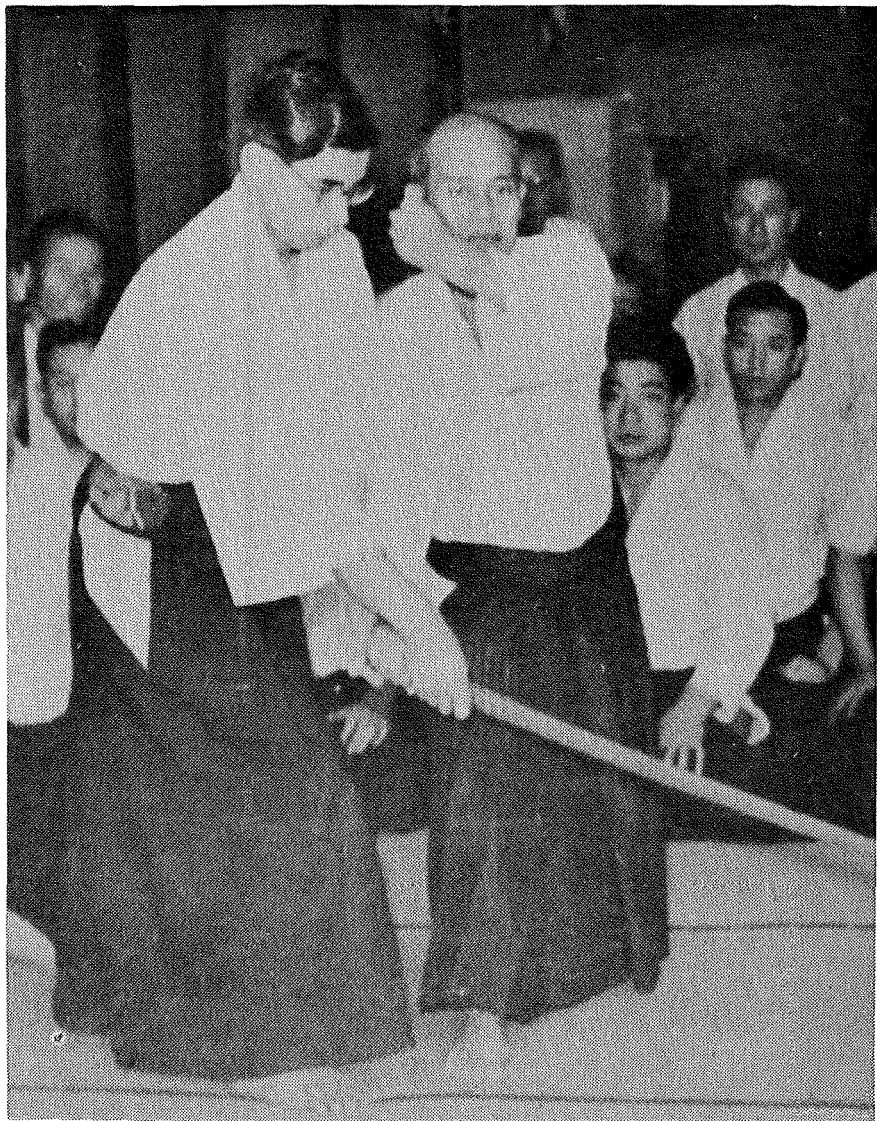


AIKIDO FORUM

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A JOURNAL OF AIKIDO
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Number 5, December, 1987



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Design & Layout	Cindy Verheul (Vancouver)
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WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

ISHU ISHIYAMA

Aikido is a drama of life, a drama without a script. There are episodes of pain, love, anger, joy, fear, excitement, despair, happiness, jealousy, peace, rivalry and enlightenment. Personal issues and unresolved inner conflicts creep onto the stage of the drama, the dojo, and interrupt our meditation on harmony. These opportunities provide for reflection and learning. There are no smooth rides to the mastery of the art and the ultimate nirvana. Spotlights are unexpectedly cast on our own self-doubt, perfectionistic tendencies, power struggles, dependencies upon others' approval and comfort, difficulties trusting ourselves and others, fears of becoming vulnerable and losing control, unharnessed aggression and competitiveness. We have to reconcile with the neglected tender feelings and physical limits of others and ourselves. Our centre becomes off and we may be in pain, be confused or defensive of our fragile egos. But we are not Martial robots free from inner turmoil and shortcomings. Those who courageously face and deal with such human issues are the true winners of Aikido, in possession of the gift of Aikido lessons that no one else can take away from you. Best wishes for everyone in pursuing fruitful Aikido training and attaining meaningful personal reflections and growth in the year of the dragon, 1988.

As you can see, significant changes have been made in the style and design of our journal. We hope that you will find this new format visually more appealing, easier to read, and more portable. We owe much to Cindy Verheul, our new member of the editorial staff, for such improvements. Special thanks are also due to the following individuals for helping us review and edit the submitted articles: Larry Dettweiler, Liz McKinlay, Walter Lanz, Suzanne Brett and Susan Middlemiss.

INTERVIEW WITH DOSHU KISSHOMARU UESHIBA: AIKIDO IN MODERN DAYS (PART II)

ISHU ISHIYAMA

AIKIDO IN DAILY LIFE

Interviewer: What you have said means that we need to recognize the meaning of Aikido in the stream of life and humanity, instead of getting preoccupied with short-term gains and superficial goals.

Doshu: Yes, that is correct. Too many people seek immediate results (of Aikido training and dojo administration) nowadays such as, "If you do this, such and such will happen." Just like the stock market boom in Japan. Did I win or lose? I



Doshu K. Ueshiba

used to work for a stockbrokerage firm, and I know what goes on in that world. Those who have lots of money are treated with utmost respect there, while no one would talk to a loser. That's capitalism. I don't think this is the right way of human existence. This society is run with capitalistic thinking, and such a superficial way of judging people goes unchallenged by many people in this type of business. The point of origin is in the human being (and not in materialistic and monetary possessions). We must think about how we should live our lives. Otherwise, the human world and the animal world would be the same.

Interviewer: What would you consider to be the most important thing in personal training?

Doshu: I think the goal of training in "the way" is to fulfill the "heart of being". I would like to spend every day with a feeling of refreshment. I would like to say without

hesitation, "I made a step forward today." This is my goal. This leads to the heart of being. Living everyday without regret is the most important thing. There are many types of people. Some say "I should have done this and that." It can't be helped if the person was incapable of doing such things. However, if the person was capable but failed nevertheless, I would say that their depth of training was missing.

Interviewer: You are a veteran, having been in budo (martial art) training for decades. Would you mind sharing any episodes of hardship?

Doshu: I have no such episodes. I would not especially term my experiences as training. I practise Aikido with this connection in mind. It is nothing more. Some people might think that training means getting up early in the morning and cleansing the body with cold water, etc. But, that is not training. If this is part of what you have to do, you just have to do it. If there is a 6:30 a.m. class to teach and you taught it for a long time, people may say that you are doing a great job. But this is not a special training. I have been doing this because I consider it to be necessary work, and it is not special training. This is simply part of my life. This is my way of living.

Interviewer: So, there is no separation between training and daily life.

Doshu: That's right. It is no good at all to separate the two. Your training and your life should be the same. You must know how to put the two together. You should not treat yourself as someone special as if you were higher beings than others. You must regard the training as an essential part of your life, a necessity for personal existence. You also need to connect it to your work.

Interviewer: In addition to your martial art training in your daily life, I understand that you have an important job of organizing a large number of people. You are the leader of tens of thousands of people in the Aikikai organization. I wonder if the way you have dealt with various organizational matters is also an expression of your Aikido.

Doshu: Possibly. Since I have to deal with so many people, I need to discipline myself. I pay close attention to the choice of words I utter or write. But I have been able to

fulfill my role and responsibilities because I don't let them become a burden in my life.

AIKIDO FOUNDER

Interviewer: How do you, as the son of O-Sensei, regard the Founder?

Doshu: He probably was a martial art genius. Because of his giftedness, he related well to other masters in the traditional arts such as painting, pottery, singing, and dancing. I know my father was visited by well-known Japanese dancing masters, calligraphy masters, and painters. As I listened to their conversations, I found similarities between their arts and Aikido.

Interviewer: Do you have any artistic hobbies?

Doshu: No. I'm not good at arts, and I don't do anything artistic. However, I practise Aikido. Someone once said that religion is an art. By the same token, I believe that budo IS an art.

Interviewer: When you built this new dojo in Wakamatsu-cho, I understand that O-Sensei said to you, "You did a very fine job." Is it true that this was one of the rare compliments you received from him?

Doshu: It was quite rare for him to pay compliments. He was not very good at accomplishing things like building dojos; that's why he said to me, "Well done." This meant that he couldn't have done it himself. It must have been very difficult for him to live in harmony with modernized society. He was a very traditional person, and you could not expect him to think as an organizational person would. When my father passed away, one person said, "The last martial artist is now gone." Also, many novelists approximately during 1945-1955 wanted to meet him as the last true martial artist. When they met him, they didn't feel they were in the present time. They felt the timeless presence of the spirit of a traditional martial artist. People who were like the Founder lived respectable lives in various eras like the Sengoku, Tokugawa, and Meiji eras (16th to mid-19th centuries).

PURSUIT OF AIKIDO AS A STUDENT AND AS A GUIDE

Doshu: It may be under the influence of the current occult

boom that some people in Aikido nowadays talk about throwing someone with a vocalization only. It is impossible for them to do such a thing. These are the people who try to learn budo without any concerted effort or hardship. They don't want to go through training. The Founder was able to demonstrate miraculous techniques because he followed each step in training toward mastery over many years. It is useless for them to imitate only what can be seen in appearance without mastering the inside. It's simply superficial. I think this is an undesirable trend of recent times.

Interviewer: They say that someone can throw people around without even touching ...

Doshu: That's ridiculous. You have to touch the person if you want to throw them. However, you can immobilize another person's mind. This ability is a result of many years of a hard training.

Interviewer: In Chinese martial arts, there is a technique called "to-ate" (pronounced toh-ah-te, meaning distant striking without touching).

Doshu: Some even call it the technique of "Aiki-toate." It is impossible without profound training. It's better for ordinary practitioners not to long for such an esoteric technique.

Interviewer: Do you have any wishes and hopes for practitioners and instructors in Canada, U.S.A., and the West in general?

Doshu: How is the Canadian Aikikai? Do you have a federation?

Interviewer: Yes, we have the Canadian Aikido Federation. Above it is the Technical Committee for the North American Aikido Federation consisting of the Shihans Yamada, Kanai, Chiba, Tohei, and Kawahara, who are responsible for instruction.

Doshu: I know little of the details of the situation over there.

Interviewer: The number of practitioners has increased. I have an impression that more people are pursuing something philosophical and spiritual than before. People may get initially attracted to strong and impressive throws, but some grow to feel less than satisfied with the physical aspects alone and start seeking the spiritual side of Aikido

by reading books and articles on Aikido such as the ones by you.

Doshu: It sounds like a good tendency. However, I have been getting an impression, which may apply to some Japanese, that there are many Westerners who only think about organizing and administrating. They should relate to others through Aikido practise. Practice (and not politics or organization) is the first priority in one's training. I suggest to Canadians that they should grasp what Aikido is through daily practice. If they like Aikido, they must practise it earnestly. That is what I feel.

Interviewer: I understand that what you mean by this is that action speaks louder than words and that Aikidoists need to relate to each other through earnest practice and sincere attitudes that can inspire others and beginners positively.

Doshu: That's true. I never thought of guiding others when I first started teaching. Because more and more people came to our dojo, I had to take a teaching role. The same with my father. He used to say, "I'm not a sensei or a master. I have no intention of leading others." He meant that he was only a forerunner, a more experienced one and that others were welcome to follow him. Nowadays, instructors cannot afford to remain in a learner's role. They must create a path or a road for the less experienced ones to follow. This is a fact. What is most important, however, is to be pure and train without being distracted by noises (such as politics, intellectualizing, and attachments to power and status). Instructors should be careful and thoughtful in providing guidance to less experienced practitioners. What is most desirable is that their action and attitudes serve as milestones to their students.

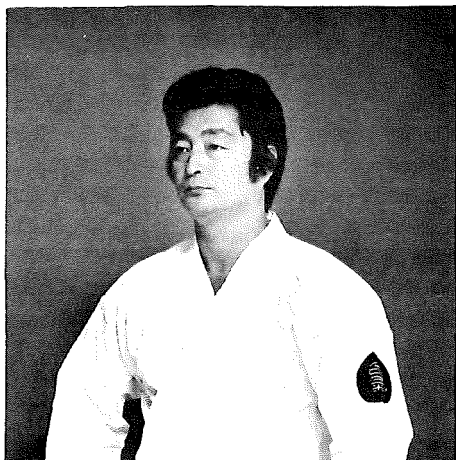
----- *Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, 5th degree blackbelt, is an assistant professor in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. He instructs Aikido in Vancouver and Victoria.*

----- *Interviewer's Note: What is written in the parentheses is my addition, hoping to clarify Doshu's statements in the given context. I wish to thank Miss Jitsuko Murakami for helping me to transcribe the interview tape in Japanese. (Translation by Ishu Ishiyama).*

UNITY AND HARMONY IN AIKIDO TRAINING

YOSHIMITSU YAMADA

This past June I received a great honour of being asked to write an article for the Aikido Forum. The fulfillment of this honour was unfortunately delayed until now due to my rigorous summer teaching schedule. My summer travels started in early July, 1987 when I attended Aikido camp in Banff with Shihan Kawahara and many Canadian Aikidoka.



Banff, in the province of Alberta, is located in the midst of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Practice in such an awesome surrounding was truly and deeply inspirational. After that I attended - among others- Aikido training in Europe, our own East Coast, and Venezuela in South America.

It was during this hectic, event-filled summer that I participated in Aikido camps all over the globe and had opportunities that allowed me to observe the different practices in different countries. I found it beneficial and quite enlightening for me professionally to have had such opportunities.

Whenever I travel as much as this, I am impressed anew at the huge Aikidoka population. Although we are introduced to Aikido in different ways, by different instructors and from different sources, we are practising a form of martial art coming from one source, developed by one specific person: O-Sensei. I am overwhelmed with this feeling that there is an underlying sameness, a

harmony when I teach all these diversified groups. It is this fact that makes all these summer courses very special and meaningful to me, and I truly hope that it has similar meaning to the students who participate.

At these gatherings there are students coming from the "Big" Dojos, under tutelage of the "Big" Senseis. There are also smaller groups of practitioners who travel from more isolated areas, whose effort I have great appreciation of and respect for. One purpose we all share in attending large seminars like summer camps is an exchange of knowledge and the chance to explore how other people practise. In this, your focus should not be on comparing your skills with others'; rather it should be on personal growth and technical improvement. If you are lucky enough to be more highly skilled than others, be generous with your knowledge and offer your assistance to those around you.

I say this because I witnessed, during the summer of 1987, a tendency for those who came from smaller or isolated schools to go off to one edge of the mat and practise shyly among themselves. And, surprisingly, I saw their instructors practising among them, gathering their students around them like chicks to a mother hen, instead of encouraging them to venture further and to experience working with other people. Having seen this I would like to convey the following two messages to all Aikidoka:

To the students: You should always seek to improve your techniques, but do not let your search interfere with your relationship to your first teacher. Whoever he or she was, and regardless of their level of advancement, always respect your original instructor for it was they who opened your eyes to Aikido in the beginning.

To Instructors: You must all delight with your students' progress, delight even in the idea that, finally, your students may become even better than you are. This is what all teachers must ultimately hope for, myself included. This is the attitude for you to have. For this reason you should encourage your students to learn from others who may have different skills from yours. Nobody is perfect, but everybody has various specialties and skills. I know that there are Shihans who have something

special that I do not have, and I hope that there are things I can do that might be particular to my own abilities. Remember it is unnecessary and even harmful to criticize other teachers before your students and that, if the teacher does not have a generous open mind it would create disharmony among the club members. We are all teachers, no matter what our rank, but before O-Sensei we all are just a bunch of beginners.

----- Yamada Shihan,
8th degree blackbelt, is the chief instructor of New York Aikikai and the head of the Technical Committee of the North American Aikido Federation. He is the author of The New Aikido Complete: The Arts of Power and Movement. (Published by Lyle Stuart, New York, 1981).

There is no form and no style in Aikido.
The movement of Aikido is the movement
of Nature - whose secret is profound and
infinite. (Aikido Founder, Morihei Ueshiba)



ANNOUNCEMENT: The winner of Mr. Giblan's drawing (see back cover Aikido Forum # 4) is the Aikido Ohana Dojo, Hawaii.

AIKIDO AND SELF-REALIZATION

KAZUO CHIBA

In our attempts to investigate and understand the essence of a thing or an event, there are times when a solution to the problem is hard to find. In such cases, it helps to change our perspective drastically and to look at the problem we are facing from a completely different direction. In describing an essence of



something, certain kinds of metaphors are very effective although they may appear to be distant from the solution and rather abstract. (The Bible contains such effective metaphors, for example.) The reason for the effectiveness of the use of metaphors in problem solving is that it provides opportunities to have a global view of the problem and grasp relationships among things. When stuck in a narrow scope of problem solving, one's efforts may appear to be like an attempt to cut off only the tip of an iceberg. Such efforts often end up being wasted.

What was considered to be the ultimate secret to the mastery of an art in the history of the traditional martial art training was often imparted through oral instructions, which took on the forms of verses and poems in many cases. This implies the use of artistic, religious, and affective senses in appreciating and communicating the ultimate secret of budo, rather than the intellectual and rational means.

I said, in response to a certain student's question during the questions-answers period after an Aikido class, that it was more important to recognize and understand thoroughly the true situation that this student was now

placed in, instead of seeking an answer to the question. Based on my personal experience, the more serious a life issue or a personal problem is, the more important it is to wait with patience until the self-reflection on the problem reaches a boiling point, rather than seeking a short cut answer. When the problem reaches maturity under such a circumstance, the answer will be espoused within oneself, as if a ripened fruit falls to the ground one day. The problem is now transformed into the solution.

This process of problem solving is called "shin-shin datsuraku" (disappearance of the mind and the body) in zen. However, no matter how much like honey the fruit may become, it is impossible to find honey in an unripened fruit by breaking it. As a Japanese proverb goes, no matter how beautiful cherry blossoms are, you cannot find them in the middle of the trunk of a cherry tree.

Using the above argument, I would like to supplement my response to the same question with metaphors.

Let's look at the world of animals. There are many creatures in nature. For example, lions and tigers have strong muscles and sharp claws and fangs, while weaker animals such as birds are given wings to fly with, and hares are given self-protective fur that changes in colour every season. This is the greatness of nature's law. Every being is given a life force and unique abilities accordingly, which are beyond comparison in terms of which are better or worse. In its own uniqueness, every being has its own self-worth, dignity, and meaning of existence. These are only a few examples of nature's law. Nature entirely consists of harmony and unity among its members while preserving diversity among them.

Let us now look at human society. Similar to the world of nature, each person has a perfectly unique existence and there are no two identical persons across time and space. Regardless of how one's personality, ability, and life force are, one's existence is beyond relative comparison. Its meaning and value of existence must be found in itself. cultures. In my thinking, the reason for each individual's existence is to be found in this fact.

No matter how hard a hare tries to become a tiger, the effort would be a waste of energy, and vice versa. One

must awaken to the uniqueness of one's own life, and transcend it to the highest quality. I find the value and meaning of our lives in this task.

Aikido, as I believe, is one of the many precious heritages that the human race has developed to help actualize this task. It helps us reach the highest level of manifestation. It also helps us recognize the unity and harmony among diverse human beings as well as the dignity of each individual's existence. This is accomplished through hard work leading to the realization of one's true self.

We take turns as the nage and the uke in dojo practice. This is the nature of the interpersonal relationship on the mats. It is like a knife and a whetstone. In my view, the true reason for Aikido having no matches must be found in this fact, although some may give superficial reasons such as technical impossibility and potential danger of Aikido matches.

I must caution you that we have a habit of getting attached to notions such as "uniqueness" and "dignity of human existence" as absolute things. Master Dogen, the founder of Japanese Soto-Zen, left valuable words to us to help us break such a habit of rigid attachment to only one side of the facts.

To study the Way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.

To be enlightened by all things is to remove the barriers between one's self and others.

----- Chiba Shihan,
7th degree blackbelt, is the chief instructor of San Diego Aikikai in California, U.S.A. Chiba Shihan is a member of the Technical Committee of the North American Aikido Federation.

COOPERATIVE TRAINING -- KUZUSHI

BOB MOLINE

Introduction

In Aikido Forum Issue #4, I offered my understanding of the importance of equal attention to harmony and martial rigor for the proper study of Aikido. I further proposed in that article that harmony and martial rigor are not entities which can be studied individually, but that they are made up of a number of separate training elements which can be studied individually. Thus harmony and martial rigor gradually develop as each of the training elements develop. The training elements that I dealt with in that article were maai and kogeiki; this time I would like to offer my understanding of kuzushi, or unbalancing.

Kuzushi is a training element to which we all should pay special attention. Regardless of the errors we make in maai, in kogeiki, or in the other training elements, kuzushi is essential, for it momentarily makes uke vulnerable. Only by including kuzushi in our practice will we be able to develop a "feel" for the attacker from which we learn to read the situation -- to know if kuzushi is present or if it is absent. If the "feel" is there we know that it is safe to move to the next part of the technique, if the "feel" is not there we know that we must move quickly to protect ourselves, either by making maai, or by applying appropriate energy in the right place to unbalance the attacker properly. Unfortunately, in a co-operative art kuzushi is too easy to ignore.

Perhaps it is easiest to begin with a definition of three levels of stability -- solid stability, fragile stability, and instability (which, incidentally, is also the sequence which uke moves through). "Solid stability" is the total, center-down, two-feet-on-the-tatami, long-term kind of balance which nage should always have, and with which uke should attack. "Fragile stability" is the short-term kind that occurs when uke is only temporarily balanced, e.g. on one foot. "Instability" is motion, the act of falling or moving by gravity or other external force. With solid

stability, uke's mind is in an external mode and is able to combine with a balanced body in an effective attack. With either fragile stability or instability, uke's mind has moved to an internal mode, focussing upon the need to regain balance, and is unable to combine with uke's body in an effective attack. Even if it could do so, uke's body is not balanced enough to do a great deal of damage, although the chance of a panic grasp of something like nage's hair should be a concern in a practical situation.

In basic techniques nage moves uke from solid stability to fragile stability by stepping or sliding to an advantageous position and applying the minimum force necessary to remove the effectiveness of the attack . Uke attacks with solid stability. Nage neutralizes the attack by harmonizing with its energy, thus robbing it of its strength. Nage then moves uke to a state of fragile stability, and next completes the technique by moving uke to a state of instability, and uke falls.

From the moment of attack, when uke and nage become one, there is only one centre of balance allowed -- nage's. Nage has solid stability and should only allow uke to have either fragile stability or instability. The state of fragile stability is vital to the completion of an Aikido technique, because at that moment nage can most easily move uke. Uke's balance is dependant upon nage, and uke's attention has been diverted from the attack on nage to focus instead upon the fact that solid stability has been lost and must be recovered. Immediately thereafter, if unimpeded, uke will move to recover balance and, if successful, can then return to the attack. Nage has lost one opportunity for a harmonious technique and must seek another.

It is important, I believe, to look closely at how we deal with the element of kuzushi during our training, both as nage and as uke.

Nage:

As described above, in basic techniques, there are two components for nage to apply kuzushi -- a movement of the body, and the application of force. Ignoring the obvious errors of moving in the wrong direction and applying the force in the wrong place, there are four possible wrong combinations of movement and energy: too

large and too weak, too small and too weak, too large and too strong, and too small and too strong. There is one correct combination: the correct distance and the correct force. Errors are not necessarily noticed immediately because, by the "contract" in Aikido training, uke cooperates. So it may be a while before the flaw in the technique becomes apparent.

Errors either will not bring uke to the correct point of fragile stability and therefore the proper opportunity to complete the technique will not appear, or will bring uke too quickly past the point of fragile stability and therefore the proper opportunity to complete the technique will appear too briefly.

For example, in kata-tori nikyo ura, where nage steps back and to the side at about a 45 degree angle, a proper movement will pull uke forward and sideways from solid stability so that uke's only connection with the tatami is the ball of the front foot and the support given by uke's attachment to nage's shoulder. At that precise moment, regardless of size and strength, uke will have only fragile stability and can be easily moved. The shoulder support changes to guidance into tenkan as nage goes further into the technique and uke is revolved around the point where the ball of the front foot is established on the tatami.

A too-small movement will not pull uke forward enough to "unweight" the back foot. If the accompanying force is too weak, it is the same as doing nothing, if it is too strong, it will be a case of muscle against muscle. Since uke's weight will not be on one point but on two uke will still have solid stability, both uke's mind and body will be able to continue to focus upon the attack. Too large a movement will pull uke forward past the point of fragile stability, shortening and maybe even eliminating the desired point of fragile stability. If the force is too weak uke may realize that a step forward will not only maintain balance but it will also establish a reasonable maai so that a strike with the free hand while stepping forward is possible. Alternatively, too strong a force will cause uke to fall down forward, giving uke back a certain amount of stability and breaking the form of the technique.

Uke: 

Too often we do not "offer" fragile stability. We do not want to leave the state of solid stability (after all it is a preferred state) and while we cooperate with the rest of our body, we resist being led from solid stability to fragile stability. To do so we sometimes cheat and use the advance knowledge of the technique. This also relates to proper kogeiki, or attack.

Using the same kata-tori nikyo ura example, it is not uncommon to see uke attempt to retain balance by sliding the front foot along the 45 degree line that nage establishes. If uke is able to slide the front foot toward nage, then solid stability may be maintained and a continuation of the attack (strength in kata-tori), or a new attack (tsuki with the free hand), or both may be possible. If uke slides the foot forward to retain balance and then cooperates with nage for the remainder of the technique, uke deprives nage of the most important signal for the continuation of a realistic technique -- the feel of kuzushi. Nage should be learning the appropriate energy and movement needed to trap uke's front foot in the initial position without forcing uke to fall, hop forward or step forward. If uke does not start out by offering a fixed front foot, then the learning process will be distorted. If nage learns to unbalance uke after uke slides forward, then that same movement, when used with someone who does not slide the front foot forward, is one which will tend to pull uke down to the tatami, or break uke's grip, neither of which serve to facilitate a proper technique.

Conclusion:

As I stated at the beginning, kuzushi is essential and we must train with it in mind. By practising properly, it should not be too difficult to learn the appropriate distance and energy needed for kuzushi because it is dependant upon two known quantities: a visible distance -- uke's body shape from front foot to the grasping hand (in the kata-tori nikyo example used previously), and an internalized distance -- the stride that nage can take without losing balance. This is a physical ratio that can be internalized through repetitive practice to eventually allow us to do the technique automatically. One can see, then, that if uke introduces an unrealistic movement of the front foot, uke adds a variable that cannot be known by

nage and no "standard ratio" can be internalized.

I believe that a basic tenet of Aikido is conservation of energy -- nage should use the least possible energy to have the greatest possible effect. It follows then that nage should, at the first available instance of fragile stability, apply a technique in order to neutralize uke as quickly as possible. To do otherwise only takes more energy and gives the attacker a longer life.

----- *Mr. Moline, second degree blackbelt, is an instructor at Victoria Aikikai, and works as a telecommunications engineer at B.C. Systems Corporation.*

We ceaselessly pray that fights should not occur. For this reason we strictly prohibit matches in Aikido. Aikido's spirit is that of loving attack and that of peaceful reconciliation. In this aim we bind and unite opponents with the will power of love. By love we are able to purify others.

True *budo* is the loving protection of all beings with a spirit of reconciliation. Reconciliation means to allow the completion of everyone's mission.

The founder of Aikido -
Morihei Ueshiba

AIKIDO AS INSPIRATION: LESSONS FROM SUMMER CAMP '87

MATTI ANTILLA

"To inspire: breathe in, inhale, whence: inspiratory: infuse thought or feeling into (person)" -- Concise Oxford Dictionary

It has been said that life is simple and we humans tend to overcomplicate it. I sense that to be true. We seem to spend a lot of time, certainly in our western culture, in our heads, thinking: - Using words as our shields against the world: Using intricate mental constructs of how we think the world ought to be to shield us from reality. We react to events in our environment with logic, by thinking about them first before acting. We run them through our filter of accumulated hypotheses and hoping that our necessarily incomplete knowledge of the world will suffice to help us make the right decisions in our lives.

Certainly much that is useful in our lives has come from thought and applied logic and yet, many of our most enduring inventions are quite simple, elegantly so. We need only to look at the wheel for an example. Many of our most useful tools came from inventors who struggled with an idea for a long time, coming up with nothing, until one day, in the early hours of the morning, waking up with a start -- Eureka! -- in a flash of brilliant insight the paper clip is born.

This flash of brilliant insight that we sometimes call inspiration brings us to our topic.

Inspiration, the muse visits the poet and the words come pouring forth in a torrent. We think of inspiration as coming from outside ourselves but what if inspiration really comes from a place deep within ourselves, from our subconscious perhaps, from that place within ourselves that is connected to all life in the universe. From what some may think of as our connection with God, or our pipeline to universal energy, the energy that makes up everything in the universe. It is useful for me to think in

simple terms. So when I hear in Aikido of the integration of mind, body and spirit I have to boil it down to something that I understand. My mind I appear to think with, my body I can touch, but what is my spirit? What if my spirit is my breath?

This flash of brilliant insight came to me one day as I noticed that in my native Finnish language, the word for spirit or soul (henki) was the same word that is used as the root for breathing (hengittaa).

Since this inspiration, I've been paying more attention to my inspiration and expiration, and there seems to be much to it. In a practice called "rebirthing" or connected breathing, we connect our inspiration with our expiration both at the top of the inspiration and the bottom of the exhalation, making a continuous cycle of the breath. This is done for one cycle which can last for a half an hour or an hour and a half until it feels complete. Some profound changes at times occur during this process, to both mind and body. The body can revert to the contortions of being born, hence the term rebirthing. The mind often times puts together solutions to problems we've been trying to deal with, sometimes with great frustration and for long periods of time. The answer, invariably, is elegantly simple and many times involves letting go of old perceptions and viewing a situation from a different angle. The answer, in fact, is an inspiration brought on by inspiration and expiration, or breathing. The answer was there all the time, but we steadfastly refused to see it until we allowed breath (inspiration) to fill us. This filling up with breath can feel like being loved and perhaps that is what it is -- filling up the neglected nooks and crannies of our being with universal energy or love. Love that is always available to us; in a sense, loving ourselves.

This breathing pattern, by the way, seems to occur in different ways to many athletes. Runners, for example can fall into this natural breathing pattern and have the same experience, hence the runner's high. In Aikido we sometimes get to the phase where we're working our bodies so hard, that we're trying to get air in and out of the lungs as quickly as possible. At these times we naturally connect the intake of breath with the exhalation, and we're breathing in a connected way. At times, Aikido can seem

to transcend mere physical exercise and become a spiritualexperience.

The breathing, the inspiration fills us with spirit or universal energy. Is it ki?

Here we come to the lessons of Summer Camp. We were honoured with Chiba Sensei's presence. His practice and his talks were invaluable. He taught us much to do with breathing; in particular, breathing warm-ups to fill us with ki. One suggestion of his struck a deep chord: "Ki is particularly responsive to imagination." When breathing out, imagine all the toxins leaving your body; when breathing in, imagine ki from the universe filling your being. Practitioners in our Duncan club had already mentioned to me how they were helped by imagination. When a sensei is demonstrating a technique, instead of trying to break down the technique into logical parts and then trying to remember it in your mind, they suggested that I try softening my focus while watching, and attempt to see the whole picture of the movement and imagine myself doing the technique.

These concepts of imagination having power and of thoughts having a profound effect on improving our Aikido practice was also voiced earlier in the week at Summer Camp by Kawahara Sensei when he spoke of O-Sensei's meditation. According to Kawahara Sensei, O-Sensei used to say to himself during meditation: "My Aikido techniques are getting better and better." He found that it helped, that his Aikido did improve as a result.

In modern thought, this would be called an affirmation. There are a number of books written on the subject of how to improve any and all aspects of our lives through positively affirming that the situation we wish for already exists. This apparent tricking of our subconscious into believing that the situation exists, causes our subconscious to move heaven and earth to make it true. For example, we may have a physical ailment such as cancer. There are now many former cancer victims who, through visualizing cancer cells being destroyed and flushed from the body, and through the use of positive affirmations, have cured themselves of supposedly terminal cases of cancer.

These two powerful lessons from Chiba Sensei and Kawahara Sensei combined to make this year's Summer

Camp the most useful and inspiring yet for me.

So far, I think that every Summer Camp has been exponentially better than the last. If this pattern continues, Summer Camp '88 will be unparalleled and should be on every Aikido practitioner's itinerary.

----- *Mr. Antilla is a financial advisor working in Duncan and Victoria, B.C. He instructs Aikido in Duncan, B.C. and trains at Victoria Aikikai.*

I want considerate people to listen to the voice of Aikido. It is not for correcting others; it is for correcting your own mind. This is Aikido. This is the mission of Aikido and this should be your mission.

The secret of Aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the universe and bring ourselves into accord with the universe itself. He who has gained the secret of Aikido has the universe in himself and can say, " I am the Universe."

The founder of Aikido -
Morihei Ueshiba

OPENING A BOOK

VAN LE BLANC

Starting a new book always gives me a good feeling. A sense of new beginnings and discovery accompanies opening of the front cover. It's this same kind of feeling I now get when I enter our dojo (training hall) to practise, and it stays with me long after practice is over.

I was first introduced to Aikido by my roommate and good friend Kalev Vaikia while working in Saudi Arabia. Having spent many years practising Aikido, Kalev is an adept Aikidoka and a good teacher. He explained what Aikido is all about and taught me a few basic movements. He also talked about the mental and spiritual aspects of Aikido.

I knew I wanted to continue with Aikido when I returned to Canada, but I did not know exactly what to expect in regard to the type of training and class atmosphere. Would the training be like a boot camp ('one-hundred push-ups, now!'), or just the opposite? Kalev had said there are different styles of Aikido and every teacher has different methods of instruction; which is why I came out to watch a class first. What I saw was a formal type of instruction with the students talking very little, but occasionally asking questions. (I learnt this was a more advanced class, so less questions were asked.) The students showed the teacher much respect and everyone was very polite, bowing to their partners before and after each technique was practised. (I later discovered this formality is aimed at the preservation of traditional values that are inherent in the martial arts.) There was, however, a feeling of comraderie and good spirit in the dojo. This showed on the faces of the people there. Despite a fairly vigorous hour and a half practice, no one appeared ready for CPR and everyone had a smile after class.

What really impressed me was the way a complete stranger (that was me) was made to feel welcome and never once did I feel like I was being given a sales pitch

to join the club. ("Join now and get a free bonus month of lessons plus a year's subscription to the T.V. Times!") I was given some literature about Aikido which I read during the class and afterwards one of the students answered some of my questions then bade me a "hope to see you again". (I knew she would.)

What was it that made me want to continue (really start) in the practice of Aikido after coming back to Canada? The answer is I wanted to find a sport I could participate in for a good number of years, (all my life in this case, although I have yet to fully appreciate that) and one that did not require brute strength; but rather emphasized speed, agility and coordination. I also needed an outlet for my competitive spirit to me, this was also important. I was not sure Aikido would be able to fulfil this need; after all isn't it called the gentle martial art? Well, I found out that Aikido can be very physically demanding at times, and at others, quite flowing and graceful. Competition does exist in Aikido, but in a less obvious way than most of us are used to. The people I practise with are not so much competing against me as they are competing, together, with me. There are no winners or losers as in other sporting events; in Aikido, we all win.

I have been practising for about six months, and I think my techniques are slowly improving. (Although that is debatable!) I am finding the rewards derived from Aikido include not only the obvious ones (such as an increase in general health and fitness, improved agility, and better coordination), but also more subtle, intangible, less well defined rewards. I am talking about improved spiritual energy and a better understanding of oneself and others. These changes are sometimes not apparent, but I think they do occur in all who practise Aikido. For me, these added benefits, unlooked for and welcomed, have become as important as the purely physical aspects of the sport. I am finding that Aikido (as the name implies - "method or way for the coordination or harmony of mental energy or spirit") is much more than a means of self-defense or a way to stay in shape; and this is what makes it unique from any other activity I have participated in.

My friends often ask me what Aikido is all about. I can tell them what Aikido means and explain about

centralization, extension of ki, and circular motion; but I often do not tell them about some of the less ahh.... immediately gratifying aspects of Aikido. Most people do not want to hear about the hours of repetitive practice and dedication it takes to realize the benefits inherent in Aikido. They either want to know of a sport that is lots of fun all the time, (and let's face it, when you're first starting, taking nikkyo eight times in a row, is not always so great!) or they want to participate in a martial art that will transform them into instant fighting machines able to break solid objects with just a look (add water plus a couple months of training and stir!). It really does take many, many hours of practice and study, both in the dojo and on your own, and I know that I have a long way to go before I can hope to achieve the same level of expertise that many of the people I practice with have. However, I know that, as with any other game, skill, art or study; if I practise diligently and in good spirit, I can not help but gain many rewards (as indeed I have begun to).

Up to now, I can say my experience has been a very positive and enjoyable one. Again, it must be realized that in order to gain any benefits, from any study or sport, (whether it be world class gymnastics or lawn bowling) you must put in what you expect to take out. Aikido is no different in that respect. I have tried to relate some of my feelings and observations about my very short time involved in Aikido. If anybody was to ask how to get involved in it, I would tell them to come out and watch a practice or two, ask questions, then start practising - and don't quit; definitely don't quit.

As explained to me by my first teacher, the book of Aikido is one that takes a lifetime to read. The first few years of practice and study are equivalent to opening the front cover of a book; the following years, to the pages of that book. I'm still opening the front cover, but I'm looking forward to a lifetime of enjoyable reading.

-----*Mr. Le Blanc,*
has been practising Aikido at Vancouver Aikikai for six
months.

JAPANESE FOR AIKIDOISTS

BOB MOLINE

The following is an excerpt from "A Dictionary of Useful Words and Phrases for English-Speaking Aikido Students" written by Bob Moline.

1. COUNTING

ichi	one	ju	ten
ni	two	ju-ichi	eleven
san	three	ju-ni	twelve
shi	four	ni-ju	twenty
go	five	ni-ju-ichi	twenty-one
roku	six	san-ju	thirty
shichi	seven	san-ju-ichi	thirty-one
hachi	eight	etc.	
ku	nine		

2. BASIC AIKIDO TECHNIQUES

ikkyo	first technique
nikyo	second technique
sankyo	third technique
yonkyo	fourth technique
gokyo	fifth technique
irimi-nage	straight entry throw
juji-nage	arm entanglement throw
kaiten-irimi-nage	rotation-entry throw
koshi-nage	hip throw
kaiten-nage	wheel throw
koyu-nage	breath throw
tenchi-nage	heaven and earth throw
ude-kime-nage	arm lock throw
shiho-nage	four-direction throw
juji-garmi	arm entanglement technique
kote-gaeshi	palm turning technique
sumi-otoshi	corner throw
aiki-otoshi	swooping throw

