

合氣道

# AIKIDO FORUM

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**WORDS FROM THE EDITOR**

The editorial staff of the Aikido Forum wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Aikido Forum has managed to survive its first year with the generous help of the authors who have contributed articles. THANK YOU!! We are pleased to announce that Mr. George Hewson of JCCC Aikikai in Toronto will join us the regular contributor for book reviews starting in the next issue.

Although we have solicited articles on cross-cultural issues relating to Aikido education and training, we have received very little response. One of the concerns that you may have is about putting your thoughts into words and wanting your articles to be perfect. Another concern might be: "Oh, my ideas are not fully formed yet and I should wait a few years until they are."

What we want most urgently is your descriptions of how you feel and what you think at this point in your Aikido training, not a perfect dissertation of your life-long research. Please let us remind you that we prefer to share your ideas and experiences rather than receive literary and rhetoric writings. Please feel free to write an article as if you were talking to a friend, or writing a personal letter. I am fortunate to have skilled editorial staff who are willing to make necessary stylistic changes and suggestions. So please remember that we want your input in any form now!

**AUTHOR'S GUIDE**

Articles submitted for inclusion in the Aikido Forum must be typewritten (double-spaced), be less than 1600 words, and be accompanied by a brief autobiography (40 words or less) including rank, dojo name, and a personal telephone number. We prefer that the articles be submitted in English, but we do have limited translating capabilities in French, Spanish, Dutch and Japanese. Please keep a copy for your own records and submit your article(s) to the address on the front cover.

## RETURNING TO THE POINT OF ORIGIN

### by DOSHU KISSHOMARU UESHIBA

There is an increasing number of people who try to find the source of effective living in enjoyable Aikido training. The effects of Aikido upon various aspects of society seem to have greatly increased. I call it social stabilization and social penetration of Aikido. We have entered an era where Aikido is widely known and spread in society. Aikido used to be limited to interested practitioners only at certain schools, organizations, and dojos. I have referred to this as "growth of points into a line and into a larger space."

I recently visited a certain place to give a demonstration. There used to be a core of only a few earnest practitioners with an additional ten or so members. What surprised me in this recent visit were the large number of spectators at the demonstration, and also the serious and enthusiastic looks in the eyes of those who came to the reception after the demonstration. At the reception, one person commented that there were groups who had suddenly started publicizing their non-Aikido arts as "Aikido" to attract people and thereby misrepresenting Aikido in society. Their intent was to take advantage of the name of Aikido for publicity.

I would like to simply feel pleased at the growth of Aikido from the state of isolated points or a line, and finally into the state of a large space. However, it would be a grave concern if a fake Aikido got a ride on the present spread of Aikido and leaked poison in society.

"Returning to the point of origin" is a recent common expression. Everybody knows that Aikido is a way of disciplining the mind and the body. In accordance with the depth of this knowledge, we must embody the Aikido Founder's original intention and pursue our stringent daily training. Our Aikido should not be a shallow way of attracting people. It should not be a personalization of Aikido based on egoistical personal judgements.

Consciously and unconsciously, we must maintain and nurture the prayer for building a truthful personality and contributing to the happiness and prosperity of mankind. Only when we pray for this sincerely and earnestly, could we ascer-

tain that we are soberly recognizing the point of origin.

Aikido is presently promoted in Japan mainly by the Aikikai Foundation as the umbrella organization for over 160 university Aikido clubs as well as various branch dojos, dojos at companies, organizations, and the Ministry of Self-Defense, as well as many clubs and organizations abroad. The rate of public promotion of Aikido is phenomenal, and it is comparable to rolling a ball from the top of a hill.

However, submerging the ego in the state of high expansion for personal gains and attachments would be blasphemous to the Way. Such individuals need to recognize their responsibility to the public.

**Editor's Note:** The above article first appeared in *Musubi: Magazine of Aikido*, published by Hombu Dojo, in the 1974 (April) issue. It has been translated into English and is presented in the *Aikido Forum* with the author's permission.

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### **Aikidoists Beware!** by Kazuo Chiba, 7-dan

The martial art (budo) is truly a frightening thing. Although I do not know about the attitudes among the majority of people (especially Aikido-related people), it is necessary to know that the martial art is back-to-back with death. However, the potential death is in an inevitable balance of tension with the instinctive desire to survive. This fact bears itself heavily upon the seeker's mind and body in the training process, while vividly emphasizing the existential dignity and respect of the lives of the self and others. If we were to find the unchangeable ethic in our Japanese budo, its source should be found in the relative balance of tension between life and death and between the self and others.

Aikido is a new way of developing personhood beyond the traditional and conventional martial arts, and it is a combined result of the utmost efforts and natural predispositions of a great personality, Morihei Ueshiba. However, this does not

mean that Aikido denies the various thoughts found in the traditional Japanese budo. In other words, the transcendence of Aikido from the traditional martial arts as a new way of personal development does not mean it ceases to be a martial art, just as it is impossible for humans to stop being human or conversely to assert that their existence has been non-human. Rather, it may be more appropriate to believe that the Founder's own internal experience, that is, his spiritual light, was emitted and filtered through the Japanese budo (the rare product of the human race) upon its fundamental and essential existence. I believe that the answer to this process is the Founder's "take-musu-aiki" (truthful aiki).

Before Aikido was developed, the concept of aiki had already been in existence in Japanese budo since the ancient times. Likewise, the state that the Founder reached is not exclusively unique to him in the history of Japanese budo. The Founder himself never said that Aikido is not a martial art although he used to say that Aikido is a true budo. I therefore disagree with the view that Aikido is a completely unique and new discipline while ignoring the position of Aikido in the Japanese martial art history and its relative relations with other martial arts.

The fundamental meaning of the impossibility of humans quitting being human is derived from the fact that humans cannot become free from the restriction of life and death or from various sufferings (birth, aging, ailments and death). The uniqueness of Aikido as a way of personal development lies in the departure from the self-limiting formalization and win-lose conceptualization found in the traditional Japanese budo, toward the original, fundamental, and permanent place of existence. I find the reason for the Founder's calling Aikido the real budo in this fact.

There are cheapening trends not only to be overly ideological but also to be commercialized. I feel the necessity to give warnings here. I consider this to be double deterioration. One side of it is that Aikido, as a Japanese martial technical system, becomes more abstract as time progresses. The other side is that Aikido becomes more financially pragmatic in its existence.

In addition to the above, the dojo as the place for personal training is facing increasing amounts of unnecessary organiz-

ational and political pressures. This present state sheds a dark shadow on the development of Aikido which relies on the existence and development of young practitioners with free and unrestricted individualities.

These two elements, coexisting with the hedonism that is pervasive in the present society, need to be overcome daily by the seekers of the true Way.

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**Chiba Shihan** is one of the direct disciples of the Founder of Aikido, and the chief instructor of the San Diego Aikikai.

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Aikido is the universal truth, the thread weaving ten thousand generations of the life of the universe.

O-Sensei

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**AIKI WITH NATURE: PART II**  
**Farming, Apprenticeship and Tools**  
by **Alan R. Drengson, 1-dan**

**Introduction and Background**

In Part I (Spring 1986 issue of the Aikido Forum), we explored the common ground between deep ecology, with its concept of ecological wisdom, and aiki with nature at a fairly abstract level. In Part II we will explore a specific context and particular examples.

I focus on farming for a number of reasons, one is that O-Sensei worked very hard to establish a farm and a shrine as a spiritual centre for Aikido, and farming, as we will see, brings humans into deep contact with nature. I say this even though agriculture is taken by some to represent the break between humans and nature, our original alienation. It does not have to be, for if aiki is practised, farming can rediscover and re-establish harmony with nature, just as Aikido uses the martial way to cultivate spiritual strength and positive ki, transcending the desire to overcome others. As both are committed to cultivating relationships based on harmony and respect, both produce a bountiful harvest of positive results, one in nutrition, the other in community. In both there is development and self-correction.

Another reason I focus on farming is because of my interests, family background and experience. I have long had a deep love for the land, in part because of old family traditions, but also because of personal experiences in gardening, farming and wilderness travel. My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all farmers. They loved the land and would never have considered abusing it, or of mistreating farm or wild creatures. Destructive and careless use of anything, soil, plants, persons or farm tools, was completely unacceptable. A good farmer kept the farm in the best possible condition, everything was cared for and was put in its place. After it was cultivated, the land was allowed to rest, to fallow. It was clothed in winter with cover crops, and crop rotations, sound grazing and other such practices preserved its integrity. There was a very strong sense of good work in training a horse, using a scythe, repairing a fence, building a house, planting a tree, and so on; all had their proper ways of being done. These were passed on through example and practice. The good traditional farm practices were sustainable, self-sufficient and community spirited. The land was not worn out by farming, but actually increased in fertility and goodness through the years. Farming was not a business, but a way of life, and through farming one not only cultivated the soil but also human character and culture.

#### **Aggressive Agriculture**

One can contrast the approach just described with the factory methods of agribusiness that have developed in this century. In North America large numbers of farm communities were undermined by the introduction of big machines and other industrial-economic practices; chemical fertilizers, monocultures and antibiotics moved most animals to factory farms. During the last forty years a virtual war against nature has been carried on, using insecticides developed first as nerve gas during World War II, and then powerful herbicides. Plants have been manipulated to make them suitable for mechanical harvesting and high yields at the expense of the land, plant strength and nutritional value. These practices have led to serious problems in North American agriculture.

A bushel of corn raised by such methods

in Ontario or Iowa can cost two or more bushels of topsoil. Recent studies of soil losses to all causes have shown that if current practices are continued, they will destroy the productive capacity of much of our topsoil. (Every past civilization that destroyed its topsoil collapsed, or turned to the conquest of new lands.) Contemporary industrial agriculture uses ten to thirty calories of energy to get back one calorie of food, whereas older, traditional methods consumed one calorie of energy to get ten calories of food. In conjunction with these consequences, the excessive use of debt associated with industrial agriculture now threatens large numbers of North American farmers with bankruptcy.

#### **Ecoagriculture and Natural Farming**

There are larger environmental hazards generated by aggressive agriculture in the form of groundwater pollution, contamination of the food supply, and disruption of the population dynamics of other organisms. These are becoming increasingly serious problems. However, there are non-violent alternatives to this warfare on nature. They can be lumped together under the word "ecoagriculture", which is a term that collects approaches such as organic farming, natural farming, biodynamic farming, regenerative agriculture and many other forms of agriculture which respect nature, and use sustainable, more natural, nonviolent methods of farming. These approaches reflect a shift in attitudes, values and knowledge. In some ways they represent a movement toward the older, more traditional approach described earlier, but they also incorporate contemporary deep ecological knowledge.

One of the purest forms of ecoagriculture, from the standpoint of aiki, is natural farming, pioneered by a Japanese farmer, Masanobu Fukuoka.

Fukuoka was trained as a plant pathologist and worked for the Japanese government for several years, adhering to the conventional, industrial agricultural philosophy. In his early middle years he went through a profound spiritual and physical crisis, and came to doubt almost all that he had been doing as a specialist. He returned to his family's farm, and committed himself to farming in total harmony with nature.

He learned from nature how to farm in a sustainable, harmonious way. He did so by

carefully observing nature, and attempting to use farming practices that were like the natural processes of regeneration, complementary plant diversity, and plant succession. He now raises grains on land that has not been plowed or sprayed for thirty years. His yields are comparable to those of the best Japanese farmers. He has raised vegetables that are closer to their wild ancestors, hardier and with more flavour, that reseed themselves. His fruit trees produce well with minimum intervention.

Fukuoka learned to farm in this gentle way by apprenticing himself to nature. He discovered through close, loving observation of nature that one can farm with a minimum disruption of the communities of living beings which are integral parts of the natural environment. He found that farming should be a practice that enables the farmer's mind and body to become one with the land. Such a practice is solicitous toward nature and treats it with respect and gratitude. Farming in this manner brings forth the best from nature and leads to a way of life that shows our best to nature. The good natural farm is one that reflects the beauty of flourishing natural communities along with abundant crops.

A farm that is aiki is an expression of the way (do). When there is aiki in our approach, our hearts are open and love flows through us, and then we are joyfully, harmoniously unified with all that we do. Proper actions flow from us as full expressions of nature itself. And yet this is a highly personal, and individual thing as well. No two farms or farmers are exactly the same. No two persons or pieces of land are identical; each has its own character that can be cultivated with aiki as we learn from the exchanges that take place.

### **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship, as we use the term here, is a way of learning which is characteristic of ancient nature religions and the older arts and crafts, all of which have their origin in times prior to writing.

In learning such arts we submit to self-discipline, to patience, and to the ethics of work with integrity. We learn the art by studying with those who have such mastery, or who are more advanced than we are. We learn by repetition, by practice, by asking questions, by doing,

by being corrected, by studying and by imitating and trying to duplicate the form the teacher shows us. Eventually we have no cumbersome barriers to understanding. Finally, through this guided, deep, personal effort we are in time led to freedom of expression through the art. At this stage the art is fully integrated into the person but the person also has been formed by the art.

Practice of the art leads to liberation from self to realization of a deeper, larger Self. This forgetting of self removes barriers to a fuller realization of aiki. The preservation and transmission of such arts, then, requires apprenticeship training that uses methods of learning which involve repeating standard forms, patterns of actions, rituals and so on. Art lives in its practice, not in its artifacts. Through the practice its artifacts gain life. The art as a whole is deeply embedded in whole persons in a community. In the best of apprenticeship traditions the art and its values are circumscribed by, and based on, several different dimensions: ethical, spiritual, aesthetic, communal and personal, which assure good work and proper transmission through sound practices. In apprenticeship the teacher and the community, not the text, the art, not the theory, occupy the central place in the learning process.

In natural farming one is apprenticed to nature and its natural communities, and perhaps to a natural farmer. Learning through an apprenticeship, such as this, can develop the whole human person to a level of maturity that is characterized by more humility, compassion and transcendence of narrow selfish preoccupations. Learning Aikido is an apprenticeship that involves the cultivation of the total body-mind, as it also cultivates human community and harmonious relationships. This carries over to our relationships with nature, partly because in the absence of healthy human relationships it is very difficult to have good relationships with nature. It is our human relationships that shape us from the beginning of our lives, and that help to determine whether our approach to nature or other humans is an aggressive or a loving one. The practice of Aikido helps us to develop the integrity and trust necessary for good interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Apprentices and teachers (and we are each both) work together to realize

values that can only exist through their harmonious efforts. Through practice we come to experience the depth, mystery and beauty of aiki.

### **Specific Examples of Aiki in Farming**

We have considered how natural farming strives to harmonize our efforts to raise food to feed ourselves and others by apprenticing ourselves to nature, by learning directly from nature how best to farm using natural processes, instead of chemical poisons and exploitation of the soil. Of course, it must be admitted that the process of apprenticeship carried on through practice and tradition helps to accumulate lessons learned, and with the help of a human teacher our learning will advance more rapidly. The human teachers need not always be present, for we can also learn from manuals or from journals such as the Aikido Forum. But the essential problem for the learner is that the connections must be made through one's own practice and direct experience; they only become part of oneself through discovery in practice, in activity. The text helps one to search or practice in the right direction, but it must be interpreted; it does not interpret itself. This being so, I now add these descriptions of my experience in farming.

#### 1. Getting to know the land

To get into a harmonious relationship with the land my approach is to spend a great deal of time following the natural contours and the boundaries, feeling and observing the living processes of the soil and the grasses, weeds, flowers, trees, birds, animals, the movement of water, the sounds, the smells, sensing the qualities of the Earth underfoot and in the hand, noting the relationships between the sky, sun and land. Sometimes I lie in the field and quiet my breathing, empty, becoming one with the Earth.

This is only a partial description of a process that is analytic, meditational, active, passive, reflective and receptive, one which lets the land speak to me. The practice of meditation in the dojo and study of Japanese traditions in Zen and Shinto have helped me to learn this. This art of knowing the Earth is very ancient. It is related to geomancy which is the divining of the Earth's spirit and the spirit of the place, where "spirit" does not mean some insubstantial vapor, but the

energy and aliveness, the Ki of the place. Geomancy comes out of nature religions in both the ancient west and east.

#### 2. Mowing with a Large Scythe

The scythe that I use has a snath (handle) of six feet, and a blade that is 28 inches long. The blade forms approximately a ninety degree angle with the snath. It can only be used going in a clockwise direction and because it is right-handed, the hay to be cut must be on the right.

The primary movement is like the spiral movement in iriminage. One stands with the line to be cut on one's right (parallel to the line to be walked). The feet are spread slightly apart, with the right foot advanced. The right hand holds a nib (a small round handle set at ninety degrees to the snath) which is about a third of the way down the snath, the left hand holds a nib that is at the top of the snath. The primary movement is begun by swinging the snath to the right so that the blade is just above the ground, but parallel to it. This swing is not just in the shoulders and arms, but involves a rotation of the whole body from the ankles to the top of the head. The arms are not swung up as in golf, but instead are swung low so that the blade does not rise. One twists to the right, storing energy. When the maximum twist is reached, one uncoils and swings the scythe toward the left. During this process the weight has shifted from the left foot, at the wind up, to the right at the beginning of the cutting swing, and then as one cuts, twisting to the left, the weight is shifted back to the left foot. To stop the blade from rising during this twisting, spiral movement, one must sink, slightly lowering the centre while turning to the left. It is important to follow through the entire movement with the whole body. The best practice is to follow the blade with the eyes, for then the shoulders and neck, which should be relaxed, will follow the swing naturally. The energy must be allowed to flow through in this way or one will soon tire, and will not dump the grass where it should go. It should form a line that parallels the edge being cut, leaving room to move without trampling on the mowed hay.

There are two important details yet to observe which have to do with forward

movement and breathing (kokyu power). As one mows one must advance. This means that one has to either mow one swing, and then step forward, repositioning the feet, and then mow another, or preferably one mows while walking in a rhythmic manner, paced by the speed of mowing. This is as one shifts weight, while following the primary movement. If one does the "A-Oh" body-rhythm breathing we practice in aikido exercises that harmonizes with the swing of the blade and the pace, then the whole movement becomes a breathing exercise and full power comes out. Wind up and breathe in on "Oh", unwind and breathe out on "A". The passage through the field then becomes a natural movement exemplifying body-mind unity. The scythe makes a swishing sound as it slices through the grass, and the grass makes a soft "kush" as it falls in a line. After mowing in this manner for a while the whole field smells of new-mown hay. The sun and wind wash over one's body and field; the day is perfect.

### 3. Tools and Self-Defense

There are many common elements between the use of weapons in Aikido training and the use of tools in farming. Here we will give just a few examples.

The chain saw is a valuable tool for clearing up brush and downed trees, for cutting firewood, etc. It is potentially very dangerous. Besides wearing safety glasses and hearing protectors, it is important to know how it works, how to care for it and keep it sharp, and how to use it safely. Safe use begins by anticipating problems and hazards. A most important lesson is to learn to step off the line of the moving chain. When cutting firewood, do not stand directly behind the blade, for if the saw should kick back or cut easily through, the moving chain could cause a serious, even fatal injury.

One should not force or hurry the saw. Most of the work is done by the movement of the chain, if it is sharp, and by the weight of the saw. The same applies to cross-cut hand saws, and in the case of the larger, two-person saws, aiki should be practiced with one's partner. Here rhythm and proper breathing are very important. In splitting wood use a proper tool (axe, maul and wedge). The legs and feet are again off the line and the swing is much like bokken- or jo-waza,

the power coming from the centre and through the point of contact.

On our farm we prefer to use hand tools whenever possible. (To be sure, we are not trying to farm a large piece of ground, nor to raise a cash crop. We are trying to rejuvenate an old farm that has not had much care over the years.) Hand tools allow for careful, precise attention to its details, but equally important the proper use of hand tools also "grooms" and develops the user's body and mind, just as weapons' practice does in Aikido training.

### 4. The good farm

On the good farm the tool shed is kept in neat order. As in the dojo, the tools (weapons) each have their own place and are cleaned and returned after use. After splitting firewood, weeding or mowing, the ground is properly cleaned. We avoid using poisons and artificial fertilizers of any kind. We compost all plant material and kitchen refuse. We feed the natural soil communities and mulch to conserve water. We try to enhance the possibilities for wildlife by improving the habitat. Working with and for animals can add other dimensions of aiki to farming. The well-kept, well-loved farm, looks beautiful. It has simplicity in appearance, a lack of clutter, with natural edges, and lots of smaller lines of natural division that together create a place in which both humans and nature are at home and in harmony. For me this illustrates Aikido in farming.

### **General Conclusions**

The aiki of natural farming is the deepest ecology in feeding ourselves, and Aikido is a martial art that is most compatible with deep ecology. Through its philosophy and practice we can come to ecosophy, a harmonious dwelling in the world, with love and respect for all beings in thought, word and action. This is aiki in the fullest sense, which is ecosophy (ecological wisdom).

A farmer whose heart is filled with love for nature is a farmer whose practices woo the Earth to bring forth a bountiful harvest of well-being for all who are touched by these practices. As we sow, so we shall reap; this applies to vegetables, fruit trees, interpersonal relationships and character. Farming, as we know, can be seen as a metaphor for life itself.

In the same way, Aikido, as a martial



art, can be seen as a metaphor for life as a whole, and by practicing Aikido together, alone, on and off the mats, we each come to personally appreciate and be more centered in the world, in our immediate mind-body reality. We see in both contexts how meeting force with force is counter-productive. We see that through aiki on the mats and in daily life we achieve our mutual aims together through cooperation.

I have attempted here to say how we can come to a deeper understanding of nature through aiki, and ultimately to realize ecosophy in daily life. Through the practice of Aikido we develop enough faith and confidence in ourselves, and in nature, to let others be what they are. In approaching humans, animals, plants and nature this way, we allow other beings to reveal themselves to us, and in revealing ourselves to them we share the discovery of deeper values. Aiki allows all things to be and appear as they are. It is non-distorting. Aikido in this sense is a way of life which helps us to realize the ecological depth that is in the place in which we dwell. Ultimately, it is confluent with the way of nature itself. Through it we can rediscover our own natural self and the Self of Nature. This, at any rate, is my current understanding of these matters.

Let us end these reflections with an observation from O-Sensei: "In Aikido there are no forms and no patterns. Natural movements are the movements of Aikido. Its depth is profound and it is inexhaustible."

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**Dr. Drengson** is a senior member of Victoria Aikikai and an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Victoria. He is the author of Shifting Paradigms: From Technocrat to Planetary Person, and the editor of the ecophilosophy journal The Trumpeter. In relation to the subjects discussed in this two part article, he has a short resource and reading list available on request.

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Aikido protects the soul and the body.

O-Sensei

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**RANDOM THOUGHTS ON A TWO-DAY SEMINAR  
THROUGH A BEGINNER'S EYE**  
by Mel Malinowski

We had a two-day seminar with our guest instructor, Ishiyama Sensei, at our Terrace Aikikai dojo headed by Liz McKinlay Sensei who had been trained under him. I was curious how different it would be taking instruction from him. I was sure of one thing though, that he would be more at ease than we were. But looking back I see that I had no reason to feel that way. I found Ishiyama Sensei to be a very gentle, yet firm teacher. He was exactly what I should have expected from someone who has devoted so much of his life to the way and the meaning of Aikido.

I cannot speak for anyone else in our Aikikai about what was gleaned from the seminar. But from the general feeling in the dojo, especially the warmth of the goodbyes at the end of the last class, it was something that everyone felt very good about. So much of it is not something that can even be put into words. It is something that is felt beyond doubt, something that will surface again and again in technique, in attitude and hopefully in understanding more of what Aikido is and can be. Maybe it is even too early to attempt to put down what I personally have received from the seminar, but I want to get some things down while I am still riding the "high" of the seminar.

And what have I learned? What do I have now that I did not have two days ago?

One of the things that stands out the most is our open-mouthed watching of the guest instructor working with our own Sensei. I am a relatively new Aikido student, but in our club, due to its short history, I am a second senior student. However, in the fourteen months that I have been a student, I have not had the chance to see two black belts working together. It was an eye opener to say the least.

I was awed to see the kind of force that Ishiyama Sensei could exhibit with what appeared to be so little effort. Countless times our Sensei would travel ten or fifteen feet across the tatami while he would have seemed to hardly move. You must appreciate that to many of you this is a common sight. To me and the the rest of the students it was the first time for such an exhibition.

Another thing at the top of the list of

what I have absorbed is the relative simplicity of a throw that is done well. We beginners make it all too complicated somehow. I learned that unnecessary movement is fatal, that the direct line of counter-attack is most often the best. A hundred other things entered my memory without conscious awareness. I felt them during the seminar classes. I was suddenly doing them in imitation. Some of them our guest instructor did not even talk about or demonstrate but were now entering into my fledgling "style". My centre was lower when I moved, or at least I felt it was. I moved now with more of a conscious effort to keep my ki in front of me. Does that make sense? I learned more about the importance of extending uke past his or her own circle of strength. To move him or her where I willed was much easier once I adopted that relatively simple change. Yes, I learned a lot. I also learned again how much Aikido means to me.

Then there were the more spiritual aspects of the seminar that were carried over and expanded upon at the party which followed the seminar at McKinlay Sensei's apartment on the last night. Our Aikikai has these sort of get-togethers every couple of months or so and they are always a very warm, very rich experience. Last evening's was no exception. This article is in no way long enough to even begin telling what was discussed and how we all felt about the Aikido "family".

A couple of points, though, should be mentioned. Several of us brought our families along and it was such an open and contagious atmosphere that developed that there was no real feeling of who were Aikido practitioners and who had come "along for the ride." Everyone contributed in terms of what they carry inside regarding the spiritual side of their lives, how they see the world and how ordinary people can make it a better place. I heard at the seminar that Aikido tends to attract people that are "spiritual" in nature.

Near the end of the party, we set up an 8mm projector and we watched a black and white film of O-Sensei. I for one had never seen anything except stills of the Founder. But what can I say about how I felt watching the film. Incredible. It was like watching a phantom moving in and among the attackers. One second here, the next across the room. And the power, the ki! How do you describe that?

Finally, I will stop talking about the effect Ishiyama Sensei had on me and finish with what I saw taking place in my daughter during the seminar.

Tara is a couple months short of twelve and has been taking Aikido since September 1985 and loves it. She does very well and learns fast and correctly. It was with a great deal of fatherly pride that I watched her quietly and respectfully taking instruction from our guest instructor during the seminar. It was also with fatherly concern that I watched her hit the mats harder than she had ever done before. Finally, after a sharp retort from her as to why I kept whispering if she was alright, I stopped asking. Our guest instructor left no doubt as to who was in control, nor any question how fast the mat can come up to meet you, nor what a firm nikyo can do to a wrist. Tara thrived on it, as did all of us.

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**Mr. Malinowski** is a member of Terrace Aikikai, a teacher in Terrace, B.C. and a freelance writer. He has long been interested in martial arts and eastern philosophy.

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Respect the heaven, gods, other people, and yourself. Hurry to complete the gods' task of creating harmony in the universe.

O-Sensei

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**"Focus on Women" Seminar**  
by **Fran Turner, 2-dan**

On April 19 and 20, 1986 there was a Canadian Aikido "first". Sixty aikidoists attended this seminar in Montreal at Aikido Kensankai and the University of Montreal. Yamada Shiyan welcomed practitioners to the first day of the seminar and expressed surprise that there were so many beards on the mat -- at this women's seminar approximately half the participants were men! Women instructors at the seminar were: Yumi Shannon, sandan from Toronto Aikikai, and nidans Helene Bertrand of Centre de Aikido de Quebec, Kathleen Grant of Montreal Aikikai, Mary Lou Waters of Aikido Kensankai, and myself from Toronto Aikikai.

The seminar was created to acknowledge and support women's practice in this male-dominated martial art. It would also expose high ranking Canadian women instructors to a group wider than that in their own dojos. Both of these aims were successfully met.

A Saturday luncheon provided an opportunity for informal discussion of issues related to women's practice. Just as on the mat, half the participants were men. Some issues raised related to women's classes. Feelings ranged from acceptance of learning needs of particular groups such as women, to denial that any special needs existed at all for any group. Are women's classes synonymous with "soft" style classes; are women's classes being taught instead of beginner's classes; what are the strengths and assets that women bring to the mat? These were some of the questions which came up. The tone of the discussions was positive and although some nervousness was apparent, the atmosphere was comfortable.

There were other special features to the seminar. Donna Winslow gave a powerful Iaido demonstration. Yumi Shannon led a relaxing and greatly appreciated shiatsu session. The friendly atmosphere of the seminar was also thanks to Aikido Kensankai's support of the endeavour.

Toi Pringthongfoo of Aikido Kensankai and I were pleased to organize the seminar. We initiated discussion about developing this seminar nine months earlier and initially there was some hesitation -- what if the men had their own seminar? Despite some worries, plans for the seminar met with enthusiasm because it was decided that this would be a seminar for all.

Some participants referred to the seminar as having been "diplomatically handled" and "non-sexist". Perhaps some were disturbed that only one instructor specifically addressed the central issue of how women's practice related to that of men and felt it warranted more attention. There seemed to be a feeling of collegiality during the vigorous classes. Men and women appreciated the exposure to the different styles of the five different instructors.

Aikidoists from as far as British Columbia attended the seminar and there were representatives from the U.S. as well, one being Mary Heiny, yondan formerly of Seattle, Washington.

This seminar was so enthusiastically accepted that the next one is already scheduled for May 2 & 3, 1987 in Toronto. Lorraine Di Anne Sensei from Aikido of Berkeley will attend as the guest instructor. Please come, you are all invited.

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**Ms. Turner** is a shiatsu practitioner and a registered nurse who works at Toronto General Hospital. She began Aikido in 1974 in Copenhagen and now trains at Toronto Aikikai.

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### JAPANESE AIKIDO AND WESTERN STUDENTS

by Tom Koch, 2-dan

The foreign nature of modern Aikido is both an attraction and an obstacle to North American students. Students who have read of ki, "energy training", zen, and martial rigor are drawn to Aikido as are those seeking discipline and the courtesy which is central to the art.

But, to some, the apparently arbitrary rules and bizarre forms of bowing and ritual are a barrier to study. Ernie Ball, an Aikido instructor in Alberta, for example, told me last year that many would not study Aikido because they saw the bows (rei) as a form of worship and, as good Christians, could not bow to graven images. Similarly, a U.S. martial arts supplier explained to me that she would not bow to anyone when "all I have to do is shake their hand."

These are problems of ignorance and are usually easily solved. A short one-page description of the practical aspects of each bow helped the Alberta instructor to explain the difference between false prayer and real courtesy to prospective students. Since each bow has a practical, courteous aspect, the students could then participate without violating religious precepts.

When the American was told that bowing when entering a dojo signalled a desire to learn rather than a desire to challenge the instructor, she said that if that was the point "it's fine by me. I'm not looking for a fight." Many areas of misunderstanding seem to stem from this type of ignorance and can be handled easily.

More difficult are those problems which

arise when a Japanese form is transplanted wholesale to North American schools. In a Japanese dojo, the relationship between senior and junior students, for example, involve obligations for both. In North America, where all players are answerable only to a coach, the relationship usually requires modification. Too often the junior misunderstands or even resents a senior's attempt to help. He may respond that he "listens only to the teacher" and that the senior is "just another student" out sweating on the mats.

Here again it is a question of education and clarity within each dojo. This, of course, is the responsibility of the instructor who must decide and make clear the degree of responsibility dojo members have, each for the other.

More critical, however, is the often heard refrain that one or another place is a "Japanese dojo" or that one or another procedure is correct because "that's the way it's done in Japan." This usually is said by those who have spent a bit of time in Japan in a single dojo. It is important to remember that not only do Japanese live by different rules but, as importantly, that there is widespread diversity within the Japanese martial world.

The way things are done in Iwama at Saito Sensei's dojo is different from the way Hombu operates in Tokyo. Both have practices differing from those in other regional schools. Methods of instruction differ as do means of showing respect and dedication. In some schools instructors drink with the students, in others they remain aloof. In one place everyone drinks tea together in the dojo after class, in another everyone leaves right after practice. Japan is not a monolith. What binds all good schools that I have seen (Aikido and Karate) is two-fold. The first is an emphasis on proper technique, and the second is a mutual respect between members of the dojo. If the rules are clear and enforce respect and discussion, up and down the line, then that school will likely be advancing and prosperous. If the instructor daily reviles his students and their complaints are shoved aside, respect cannot prosper.

Japanese are not robots, any more than Canadians are. Problems arise, there as well as here, when individuals feel that their integrity, backgrounds and efforts are not respected. Despite the different approaches of the two cultures -- one

group-oriented and the other individually driven -- this seems universal.

Where the questions of practice, courtesy and procedure arise, intelligent discourse can usually resolve them. Recognizing the differences between the two cultures is appropriate but insisting on the inherent superiority of one over another is racist.

The Founder decided to offer Aikido as a bridge between world peoples. That will require, I suspect, mutual respect and blending on the part of all. But for that to happen there must first be a willingness to discuss and understand -- on the part of both Japanese and non-Japanese -- the elements of culture and courtesy which sometimes separate them.

In Canada's two official cultures we have worked out a unique understanding of cultural blending and the Canadian Aikido Federation's constitution exemplifies it. Begun in Quebec City, worked on in Toronto, and ratified in B.C., it is a model of multi-cultural effort. The same techniques must be embraced to meld non-Japanese cultures to the Japanese for an Aikido-style, melded hybrid.

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**Mr. Koch** is a free-lance writer and broadcaster. He is a senior student at Vancouver Aikikai.

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#### LETTER FROM A TRAVELLING STUDENT

by Alan Baiss

Dear Sensei:

I have been in France during most of the time since I was last in Victoria about nine months ago. I spent over three months in the city of Toulouse where, while living with a very fine French family, I was able to work on my still limited knowledge of the French language at the University. This wonderful experience gave me a fascinating education well beyond my studying only the language. For this I feel honoured.

I would like you to know that I remain very grateful for your teachings. As I say this honestly, I am also fully aware that I have not even come close to grasping the deep meanings of the things you have said nor the deep meaning of practicing Aikido. I believe Aikido does con-

tinue to be a very important part of my life even with the little formal practice I have had since I was last in Victoria. I do hope someday to become aware of the practice of Aikido in all aspects of my life. My understanding continues to be limited and unclear but I do feel my need to practice Aikido on the mats is reflected by many aspects of my life. For example, often in conversation while trying to relate an idea, I find myself pushing my idea instead of clearly extending it from the one solid point in my centre (the hara) toward the other person. I thus begin to fumble, often ending up feeling quite off balance. As I push I use more energy, and the idea then received is weaker and is less clearly expressed than was my intent.

I believe that the principles of Aikido are vital, if I am ever to approach the feeling of myself as part of the whole and to realize, at least in part, my connectedness. I have often wondered why I must feel such an outsider when I feel so much life around me -- for example, on a field of grass and flowers where the birds flutter in and out and the insects are evident everywhere. I do believe that Aikido is a path which can help me to come closer to the way I see a deer in the field, so gently and so beautifully and very definitely part of its environment. The practice which I feel is required, I do not think, could ever reach a completion.

I believe that Aikido is important in all aspects of my life and that my introduction to Aikido is helping me to become aware of many of my weaknesses. It seems to me that the number of areas of myself that need work continues to increase as the old ones don't seem to go away. I am, though, thankful to be able to continue to become aware of some of these things.

I feel, for me right now, that to pass one of the biggest obstacles is to gain control of myself. I think that is learning to emanate honesty and strength from one point, so it is me who is gently but definitely in control rather than being controlled by my passions, emotions and all else that lead me off balance. I am thankful to you, Sensei, for showing me a direction which I trust and sincerely hope to be able to follow.

My understanding is limited, but as a result of what I think I have understood I have gained great respect for your teachings. Your teachings, which I feel are

very special, still maintain too small a portion of my life but are very significant to me.

Even though my practice of Aikido has not been as continuous or as frequent as would be ideal, I hope I am somewhat successful in relating to you its importance to me. I know that to feel the essence of Aikido and possibly to have a glimpse of truth can only be achieved through practice. I also believe that it is only through diligent and regular practice that I can become increasingly aware of the actual reasons for and the importance of the practice itself. This has been one of the biggest sacrifices that I have made when I chose to be away from Victoria these past two years.

I hope this letter finds you and all my friends in Victoria enjoying good health.

I humbly remain your student.

Sincerely yours  
Alan Baiss

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Mr. Baiss began studying Aikido at the dojo in Victoria in 1983 and currently travels and sails in Europe and around the North and South American coasts.

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#### KEEPING A SMALL DOJO ALIVE by Matti Antilla

I was always most interested in practicing Aikido, not in forming a club. Ever since my introduction through a magazine article by George Leonard to this most fascinating art, I've been intrigued by its difference from anything else in our society.

Even though I had experimented with many self-improvement techniques and disciplines, I had not run across anything that "clicked" for me quite like Aikido. Alcohol, drugs, transcendental meditation, Yoga, hypnosis, dance, massage, rebirthing, I Ching, Judo, Tae Kwan Do, Kung Fu, Tai Chi, running, weight training are some of the avenues I've started down. Hare Krishnas even had a crack at me. Aikido "jelled," it "felt right." Many of the other disciplines dovetail quite nicely with Aikido, but none could take the place of Aikido.

After a one-year introduction in Cal-

gary, my radio career brought me back to Duncan on Vancouver Island and I did nothing for the first year. Victoria was an hour's drive away, so eventually I gravitated to the dojo taught by Ishiyama Sensei.

I remember the feeling: Why did I wait a year before I started again? It was like coming home. The training was hard, sometimes exhausting, but no matter the difficulty, I was hooked.

Something happened: I resolved that life was more worthwhile with a discipline to follow and this discipline suited me. Many times it forced me to face my own fears, such as the time Sensei repeatedly threw me over his hip in "koshinage." I was frightened out of my wits. Over and over again, he exhorted me not to be "donkey hips" and hold back, it was only when I no longer had the strength to hold myself tense, that I started to get an idea of how easy it could be if I flowed and surrendered to the movement.

It was around that time I approached Sensei about the possibility of starting a class in Duncan. I had hoped that he would find the time to come and instruct, instead he threw the challenge back to me: "you instruct."

Looking back on it, I think I went into shock. I must have been only fifth kyu, what business did I have instructing? But the die had been cast; Sensei insisted. He was sending Scott Macphail up for a Friday night class and without him the endeavour would have been impossible. But that still meant I had to take the class one night a week.

There was nothing to it but to do it. I wrote out the warm-ups and techniques we would do, and I prepared my profuse apologies to the new practitioners that one night of the week they had to settle for me as instructor. Not knowing how to go about the whole thing I rented the gymnasium at the community centre and advertised with posters. Sensei and a group from Victoria came up for a demonstration which I hoped would bring in some new members. The demonstration was well attended but on the first night we had only one thirteen year old sign up.

A couple of other people did drift in and right out again and my girl friend, Sharlene signed up -- now we had two. It was apparent to me that at this rate, with the rental of the gym, I was losing money and couldn't go on very long.

Hoping more would sign up as time went on, we moved the practices to my apartment. Now at this time, I was working for the radio station and living in one of the apartments on the second floor of the same building. The room, where we were now practising, Robert the thirteen year old, Sharlene and I, was directly over the on-air control room. Space was limited, but we were as exuberant as any beginners in the art and the noise and thumping could be heard downstairs in the control room. While there were only three of us and sometimes only two, many a breakfall could be heard over an open microphone by some ten or fifteen thousand people in their homes and cars. I don't know what the noise sounded like to the announcer on the air, but he did wonder out loud how my girl friend and I were getting along. I suspect that he thought we were having the knock-down-drag'em-out kind of arguments up there.

It wasn't long thereafter that we worked out a deal with the community centre and started using one of their smaller rooms. The classes sometimes swelled up to about a dozen and shrank to as small as two once again. Posters were our mainstay for advertising and word of mouth helped as well. Our core group of committed practitioners has stabilized now, but the problem of attracting new members is still very much with us. Sometimes new people drop out after one class, sometimes they stay for as long as a year or more. Always, we face the problem of finding new members.

We haven't found much success with demonstrations. Perhaps part of the problem is that demonstrations can be very dramatic and even scare off some potential new people by their exuberance.

We're now experimenting with a technique the Victoria club has found successful. Poster advertising in depth -- any window is fair game for a poster, with permission of course. The posters advertise a beginner's course of six weeks in length providing a gentle introduction to the art. We feel that this may be one answer. Having a separate beginner's class gives a new member a chance to get oriented without feeling threatened by some of the advanced techniques and without feeling that they are holding back the older members.

The practice of Aikido has provided me with many benefits, and I'm convinced

there are many others who could, with no exaggeration, find their lives transformed by the practice. As well, the dojo is enriched by the introduction of new blood, and the art is kept alive. Finding new members and enlarging and extending the Aikido spirit wider and deeper into the community is just another of the many challenges we as Aikidoists face. Meeting that challenge is vital, I believe, not only to the development of Aikido, but to enhancing our individual development as well.

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**Mr. Antilla** remains the prime driving force behind Duncan Aikikai, and practices as regularly as possible in Victoria.

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**MY EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING  
WESTERN STUDENTS  
by Yasuhisa Inaba, 4-dan**

I would like to write about the differences in attitude between Canadian and Japanese Aikido students based on my six-year experience of teaching Aikido and living in this country. These are my personal feelings, that I suspect other Japanese also have.

The first day of practice for the Calgary Aikikai was on November 15, 1980. Two weeks prior to this, I had given a demonstration at a Canadian army base and thirty people had signed up to join. However, only one student showed up for practice. Since then, I have had difficulty believing the Canadians' words of promise. I do not think that the same type of thing would happen as often in Japan. Fortunately, I was encouraged to continue my class by a captain at the base. His support and advice appeased my prejudice towards Canadians.

Another thing that made me think about the cultural differences happened at an Aikido seminar. Everyone from the seminar went back to the dojo after lunch at a cafeteria, leaving their tables covered with left-overs and garbage. A visiting shihan, Kawahara Sensei, cleaned up the tables and joined the students at the dojo. I wonder how many students saw this scene. In Japan, the students run errands for their teacher. I wondered if the reverse was true in this country. The

shihan, I think, did the clean-up of the tables with a concern about the Aikido students' giving bad impressions to the public. This also showed how much he loved Aikido.

I found a great difference between the Japanese and the Canadians in their attitudes towards appointments. At one seminar, I asked my students to come to the dojo at nine, only to find myself alone. In Japan, normally most students would be waiting on time for their sensei's arrival after dojo cleaning. Many of my students were at the dojo on time, but they were still changing or doing other things, and it was 9:30 when the class finally started. Since then, I have learned to make clear to them exactly when the first class starts.

One day one of my students asked me to give him an opportunity to instruct Aikido. He was only second kyu. It was inconceivable to even think of teaching when I was second kyu. Even people at a shodan or nidan level in Japan do not dream of teaching. Also, when I was teaching a beginners' class, a fifth kyu student approached and offered me his help to teach the class. This was the most surprising experience for me.

I have given some examples from my experience to describe the differences in attitude between Japanese and Canadian students. I do not intend to generalize my observations to all the Canadian or Western practitioners.

I also want to point out something Japanese practitioners need to learn from Westerners. For example, I have been impressed with the fact that once Western students are taught proper etiquette they tend to observe them strictly and faithfully. Some people exemplify proper manners far better than the average Japanese practitioner. Many Japanese visitors at the Banff Aikido Seminar in August of 1986 were very impressed with this fact.

I realize, as this example implies, how important it is to pay close attention to the instruction of correct manners to Western students. One is doomed to unexpected failures if one assumes that the knowledge of correct etiquette in the Japanese martial art training is common sense among Western students.

It is extremely important to teach students the Japanese culture and attitudes towards martial art training. In my view, the instructor needs to have a

long-term perspective in judging if a student is suited to become an instructor. What is essential is not the technical abilities or manners-on-the-mat but the personality of the person. For example, no matter how advanced a student is technically and etiquette-wise, if the person is not liked and respected by others he/she will be a failure as a teacher.

There are a handful of students who throw beginners hard and show off their power. This type of person should not become a teacher. It would be better for everyone concerned that such a person quits practice. I also see some people teaching and directing verbally their partner during practice instead of non-verbally guiding the other in proper movements. This is a waste of time.

I hope my suggestions are useful to some people. It is my hope to train in Aikido pleasantly.

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**Mr. Inaba** is the Chief Instructor of Calgary Aikikai in Calgary, Alberta.

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**ANOTHER STEP ALONG THE PATH**  
by **Bob Moline, 2-dan**

In October 1985 I made a significant and unexpected advancement in my bokken technique -- with an axe and a sore back.

One cold morning I awoke with backpain that soon was limiting my movement considerably. Luckily, the day before I had split some firewood for my woodstove, but by nightfall I was dismayed to see that I was down to three pieces of wood which I had previously set aside because they were difficult to split. After deciding that the short-lived pain of chopping the wood probably would be less of a problem than sitting in a cold room, I took up the axe. Knowing that I must make my best cut to minimize the pain, I mentally refreshed my bokken technique -- my center down, my elbows heavy, my shoulders and especially my back relaxed. I swung, and to my amazement, not only did the wood split cleanly but it was also painless! I tried again, same result! In about eight cuts (ignoring the two or three extremely painful ones when my concentration wavered) I had reduced the three blocks of wood to

firebox size. I was cutting at a level that I had never experienced before!

Shortly thereafter my back healed and I no longer have the pain to guide me, and consequently I cannot tell whether I have been able to repeat that cut or not. What I do know is that having once experienced it, eventually, through consistent practice, I will be able to reach the point where it is my norm.

What should I learn from this? The most obvious teaching is in the parallelism of this situation to my actions as an uke. When the pain of the technique received with improper form encourages a search for a less painful way to receive the technique while fulfilling my obligation to my nage, i.e. to find the proper form. Another teaching is that life's setbacks are fertile ground for improvement if only one searches. Good can be found when one is driven by need, as in my case, or it can be found because one seeks it out rather than surrendering to despair.

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**Mr. Moline** is the current president of, and an assistant instructor at, Victoria Aikikai. He is employed as a telecommunications engineer by the Government of British Columbia.

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**CROSS-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF AIKIDO**  
by **Liz McKinlay, 1-dan**

A group of Vancouver students were recently asked about the attractive and difficult cross-cultural aspects of Aikido. This article describes and elaborates on their views.

Attractive Aspects:

Several students indicated that one of the principal cross-cultural attractions of Aikido is its potential for understanding another culture. It teaches something about how a different culture communicates, not only the language, but social customs and manners as well. I am amazed constantly at the number of differences between Japanese and Canadian cultures. But the more I learn about Japanese culture, the more clearly I can understand and appreciate my own. (Canadian culture had always seemed non-existent before!) Now, through Aikido, I have increased my



understanding of both cultures.

Another attractive aspect of Aikido that was mentioned is the variety of techniques not covered by other martial arts. Every martial art has its advantages and disadvantages. Aikido has many advantages from the point of view of self-defense. As well, there is the advantage of learning about the existence and use of Ki. Walter Lanz (4th kyu in Aikido, 2nd dan in Judo) stated, "Judo instruction in Japan does lead to the study of these aspects of martial arts, but this sort of instruction is not available in the same way in Vancouver in Judo."

Paul Martin, (2nd dan), indicated that some aspects of Aikido are "predominantly intuitive and have no clear logical sequence of learning stages." This can be seen as a difficult aspect, but it can have its attractions. The Canadian educational system fosters reasoning in a logical process. In the Aikido Dojo we must co-ordinate the mind and body to imitate a demonstrated movement in a smooth and effective manner. Once developed, this co-ordinated learning is useful in many other situations.

#### Difficult Aspects:

Several students indicated that one of the most difficult cross-cultural aspects of Aikido is the confusion or lack of knowledge about Japanese social customs. Cindy Verhearl, (5th kyu), describes the feeling that a lot of us have had: "I am never quite sure if I am following proper etiquette and I am worried about offending someone unintentionally." This problem is compounded by the barrier of language and the rules of etiquette themselves.

Firstly, it is not easy to describe culturally-ingrained expectations, and even more difficult to justify that behaviour to members of another culture.

Secondly, the rules of etiquette may prevent teachers from correcting infractions of conduct amongst their students. In B.C. we are hindered by the almost total lack of Aikido students of Japanese origin. Written matter such as Kanai Sensei's article in the last issue of the Aikido Forum are of immense value because it gives non-personalized guidance.

Another difficult aspect of Aikido is the traditional, and what some people describe as, "out-moded" practices. Sitting in seiza for extended periods, suwari and hanmi-handachi techniques, even the

wearing of hakama are parts of Aikido whose practical value are sometimes questioned. I am reminded of when I was a beginner and the practice of tenkan seemed difficult to link to self-defense. Just as the value and practicality of tenkan became apparent with practice, so too should other aspects of Aikido.

#### Aspects transcending cultural differences:

The most important point for me is how Aikido transcends cultural differences. I can practice with someone from Japan or Italy or Mexico and have immediate communication and rapport. There is no need for words. Cultural differences dwindle in the common culture of Aikido. In our mutual pursuit of the physical and spiritual rewards of Aikido, there are more similarities than differences. O-Sensei said it best: "Aikido is ... a way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family." Whatever the different cultures we bring with us to the Dojo, we become one culture, one family in Aikido.

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**Ms. McKinlay** was until recently the instructor at Terrace Aikikai. She has recently taken a position with the Ministry of Labour in the B.C. Government and is now a student at, and President of, Granville Island Aikikai in Vancouver.

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#### **Subscribers Please!**

The editors of the Aikido Forum hope that by now you, our readers, will have discovered that our journal offers considerable value as an adjunct to your personal study of Aikido. This was our intent when we began and it remains unchanged. One of our goals will be reached when serious practitioners want issues of our journal as part of their growing library of Aikido information. If you have any comments or can offer any suggestions on how we might better fulfill this endeavour we would be most grateful to receive them.

One of our more pressing concerns, not unnaturally, is our financial viability. If we cannot eventually meet our costs, we cannot continue to publish. At the moment we are sponsored and subsidized by Victoria Aikikai but that cannot be a long-

term expectation. The purpose of this "notice" is to ask each of you to take a moment to consider our situation and also to consider what the loss of the kind of information we provide, and intend to provide, would mean to you and others if we had to stop publishing.

As a personal contribution to the spread of Aikido throughout the world, we would like each of you to do two things to help the Aikido Forum: 1) take a subscription of your own, rather than use a photocopy or a borrowed copy; and 2) see if you cannot get someone who doesn't subscribe to take out a subscription, or even better, give a gift subscription to someone you care about.

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#### WESTERN CANADA YUDANSHA SEMINAR

by Larry Dettweiler, 2-dan

The Western Canada Yudansha seminar was held on the weekend of April 12-13, 1986 at the Victoria Aikido Centre. Instruction began in the early afternoon on Saturday with a class taught by Ishiyama Sensei and continued with two classes taught by Kawahara Shihan. A similar format was followed on Sunday. About four hours of instruction were offered on each day. The seminar was attended by 12 students from Victoria, Vancouver, Terrace and Kelowna, B.C. The classes offered a unique opportunity for advanced students to practice with other students holding rank of shodan or higher in an atmosphere somewhat different from that of a class which includes students of lower rank. Although we had all practiced together on other occasions, the experience of practicing with a class of black-belt students was a new one for me. I would like to mention some of the thoughts that come to me as I reflect upon the seminar.

One of the interesting aspects of this practice was the amount I learned from my various uke. As Kawahara Shihan mentioned at the seminar, "There is no excuse for doing a technique incorrectly when your uke is at this level." Another fascinating aspect of the experience was the absence of collisions and injuries. I imagine that this is a result of the advanced student's awareness of the movements of the surrounding practitioners as well as the movement of his or her uke and own body.

I have noticed that beginners are most conscious of their own bodies at first and gradually learn to pay attention to the movement of their partner. Only later do they carefully attend to the surrounding practitioners. I wonder if this development is accompanied by a similar change in social awareness and interpersonal relations?

Perhaps the most interesting difference in this practice was the detail with which both instructors explained the logic behind the techniques. Much time was spent dissecting techniques and demonstrating small changes which affect the success of a technique. Both instructors took many opportunities to point out solutions to problems encountered by the students present. This "individualized instruction" benefitted everyone, I'm sure. In many ways it was a seminar for local teachers. Although more advanced techniques were practiced, the fundamental aspects of Aikido were stressed. Concepts were presented which will be helpful to our students, both beginning and advanced.

On Saturday evening, practitioners and spouses enjoyed a delicious, catered Japanese meal. We also heard news from each of the many dojo represented at the gathering. After a filling meal, dojo news reports and much laughter, it was obvious that Aikido is well and growing in B.C.

After two days of intense but enjoyable practice, we finished the seminar with a jo class in the sun on the lawn in front of the centre. I think everyone felt extremely fortunate to have been involved in the classes and left the seminar tired but wiser (or at least humbler). I would like to thank Kawahara Shihan and Ishiyama Sensei, the organizers of the seminar, and the people who travelled some distance to attend for an enlightening and enjoyable weekend. I sincerely hope that this will become a regular event and that yudansha from outside B.C. will take advantage of this unique opportunity.

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Dr. Dettweiler is the instructor at Camosun College Aikikai and also trains at Victoria Aikikai. He is the coordinator of the Psychology Department at the college.

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**AIKIDO TESTING: RANDOM THOUGHTS**

by **George Hewson, 2-dan**

Reasons for Testing:

1. To show respect for Sensei and your fellow students.
2. To provide an opportunity for Sensei to evaluate individual and group progress.
3. To focus your practice on specific techniques, breakfalls, and Japanese terminology.
4. To have an alternative to competition while maintaining martial and harmonious qualities.
5. To develop physical stamina and mental concentration.
6. To experience the psychological satisfaction of success.
7. To prepare for seminars.
8. To prepare for demonstrations.

Comments:

1. Sensei has patiently demonstrated and taught. Other students have devoted their time, energy, and pain for your development. Show respect to them by displaying that you are attempting to learn. Help improve the group through your individual efforts.

2. By observing the tests, Sensei can note areas in need of particular improvement for each student. It also allows him to plan his future teaching so as to solve problems common to the whole dojo.

3. Aikido has a multitude of tai-sabaki (movements), waza (techniques), and ukemi (breakfalls). By concentrating temporarily on a specific number of waza and their appropriate ukemi, you can begin to master a limited repertoire that forms the basis of future training. At the kyu (white belt) level, it is essential to develop basic coordination and reflexes that can lead to the flow, power, and harmony of the dan (black belt) level. Testing also reminds you of the importance of understanding the Japanese terminology as used in practice all over the world.

4. Aikido has no sporting or competitive component; there is only jinbun no shiai (contest with oneself). As the testing level rises, the kogeki (attacks) and ukemi become faster and stronger. In dan examinations, the situation begins to approximate real combat and thus preserves the bu (martial) aspect that is essential to Aikido training without losing the equally important quality of harmony.

5. During a test, you must perform continuously for five to fifteen minutes or even longer. The physical stamina and mental concentration required for an examination can gradually be introduced into your regular training, thereby making it of greater value to yourself and your partners.

6. Aikido keiko (training) is a life-long path of discipline and exploration. Periodically, it is useful to assess profoundly what you have learned. Each test represents an attainable goal that can lead you on to further insight. It can also provide you with the psychological satisfaction of achievement.

7. Training at seminars (practice sessions with students from outside your own dojo, perhaps led by another Sensei) is exciting and an important step in developing a view of Aikido that is both broad and deep. Practicing with people other than your regular partners is tremendously revealing. Testing assists in preparing for this training by ensuring that you are familiar with basics that are necessary for successful keiko. Furthermore, most partners for dan tests are chosen from individuals who do not practice together frequently. This method aids in avoiding any sense of artificial choreography.

8. From time to time, you may participate in a public demonstration of Aikido. Out of respect for the memory of Ueshiba Morihei, O-Sensei, you must display the proper state of mind, body, and spirit. Examination experience is beneficial in developing an appropriate attitude for such demonstrations.

P.S. These thoughts, not yet very well formulated or articulated, reflect my personal views. I welcome questions, comments, or suggestions.

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Aikido is a prayer for peace -- O-Sensei

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