Women are to train in the same manner as men. Doshu warns against latent sexism. While this statement is clear and explicit, I wish that he had addressed this issue more fully. I hope that contributors to Aikido Forum will take up the challenge.

Doshu recognizes the pioneers of Aikido who have helped to build a community based on the Founder's vision and exhorts young and old to train together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

## Mastering Mind, Cultivating Technique

After "ki" and "nen", Doshu now introduces the term "kan" (intuition) and stresses that while Aikido is universal, it is also individualistic, i.e., there is a common core but there is room for personal interpretation and application. This means, I would suggest, that there should be a certain degree of standardization without insisting on a rigid orthodoxy. It puts me in mind of the USAF east coast summer camp where Yamada Sensei and Kenai Sensei offer similar yet individually unique instruction.

It is important to talk about Aikido, according to Doshu, but not during the training session where conversation should be very limited. Discussions may be held before and after class, but practice should be a time when "kan" is given the opportunity to exercise its proper function of penetrating to that which is beyond words.

Doshu also lays great emphasis on sword work as a key to grasping Aikido movements and gives an illuminating example related to shihonage. His message is straightforward: weapons training should be integrated into practice. In this fashion we can continue O-Sensei's quest for the essence of martial arts in harmony and love.

## Strength in Living with Nature

In describing the correct attitude during practice, Doshu stresses that it should be undertaken with seriousness and dedication but, equally important, with joy. Referring to those students he has observed training without this combination of tenacity and exuberance he says, "Many practice Aikido using excessive force, others

with grim resolution, and still others lack confidence and practice very tentatively." If I may extrapolate from this statement, I am confident that Doshu would agree that those who practice with no thought for the safety of their partners also demonstrate an inappropriate attitude. His displeasure with those who swagger to cover an inferiority complex is evident.

The word "natural" is much abused by advertisers today. For Doshu, living naturally means living in accordance with the Tao as he outlined it in the first chapter.

### Inheriting the Founder's Aspirations

This segment is a brief biography of O-Sensei and a succinct description of the development of Aikido.

### Aikido Takes Root in the World

Here Doshu reiterates the spiritual goal of Aikido.

The Spirit of Aikido is a must reading for any serious Aikidoist who wishes to understand Aikido as it is propagated by Hombu Dojo. It is a brief, clear and well translated guide to the why and how of practice. There are a small number of excellent photographs of O-Sensei and Doshu. While not a technical manual, it does offer useful directions on how to turn self-defence techniques into a lifetime of meditation in movement.

It has led me to some personal conclusions that I would like to outline here and then develop further in article to follow.

Aikido is a philosophy with a physical expression which teaches us not so much to defend ourselves in the

street, but how to make the streets safe for everyone. It's goal is not to so much to enable women to fight off potential rapists, but to help men and women relate in such a way that men do not feel the urge to express aggression and violence. More that showing us how to be strong, it demonstrates how to be gentle. It is a path to harmony.

---

George Hewson, 3rd degree black belt, practises Aikido at the Japanese Christian Cultural Centre in Toronto. He works as a teacher in the public school system and is an active participant in the Canadian Aikido Federation.



# MY INTRODUCTION TO AIKIDO

**J. Richards**

It began quite innocently enough, I had decided to end my love affair with the game of golf after ten years. It had begun to take over my life. I was eating, drinking, sleeping, playing or practising every minute I could get away from work and the kids.

One night I was reading the local newspaper and came across a piece about a Tai Chi class that had recently started in the local recreation centre. I wanted something to replace golf, because I was suffering withdrawal symptoms. Having passed my 41st birthday and suffering slightly with arthritis in one knee, I didn't want anything too violent, so this sounded just right. On the appropriate night I went along to check things out but due to a printing error, the class had already started. What I saw disappointed me somewhat. I suppose the average age of the class would be about 65 and they were practising relaxation and meditation (not the Tai Chi I saw on T.V.) and so, in my ignorance, came away.

On my way out of the building I passed the main notice board, and couldn't help being amazed at the number of Karate clubs using the centre. It was just before Christmas 1987 and at that particular time, there were twelve different clubs. Karate was enjoying a period of growth in Britain at that time never seen before.

It was whilst I was studying the notices, I heard the sound of muffled thumps coming from somewhere

upstairs. Curious to find out what was making the noise, I went up the stairs to find the source. I eventually came to a door with two paper signs on it, one read B.A.S.K. KARATE the other had the word AIKIDO. I think everyone over the age of four had heard of Karate, but Aikido? So just to be on the safe side, I opened the door very cautiously. Well I knew straight away it wasn't Karate, so it must be this Aikido thing. Before I could decide what to do, a guy came over to me dressed in a white top and a sort of black skirt and asked if I was interested in joining. Replying that I would rather watch first, I was shown to a bench.

This guy then carried out some sort of 'dance' with a young guy dressed all in white but wearing a brown belt. After a few seconds the young guy went flying off to land in a sort of gentle roll. Well it looked a bit phoney to me so when Sensei asked if I wanted to join in, I jumped at the chance to find out for myself whether it was real. But instead of being able to send someone flying, I was put in a corner with a blue-belted guy who spent the next 10 minutes trying to teach me how to roll (and I've been trying ever since!). The class then went back to the edge of the mat so that Sensei could demonstrate another technique, all the time twisting, stretching and throwing the young brown belt around. Eventually he asked for someone with strong arms, and looked straight at me (I thought he wanted a bench moved or something). So up I get and move to where Sensei is standing. "This next technique" he began, "is my favorite! You all know what it's called don't you?" Not having a lot to do whilst Sensei was talking (and not knowing any different), I gazed round at the other students. As my eyes met the young boy

with the brown belt on, I'm sure I saw what looked like relief written across his face. "It's YONKYO," Sensei continued. Completely ignorant, and like a lamb to the slaughter I gave him my arm. If he was trying to impress me, I can tell you he totally succeeded. From that point on I knew nothing in Aikido is 'phoney'. As I got to know Sensei, I found out that he used to represent Wales at weightlifting, which helped him considerably in certain techniques.

All too soon, it was time for class to finish. Was this sweat, or adrenalin pouring out of my body? My neck, arms, shoulders and wrists were all aching, but I felt like I had been charged up with some magical force inside. On my way home, I felt as though I was almost floating. What a strange feeling. I was hooked!

The following week, it was back to rolls and more rolls (I'll master these if it kills me!) and then Ikkyo and Iriminage. I think it was about this point I began to realize that I'd been born with my feet the wrong way around, but my parents hadn't told me. Surely at 41 I knew which was my right foot and left hand?! I even thought of marking them in some way, but then I would probably keep getting hit while I was looking down to check. So persevere. It can only get better.....can't it?

At this juncture I should point out that I'm a Virgo, and by nature we are very helpful people. Not a bad way to be normally, except in the dojo. I think all dojo's should have a list of Do's and Don'ts for beginners, and number one at the top should be, DO NOT CORRECT SENSEI WHEN HE MAKES A MISTAKE.

I'd been practising about eight weeks I guess and was making rapid progress. I now knew where my right hand was and sometimes could even tell whether I was standing in Ai Hanmi or not, given a bit of time to think it out. Well this particular night's practise, we were all going over a short Jo kata, and Sensei was breaking it down into easy to follow sections and counting aloud as well. We'd run through it about four times I think when Sensei got his count mixed up, and finally came to a stop. Like a knight in shining armour I charged to his rescue. "This bit comes next, Sensei" I blurted out, and showed him the correct move. A deathly silence descended on the dojo, not a soul moved, except Sensei, who turned round slowly to face me, and even more slowly said, "Thank you. Thank you very much Jim." Although from the tone of his voice I got the impression he didn't really mean it. All of a sudden, alarm bells started ringing inside me. Why hadn't anyone else said something? Surely I wasn't the only one to spot Sensei's misfortune. Then it dawned on me: You've dropped a gooly here son! I wanted to say sorry, but my mouth wouldn't work, so I was hoping the ground would open up and swallow me, but it didn't. After a short pause to stare at me while he regained his composure (it felt like an hour) Sensei resumed his position at the front of the class. No sooner had he turned his back to everyone than all the higher ranks, turned as one man, and made funny faces or gestures to me, as if to say, "there's one in every class, and you are ours". I've made a few more blunders since then, but thankfully not quite as bad...yet.

Aikido, I have come to realize, is more than a martial art, it's a way of life. Or to be more exact, a way through life. I find that all the things I encounter in the

dojo, also relate to daily life, and the longer I practise, the easier my path through life becomes. I no longer meet everything head on like I used to. I'm learning to move round them. Also, because of practising with so many varied and wonderful people, I've not only learned techniques, I've learned a lot about myself. Consequently I'm a more stable person internally, and I'm losing the urge to prove myself all the time. I now know who I am.

Aikido also has a way of making the best of us humble, and I seem to be a prime candidate, (it could be that I need the lessons more than most). For example, take something like the warm-up exercises before Jo practise. Every now and then whilst twirling the Jo in one hand, I start thinking, I'm getting good at this now. No sooner has the thought materialised, than some unseen force plucks the Jo from my grasp and flings it down on the mat. Why me, I think, and then I remember I was starting to feel cocky, and this is a way of bringing me down. It's as if someone, or something is watching over me, and trying to keep me in line so I don't get too big for my boots. I firmly believe this, and I think this is why I'm changing as a person.

When I think back to how I was before I found Aikido, (or did it find me?) I see a different man. Most of the differences are inside, the way I think, feel and act, have all changed. But I think the most striking difference I've noticed, is in the problems in daily life. There seem to be far less now. Could it be that because of my Aikido practise I don't attract problems like I used to? Or is it that they are still there, but I'm better able to deal with them.

I remember Ishiyama Sensei saying to us at a seminar in Victoria, "Aikido is a very thankful art". I for one will be eternally thankful to Aikido, my instructors and fellow students, for their undying patience and help in dealing with someone with two left feet, and guiding me along the "Path of Harmony".

"Domoarigato gozaimashita"

---

Jim Richards, 4th kyu, practises at the Victoria Aikikai. He works in construction and building maintenance in the Victoria area.

# JO MAKING

S. Abbott

After spending almost thirty dollars on a bokken and a jo from a martial arts supplier who caters more to would-be teenage mutant ninja turtles, I thought the quality left much to be desired. I saw a few very nice hand crafted, specially ordered weapons various people had obtained. I then thought to myself, "I could make these weapons easily". Boy was I wrong! After countless hours and lots of mistakes I've just started to make decent jos. I've tried to make bokken but I'm not happy with what I've done to date. I would like to relate my experiences with making jos.

I work at U.B.C. and run a small wood working and general maintenance shop. I have access to various pieces of machinery and hand tools. The first jo I made was actually a dowel of fir that I'd cut to the right size. Well it didn't last too long, since the wood was too light and soft for a jo. My next attempt was made from Western Oak which, while considerably stronger than fir, was again too light. Talking with people in various dojos, I found out I should be using gum wood, or iron wood as it is often called. Real ironwood, I'm told, is a very strong but much too brittle wood to use for weapons. Finding out what wood to use was easy, purchasing it was much more difficult. I finally bought four nice pieces of iron wood. The first jo I built was made from one piece of wood. I used it in one class at U.B.C., then I decided to see how strong it was. Repeated blows against a log were needed to finally shatter one end. "If this wood was made into a

two-piece laminated jo, it would be very strong". The first two-piece jos were glued together with ordinary carpenter's glue. I've been told by wood workers that with gum wood carpenter's glue was not ideal for making jos. I now use an epoxy resin called G2 which is specially designed for this type of wood and application. The epoxy resin takes a while to cure (as I found out) but I believe the final product will last much longer.

Making the jos from iron wood has been a learning experience. It's not an easy wood to work, and can sometimes be frustrating. I'll never forget, though, the first time I turned a square block of wood into a round straight jo. I took an ordinary block of wood and with my own hands turned it into a jo. The pleasure I received from doing this still puts a smile on my face. My own personal jo I am particularly fond of. I crafted it one Saturday night or early Sunday morning. I love how it feels and how easily it moves through my hands. In my home I have it near me a lot (I live in a small place). I enjoy the feel of it and this may sound funny, but I get a little nervous when someone handles my jo casually. I guess I've become slightly attached to it. Though I'm not artistically inclined, I now believe I know how an artist feels when they finish something they are particularly proud of.

I've only just begun to practice jo techniques and I realize I have a whole lifetime of learning ahead of me; in making my own jo I get that much more pleasure from practice. I realize that not every one can have the opportunity to make their own weapons. If you can, I would say that it will be an experience you will really enjoy. I do.



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**Summer camp is,**

*Saying hello, seeing, not seeing, dissappointed, excited, apprehensive, intensive, pans and dishes, learning, teaching, giving, receiving, wonderful, frustrating, funny, painful, pans and dishes, friendly, healthy, tiring, worrying, resting, testing, fishing, fishing? cooking, washing, cleaning, helping, organising, laughing, crying, caring, sharing, loving, heartbreaking, awesome, saying goodbye, empty.*

*Summer camp is Aikido. Aikido is life itself.*

**Jim Richards, Victoria Aikikai**

# AN AIKIDO DREAM

L. Dettweiler

One of the aspects of Aikido which attracts beginners and sustains experienced practitioners is the relevance of Aikido practice and philosophy to everyday life. In this article I would like to describe an experience which helped me to understand how the lessons of Aikido can be applied to life outside the dojo. This experience also involved a dream so I will need to talk a bit, as a psychologist, about the importance of dreams.

Several years ago I attended a B.C. Summer Camp in which Chiba Sensei was a visiting Shihan. In one of his lectures he said that by practising Aikido we prepare ourselves for the unexpected in life. It is important, he said, not to be thrown completely off centre when unexpected events occur in our lives. I remember thinking at the time of John Lennon's song in which he said "Life is what happens while you are making other plans." On another occasion, I asked Kawahara Sensei to summarize the central message of Budo. He said, "Tomorrow you may be dead." The importance of this statement for me lies in the fact that if one could be dead in the next instant, one should strive at all times to live, with integrity, in the present. O Sensei said, "True Budo aims at blending completely with the Universe itself. It calls for a return to the core of the Universe to form a wholly integrated entity ... Aikido is life, a compass of one's life mission as decreed by the Divine Spirit, and is a way of attaining peace and harmony, a way leading to Divine Love." O Sensei believed that by practising Aikido, we could discover a direction for our lives. The

experience I am about to relate showed me, rather dramatically, the importance of these three lessons.

Aikido can be seen as a metaphor for life. By meeting and solving the problems we encounter during practice, we enhance our ability to successfully cope with life in general. In jiyu-waza (free style), for example, an attack may come from any of several partners. Often an attack will come from an unexpected quarter or in an unexpected form. The inexperienced practitioner often decides upon a technique before the attack is clearly shown by uke. Or, on the other hand, may wait until the attack is shown but find that he is too late to defend himself. In either case, the results can be disastrous. More experienced practitioners know that there is a window of opportunity during which a decision is neither too early nor too late. This decision becomes more and more intuitive and less and less planned as one progresses. In Aikido and in our lives outside the dojo, we must remain centered in the present and respond creatively to the unexpected. When viewed in this way as a metaphor, Aikido can provide an environment in which we not only learn self-defense, but actually learn to live life more effectively.

A dream also can be a metaphor for life. Carl Jung, the great Swiss psychiatrist, believed that the function of dreams is to balance the two great domains of the human Psyche, the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious mind includes those thoughts, feelings and memories of which we are aware of, which can be brought into awareness by focusing our attention upon them. However, much of the vast experience of our life remains unavailable in the unconscious, either because

the thoughts, feeling and memories are too painful to recall or because they are unacceptable to the conscious, socialized mind. Dreams can be seen as a source of this unconscious information which is unobtainable in waking life. Most dreams of this type involve presentation of the unconscious in symbolic terms. In other words, the information is presented to you in a metaphor, a story or a seemingly incomprehensible series of images or symbols. Jung believed that in order to live a fully balanced life, one must recover that which is unconscious and bring it into conscious life. Explaining why this is true would require at least another article. Briefly stated, however, the rationale is as follows. If the unconscious conflicts, fears and experiences of our past are left unresolved, we are bound to re-enact them again and again with those people in our lives who remind us of the individuals involved in the original conflicts. For example, one's unresolved conflicts with one's parents often are projected onto authority figures, such as Aikido Senseis or College teachers. Unless we examine the internal, personal roots of our conflicts, they will occur each time we find ourselves in a situation that unconsciously reminds us of our past. Such conflicts impede learning, limit our willingness to experience life and stunt personal growth. By releasing ourselves from the grasp of unconscious conflicts we free ourselves to discover our true selves, or as O Sensei said, our "life mission."

Jung identified another type of dream which he called the precognizant dream. In this type of dream, you are given a message, either symbolically or realistically, which tells you about the future. In this way, like Aikido, our dreams can prepare us for the

unexpected. Related to this is the Collective Unconscious, a part of the unconscious which Jung saw as a racial memory or an unconscious connection which binds all humanity together. Within this domain, time and space do not follow the laws of physics, and knowledge unobtainable by normal means becomes available. Connections with the Collective Unconscious are, in Aikido terms, connections with the power of the Universe.

I believe O Sensei lived with one foot in the collective unconscious. O Sensei talked about seeing the paths of bullets before they reached him and of knowing a swordsman's attack before the strike came. Students of O Sensei recalled seeing him before them as they attacked and then instantaneously finding him above them on a balcony. Clearly, O Sensei was comfortable in a reality many of us cannot fathom and may not accept.

Although they said it in different ways, both O Sensei and Jung believed that ultimately one could unify the individual psyche or the mind of God. O Sensei believed one could accomplish this by practising the "Way" while Jung believed the same goal could be reached through "Individuation." During the process of Individuation, one gradually unravels the secrets of the unconscious mind and incorporates this information into everyday life. As well, Jung believed it was important not only to examine the unconscious, but also to attend to the power of the spirit. For Jung, and I imagine O Sensei, the prime task in life was to decipher one's own divine mission or path and answer the question, "Why am I here on earth?"

Reading O Sensei's biography indicates that O Sensei discovered his mission and followed it ruthlessly, often in the face of criticism and severe hardship. In spite of the seemingly illogical choices he made in his life, his earnestness, his obvious state of enlightenment and his power drew sincere people to him. Today, long after his death, Aikido is drawing more and more students to the "Way." Jungian Psychology, dismissed for years by many as mystical and vague, is now experiencing similar growth. I believed this is true because both disciplines address a fundamental truth of life. We need a reason to live. Life must have a purpose or no matter how successful, rich, powerful or loved we become, life remains hollow.

I had an experience several years ago in which the unconscious, Aikido and dreaming, came together in a remarkable way to imprint these three lessons upon my mind. It was Springtime in Victoria and as head of the Psychology Department and a member of the Union negotiating team at the College, I was absorbed in thoughts about fall schedules, timetables, hiring employees, collective bargaining and numerous other issues. During this period, I began having dreams in which I was standing in a narrow alley. At the end of the alley, a car would rev it's engines and begin to race toward me. Just before it touched me I would use some ukemi or Aikido technique to vault myself over the car and escape injury. This dream was repeated every night for about a week. My assumption was that this dream was telling me symbolically that I was dodging big issues in my life or living dangerously in some way. In other words, I assumed it was a dream of the first type mentioned above. I certainly was dealing with many

issues, both professional and personal, at the time. I was, however, soon to find the true meaning of this dream.

As I was walking home one afternoon I found myself completely absorbed in angry and confused thoughts about the activities of the day I had spent at the College. I approached an intersection, saw the walk sign light up and stepped into the crosswalk. After taking two steps I suddenly became aware of a white car to my left and the pressure of a bumper against my left knee. In retrospect I realize that the driver had come to a stop, looked left and seeing no traffic, had decided to turn right on the red signal, without bothering to check for pedestrians stepping in front of the car.

As I felt my legs about to go out from under me, I slammed my hand down on the hood of the car. I don't really remember what happened next except that I landed on my feet about a meter away from the driver's side of the car. I looked up and saw an incredulous face which said, "Are you alright?" "Yes," I said calmly as I finished walking across the street. I noticed that the car had travelled about three meters and most certainly would have run me down if I had not moved. About half a block later my legs began to wobble, my head started to reel and I sat down. The full extent of the experience overwhelmed me.

The dream had been preparing me for this experience. The unconscious mind, not bound by normal time and space, had combined whatever knowledge of ukemi and movement I had accumulated over ten years of practice together with a knowledge of

the future and had given me a gift, possibly the gift of life, in a precognizant dream. At the moment I needed it, the knowledge and action were there intuitively and unconsciously. Someone or something wanted me to survive that experience. I still do not know how I got from the right front of that car to a meter to the left of it in one jump. I don't think "I" did it.

The experience brought home the three lessons mentioned in this article. First, life presents us with the unexpected and we must be ready to respond. Secondly, to spend one's life in the past and the future is to lose the present. In fact, it is almost impossible to react to the unexpected if one is not present in the moment. In my case, if I had been in the present, I would have seen the car moving and never would have stepped off the curb. As in jiyu-waza, if one is not dealing with the present reality but rather is dealing with what one wishes were or were not happening, the consequences can be lethal. However, Aikido and the unconscious, through my dream, had prepared me for this unexpected event. As for the third lesson, I learned that a force larger than myself is in some way acting in my life and that my own path, as yet only partially discovered, awaits me if I have the courage to seek it.

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## MY EXPERIENCE IN AIKIDO

B. Foster

When I first joined Aikido I did not know anything about it, or what to expect. For the first few months I felt frustrated with my inability to perform even the simplest Aikido techniques. Since Aikido is a martial art, I felt my partner and I had to be in conflict, like we were fighting. I was always very tense and as uke I would resist nage's techniques. I was told to relax, but never was able to. Then when I practised with a high ranking student, I was thrown onto the mats very powerfully. I then thought that in order to do an Aikido technique correctly, I had to use as much force as I possibly could. Even though I felt that I was trying hard, my Aikido didn't improve much over the next several months.

Then one day at practice I felt relaxed and I started to move with my partner not against him. My movements as uke and nage became more soft and my techniques began to improve. It was then that I realized that Aikido really did mean "the way of harmony". I discovered that in order to do Aikido correctly, I had to harmonize with my partner by being relaxed and respond to his movements, not resist them.

I still have difficulty relaxing during practice, especially when I am learning a new technique, but I feel that I have reached the first hurdle in my understanding of Aikido.

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## AIKIDO AND FAMILY

G. MacPhail

I bumped into a fellow Aikidoist at the library today. He just happened to be there with his wife and one of three sons. Although my friend and I have been practising Aikido together for years, I had yet to see his wife accompany him to an Aikido gathering.

Being somewhat of an extrovert, I shook her hand, we exchanged pleasantries and I said: "Gee, it would be nice to see you at an Aikido party". Her smile melted rapidly only to be replaced with a firm mouth and unyielding eyes, "Don't talk to ME about Aikido!!!"

Needless to say I was taken aback by the hostility in her voice, but was compelled to reply: "Boy, I've certainly heard that a lot over the years from Aikido spouses." His eyes widened and so did hers.

"I really empathise with your concerns," I said, "it's not an easy road. I'm married to a Sensei!" We all laughed, and this then gave way to a door the three of us decided, nonverbally, to enter. While our children played, the conversation went something like this:

Her: I'm tired of him telling me to start Aikido.

Him: I didn't say Aikido, just get off your ass and do something.

Me: (to her) Are you active outside the home?

Her: There's kindergarten volunteer work, soccer for the boys, swimming lessons...

Me: I mean, how do you nurture yourself?

Her: (pause) I haven't any time as he is always practising Aikido.

Me: If all three of your children were in school full time, what would you pursue?

Her: Computers. Working with computers really excites me.

Me: You must be a very creative person.

Her: Exasperated, she gazed out the library window and painted a verbal picture: "I feel like I'm on an 8 lane freeway with my husband and sons going at full speed heading south, and I'm on the other side on a narrow dirt path heading north".

Me: Welcome to life with children. Every woman living in a First World country could have the same picture on their living room wall, and relate perfectly. I, for one, "burned out" when my eldest turned 4, my youngest 2. I had nurtured for a long time and realized that in order to maintain the harmony of house and home, new steps had to be taken. Mine were to (reluctantly) interview babysitters. Once the proper one was found I committed myself to re-enter the physical practice of Aikido. (Of course the reader knows, once committed, the Spirit of Aikido is always with you.) Now, a year and a half later I am definitely a happier, healthier, more balanced

individual. My family naturally reaps the benefits.

Her: But I am no longer living with the same man I married. He has changed from being completely self-centred and controlling to a person wanting his family to make their own personal decisions and to pursue paths that make them, as individuals, happy and fulfilled. This is not an easy transition. Where do I start?

Me: I then offered her a list of three local institutions which train people in the use of computers, one of which would certainly fit into her individual schedule.

Him: I've been telling her for years to start pursuing something.

Me: Perhaps what your husband is saying is that we all need to pursue a spiritual path which gives greater meaning to our daily lives, his just happens to be Aikido. Yours is whatever nurtures you as an individual. Children can always be used as a scapegoat for not pursuing our personal interests but they too, will grow and leave the nest in their own pursuits.

Her: Thank you, I will contact one of the training centres you mentioned. I was unaware they offered courses in computers. Bye for now.

Him: While walking away he turned quickly and silently mouthed a thank you.

Me: My reply was a quick, discreet, wink.

You: Is this really true?

Me: If you have gained any insight from this article, what does it matter?

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