

AIKIDO FORUM

合氣道

A JOURNAL OF AIKIDO
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Aikido Founder Morihei Ueshiba
(1883 - 1969) Photo: Circa 1965

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WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

ISHU ISHIYAMA

It is becoming increasingly popular that Aikido practitioners refer to themselves as "Aikidoka". When a third kyu student calls himself/herself an Aikidoka, I cannot help but feel somewhat uneasy. It is because of the weight of this term. "Ka" literally means both a home and a devotee or a master of the way. In Japan, it is usually professional martial artists who refer to themselves as budoka, Aikidoka, judoka, karateka, etc. These terms generally reflect their vocational commitment and identity. Their devotion to the art takes the first priority above any other vocational and avocational commitments. With such a strong sense of identity and pride, not a few people in the Japanese history of martial arts have acted upon others' verbal and sometimes physical challenge to honour the art to which they were devoted. As you can see, such a deep level of commitment of a budoka (professional martial artist) is accompanied by his/her readiness to risk life in the pursuit of honouring and mastering the way.

You may ask, "How else should I call myself?" Many Japanese non-professional Aikidoists call themselves "Aikido shugyo-sha" (devoted Aikido trainee) or "Aikido aiko-sha" (Aikido lover/enthusiast). I am one of them. There are many highly ranked blackbelts who still call themselves this way to show respect to professionally devoted Aikido masters and masters-to-be who live and practise Aikido as the major part of daily life.

Whether you are a professional or not, your love and sincerity in pursuing Aikido are what count most. That is what promotes Aikido all over the world. Professionals

protect, nurture, research, and advance O-Sensei's Aikido while Aikido blossoms within us and through us, non- and semi-professionals, and it helps to promote harmony among all the members of this world beyond the mats. The present issue of the Aikido Forum contains many inspiring articles contributed by such committed Aikidokas and Aikido shugyo-shas. I hope these articles will renew and enrich your enthusiasm about Aikido as a way of life. Thanks are due to many Victoria Aikikai members who helped us edit and proofread the submitted articles.

The following new section entitled **VOICES**, consists of letters to the editor. We would like to encourage this communication with our readers. Please feel free to write and express your opinions in reference to any Aikido Forum articles (including past issues).

VOICES

Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate you and the editorial staff for the tremendous effort it must have taken to get the magazine off the ground and to keep it going for the last three years. I also would like to tell you that to me the journal offered a great many insights and certainly improved my appreciation and understanding of Aikido. Favorites of mine are the contributions of Bob Moline in the last two issues.

What appears to be missing in the Canadian Aikido scene is communication between various dojos. Perhaps you could add a column where different local clubs can describe themselves, give their addresses, phone numbers and practice times. Also announcements of major seminars and camps would be very welcome.

Ulrich Mayer, Calgary Aikikai

Integrated Aikido: Toward Spiritual and Technical Mastery (Part 1)

BANSEN TANAKA

Translator's Note:

The following is a translation of Tanaka Shihan's instructions I received on my last visit to my home dojo in Osaka in April, 1987. With his permission, part of his talk is reproduced here. To maintain the original conversational tone, I edited very little. The interviewer's occa-



sional comments and questions have been deleted. The reader may find certain parts of this article falling short of explanation or elaboration, but I trust the reader will pursue to discover intuitively the meaning of his messages through the experience of Aikido training rather than intellectualized verbal activities. (Ishu Ishiyama)

Quest for Aikido

What is Aikido? It is a difficult question to answer in one sentence. It has a religious and spiritual aspect. Aikido is not a visible form. Aikido has discernible forms, but Aikido itself is formless. Talking is not enough to explain what Aikido is. You realize what it is through practising. You need both repetitious practice and conscious questioning of what it is while practising.

People who think of Aikido simply as a conventional martial art do not improve beyond a certain point no matter how much they practise. In order to help them, the shihan should always talk about the spiritual aspect of Aikido. It is a difficult but important task for the shihan.

To help senior practitioners, for example those above shodan, you need to make them realize that their ki does not extend unless they teach beginners. A nidan practising with another nidan will not learn to extend his ki no matter how long he practises. As he starts practising with beginners, his ki starts extending.

Sabaki and Ki

Irimi-tenkan is sabaki (body movement and relocation). The ultimate essence of Aikido is in sabaki. You need to practise sabaki well enough. When someone comes at you, all you need is to not be before him. This is the way of the reflective movements based on irimi and tenkan. Irimi-tenkan is a fundamental sabaki. It is the heart of Aikido.

You must learn both ki and kokoro (the heart, the mind). Kokoro is the centre, which turns in spiral. What helps the centre to revolve in spiral is ki. Therefore, ki and kokoro must be harmonized and become one. This allows you to become one with the opponent, too. Think about it.

You cannot throw or pull down a person who maintains his centre. (A physical demonstration of iriminage accompanies the talk.) You do a technique at the same time as you pull him in toward you and unbalance him. You do not move your arm up and down as you throw the partner. Here your ki ascends to heaven, but suddenly moving your arm down in the attempt to throw him stops the ki flow. You have to let ki flow instead, (with a further technical

demonstration). This is how you use ki and kokoro.

Creative and Spiritual Ki

There exists "fu-sui-no-ki", the ki of wind and water, in Aikido techniques. Fu-sui-no-ki is not on the earth, but in heaven. In the space up there, fu-sui-no-ki creates rain. This is the mysterious part of Aikido. It is the way that sheds light. This is the difficult part. I am studying it.

Without understanding this, you cannot grasp the true essence of Aikido. You cannot do true Aikido without it. This is what I want to practise until I die. I want to do true Aikido. The forms that you are presently practising are what O-Sensei created as an introductory system for learners. Many people in the world are practising only such forms, without thinking deeply. They will not improve much, unless they practise the spiritual side of Aikido. Their Aikido generates neither light nor heat. They are too attached to forms.

Aikido is not forms. O-Sensei said, "Aikido is the spiritual energy, a formless energy." Techniques should be based on the formless energy. That is why Aikido techniques are so difficult to practise properly. Nowadays, people commonly practise only forms and get attached to them. Although you need to start with physical forms in your practice, once you have learned forms you must not get preoccupied with the forms.

Harmonious Ki

There are many types of ki. "Shall we go for a cup of tea?" is a kind of ki that guides another person into action. Same with a suggestion like: "Let's go somewhere together." The way ki works resembles how a sound vibrates and reson-

ates. It is called "hibiki" (resonance) in Japanese. Without hibiki, your ki does not get communicated to another person. With hibiki, you guide the partner into your movement in Aikido. You remove the opponent's ki. In order to do this, you have to first become one with his energy. Otherwise, harmony cannot be attained.

Harmony is attained when your ki and the other's ki resonate together. In interaction with others, you need to think in, utter, and act on, beautiful words. If your energy is a negative one, you utter negative words and you fail to harmonize with others. To maintain harmony, you need beautiful kokyu (breathing and living attitudes). Beautiful sounds come from beautiful breathing. Your breathing resonates and creates vibrations of sounds. Others hear such sounds. It is impossible to attain harmony among people unless this process of breathing and resonating is correctly done. Saying rude and hurtful things does not result in harmony among people. Here is the essence of the following statement: Aikido should be kokyu-waza.

Aikido and Breathing

Aikido and Aiki-jutsu are the same in appearance. Aikido used to be called Aiki-jutsu. The key point is the content. You may call your art Aiki, without knowing its content. You must practise Aikido knowing what it is. Aikido requires no force. The power should be the power of ki, and not physical force. You have to know how to use the power of kokyu to master the power of ki. We have inhaling ki and exhaling ki. In practice, you learn how to use them differentially. You cannot throw someone by inhaling. A great amount of energy gets generated if you exhale as you throw a person. To do so requires a proper flow of ki. If you are throwing this way, you should not be looking the

other way. Your ki stops here, although you can still throw the partner by a physical force. You must look at where your ki is going. You must look at the future path of the ki flow. This is how you should throw.

Ki does not come out unless you breathe, unless you use kokyu-ryoku (the breath power). Ki is a very difficult concept to master. Many people talk about ki without knowing what it is. Ki is part of kokyu. Ki is born out of kokyu. This is the most difficult part of Aikido. Ki is everything. Your whole being becomes ki. That is why I say, "Take a good care of ki."

We are all breathing. This is kokyu. We need to thank the one that allows us to breathe and stay alive. Hence, the importance of the idea of "gassho", praying with two clasped hands. If we always maintained gratitude, we would not commit crimes or do bad things. As we live and use kokyu correctly, correct ki comes out. It comes out naturally. It manifests itself as a natural technique. O-Sensei said, "Use the ki of Great Nature."

Personal Responsibility for Enlightenment

This is why verbally explaining Aikido is difficult. You may listen to someone's verbal explanations, but it is you who have to attain realization on your own. Aikido is called "jiko tansei-no michi" or the way of actualizing self. It is important that you attain satori (enlightenment) by yourself. Being passive and dependent upon a teacher is insufficient. If you learned one essential thing, figure out ten thousand things that operate under the same principle. You must enlighten yourself.

You may create as many techniques as you want. Make techniques as you like. But they should be free of "suki" or

openings. If you learned 100 techniques, you can create 1000 or 2000 techniques based on them. Do not forget the central principle.

Observing Others

In practice, watch other practitioners closely. You occasionally find a neophyte doing a very good technique even though he is doing a wrong movement. You must capture that moment. That becomes your nourishment. In the pursuit of technical mastery, everyone is a teacher to us. Instructors need to observe their students in great detail.

Same for students. You tell them to take a break in the middle of a class and to observe others practising for a while. This way you help them to develop new perspectives and improve their Aikido. You teach them to observe and learn. There are stories of sword students attaining a high level of mastery as the result of secretly observing their master instructing others and stealing his secrets while splitting wood for fire as ordered by the master.

For instructors, observing is extremely important for the same reason. It is not you who create new things. It is the neophyte who happens to do something noteworthy. You learn from them, and integrate the learning into your skills. You can create techniques endlessly in this manner. There is no dead-end. I have seen many people get stuck and turn to other martial arts for a solution. This is the worst way of solving technical stagnation. Their ki stops flowing altogether in this way.

----- *Tanaka Shihan, 8th degree blackbelt, is the chief instructor and president of Osaka Aikikai. He trained with Founder Ueshiba and received close spiritual and technical guidance from him since 1936. He is the author of Aikido Shinzui [Ultimate Essence of Aikido], published by Aiki Shuppan-kyoku, Osaka.*

ROLE AMBIGUITY

FRAN TURNER

In the fall of 1981, just after being promoted to shodan, I wrote a paper for one of my graduate courses on role ambiguity. I related this topic to taking on the role of a yudansha. At the time I was training at Capitol Aikikai in Washington, D.C. My teacher was Clyde Takeguchi Sensei.

Passing a test, or being promoted to the next level is a significant marker for many on the Aiki path. I found my new black belt weighed heavily on me, particularly during the first few months. I frequently reflected upon its meaning for me and for my practice. Writing this paper provided an opportunity to clarify some of the personal issues, which had come up at the time. I present the original paper here, in a slightly revised form.

This past summer I became a black belt. It was an interesting experience through which to examine role ambiguity and the process by which I attempted to resolve it.

Three variables are important in shaping expectations that go along with a role, such as that of a new yudansha in a dojo. These are organizational and interpersonal factors, as well as attributes of the individual. The dojo, as part of the USAF, has explicit test requirements that one must meet to be promoted to the next level: these are expertise in specific techniques and a minimum number of practice hours. Black belt rank is perceived by many, especially by new Aikidoists, as high status, and the student who has achieved this rank has "made it". The sobering reality is, there are ten degrees of black belt, and the student who becomes a shodan is really at the bottom of a steeper lad-

der than before. Furthermore, achieving a black belt, according to tradition, simply shows that the practitioner is a serious beginner.

There are factors, organizational and interpersonal, within each dojo that influence expectations of the new yudansha. The teacher has expectations of students who are black belts. Most of these are usually explicit: for my Sensei, instructing and conducting demonstrations are important. Other expectations may be quite nebulous, but nonetheless potent. Fellow Aikidoists also influence the role as one spends hours with them training in class, and often socializing after. Some of them have idealized expectations of what becoming a yudansha means.

Finally, each new black belt brings unique personality, abilities, and expectations to the role. I had plenty of ideas about what I should be able to do and needed to do in that role. I assumed the yudansha role according to my interpretation, as well as in conforming to organizational requirements, the expectations of my teacher, and of my fellow practitioners.

"Role ambiguity" is a term that indicates vagueness, uncertainty and lack of agreement on role expectation. As a new shodan I experienced role ambiguity particularly at the interpersonal level. I perceived some of my fellow Aikidoists as putting heavy expectations on me of what a black belt should be able to do. For example, I felt my concentration being tested more than it had been some weeks before as a white belt. Certain of my partners would vary the pace of their attacks as we practised, seemingly in order to catch me unawares. And they attacked harder, more aggressively (or so it seemed to me) than they did some months before when I was "just" a white belt. I also found myself being told I was not throw-

ing hard enough. I was perplexed, trying to figure out how wearing a black belt would strengthen me and enable me to throw harder.

At the same time I had my own (mis)conceptions of what I should be able to do by virtue of being a black belt. Being one who is usually hard on herself, I had this all-encompassing feeling that I should know more and just be 'better' than I felt I was at this level of practice. Paradoxically, growing in me was the belief that, regardless of rank, Aikido training is a personal and uncharted course. As such, arbitrary landmarks of achievement, even a black belt, are unnecessary and possibly contrary to the spirit of the Art. I experienced role ambiguity between these poles of my own expectations.

Problem solving in an ambiguous situation does not necessarily take place only at a conscious level. I used both conscious and unconscious strategies to resolve my situation. A good portion of the resolution can be attributed to internal changes in my perceptions. I came to accept that becoming a black belt is not a static process. One can grow into the role over time with continuing practice. With my fellow practitioners, I would sometimes participate in trying to fulfill what I believed their expectations to be, but this became less important as I became more confident that training is for oneself and not for others' ideals.

As one of the few female black belts in the dojo, I began to realize that I was a role model for other women students like it or not. I kept this in mind, while I kept training as sincerely as I was able. Aware of the imperfections and short comings in my practice, I wanted to show I was training to the fullest of my abilities and that included frustrations and 'making mistakes'. I also felt a sense of responsibility to share my understanding in whatever ways

I found helpful to my partner. Upon reflection, this sense of responsibility to Aikido, to my teacher, and to the dojo, was the weight I felt wearing my black belt.

In the course of some months following my test I came to feel less hemmed in by the expectations of my fellow students and more freedom within myself to just practise. Thus, I was able to resolve role ambiguity as a new black belt.

-----*Ms. Turner, 3rd degree black belt, is a shiatsu practitioner and a registered nurse. She began Aikido training in Copenhagen and now practices at Toronto Aikikai.*

Aikido is a great self-purification, a great health-promoting method, a great way of creating and nurturing the world.

The Founder of Aikido
Morihei Ueshiba

AIKIDO AND AIDS

GEORGE HEWSON

One reason for training in Aikido is to promote good physical fitness. In keeping with this goal, we always stress bodily hygiene so that, despite our considerable bodily contact, we reduce the chances of spreading such routine ailments as colds and 'flu. Confronting us now, however, is a life threatening health issue: A.I.D.S. This insidious malady is the most serious threat in recent medical history in this country. The number of cases is growing dramatically; a high proportion of its victims have died.

To the best of current knowledge, Anti-Immune Deficiency Syndrome is spread primarily, if not exclusively, through contact with infected blood, semen, or vaginal fluids; there is no proven danger from saliva, tears, or perspiration. Repeated exposure is not required because a single occasion may provide the necessary transfer of negative anti-bodies.

Aikido practice is a "low risk" but not a "no risk" activity with regard to communicating this disease. Instructors and senior students should obtain the best information available from their local Department of Health in English, French, Japanese or whatever language is appropriate to ensure a full understanding of the problem.

For the moment I recommend the following policies:

1. no intravenous drug abusers or individuals who are sexually promiscuous should be permitted to practise -- they represent high risks,
2. open cuts should be bandaged carefully to prevent bleeding, and

3. any blood on the mats should promptly and thoroughly be cleaned up by the individual who is bleeding.

Do not judge people by who they are, but by what they do. This rule, which we already apply to our practice, ought to be kept in mind in light of the AIDS problem. Some caution and common sense will mean that we continue our Aikido training without fear of AIDS.

-----*Mr. Hewson, 3rd degree black belt, is a student of, and secretary for J.C.C.C. Aikikai in Toronto where he has practised since starting his training in 1975. He teaches high school french and history.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are compiling the most updated list of Canadian Aikido clubs/dojos, to be published as part of the next issue. Please send us information about your dojo indicating: (1) dojo name, address with postal code, telephone, (2) chief instructor and rank, (3) other regular instructors and ranks, (4) affiliated with C.A.F. or not, (5) regular visiting shihans, and (6) months or seasons for annually scheduled seminars and training camps. We would very much appreciate your input, no matter how incomplete the submitted information may be. Please let the dojo secretary know about this request. Such information will be invaluable to those who plan to visit or move to your province/city/town.

AIKIDO AND WOODCUTTING

TIM THOMAS

On the reading break weekend I had an opportunity to use what I have learned in Aikido class. The occasion came about by the need to chop wood for the woodstove in my parent's house. My father has an impressive pile of cordwood in a shed behind his house, and he needed it split. So I was required, as eldest son, to split most of the firewood while my father was working.

Even at this preliminary stage of the job I was able to use some Aikido. My father's manner of requesting that something be done is much harsher at times than a stern Sensei, and in the past there has been some conflict and much resentment on my part as I always saw myself as the loser. However, this time I performed a mental rei or bow to my father, giving him the respect that an experienced Practitioner of Life deserves. Not only did this avoid conflict, but it eliminated any resentment (which was always hiding there in past interactions), so I could move to the next step with a clear mind.

The first physical step was to address the limitations of my body. Both in Aikido practice and in physical work I have a problem with my back. Numerous injuries have weakened it, and, my back muscles are holding up an extra twenty pounds of me that, were I to work more and eat less, would not be there. My bad back is a limitation that I must always be aware of. When I lose concentration on posture or how much energy I am exerting incorrectly, I pull the muscles and ligaments further out of shape. So, it became apparent that I must keep my awareness of the injury in the corner of my mind during this job.

Next, it was necessary to do some "dojo" care. I had to examine the tools for the job. They consisted of a splitting maul and a chopping block. Upon inspection I found the handle of the maul was sound, the block was nicely square and lay solidly on the ground. However, the blade of the axe was blunt and nicked. This seemed unusual since my father was meticulous in caring for his tools, especially if they were supposed to be sharp. This irregularity rang a bell in my mind that there was some reason to use a dull axe, but I could not put my finger on it. (Later I remembered I'd heard that firemen use dull axes so that they do not stick in the wood.) So I decided that if my father split wood with a dull axe, I would not presume to know more than he, since he must be at least a "shodan" in wood-splitting. Hence, I used the axe in its original condition.

Another aspect that was much like dojo preparation and care was the need to look over the location of the work. If the ground I was standing on was somehow inappropriate, there would only be another injury to my back, and perhaps a new one to another part of my body. The job site was in front of the wood shed, under an overhang of the roof designed to keep the rain off the splitter and the wood. This was appropriate enough, but the shed sits on a slight slope, and that could create problems.

To investigate further, I positioned myself uphill from the block of wood (uke by analogy) with the maul in my hands and realized that there was going to be a problem. If I stood uphill of the wood block, the maul would have to fall too far down before contacting the wood. This in turn would bring my body too low. Thus my weight would be too far forward and it would require that my back muscles work to keep me balanced. If I stood midway down the slope facing the block, I would again have trouble with balance. One foot would be higher than the other and I

would be twisted, especially in my back, as I struck down. If I stood downhill of the block, I could strike the block with a straight back and with reasonable balance. However, I did come to realize that this would shorten the arch of my swing, reducing the amount of force applied to the wood. But since the amount of force is never a concern in Aikido, only finesse and technique, I chose to stand downhill.

My next concern was getting started on the project. I lifted the first piece of wood onto the block, thinking about the best technique, when I remembered I had not warmed up. This is inconceivable when on the mats, so why ignore it now? I did a series of stretches for the back, shoulders and legs. Finally, I felt like I was ready. It occurs to me now that the time I took in stretching actually cleared my mind, setting aside concerns for the pain I might feel in my back, or the worry over how tired I might get from so much work.

Now, I had the right attitude, the proper tools (I hoped), and the right posture and position in relation to uke (maai), as for actual wood-splitting technique, my father had tried to teach it to me, but I had never been receptive enough to use it properly. He pointed out that the wood-splitter (nage) always looked for the wood's weakest point. (This was being sensitive to the uke.) This point usually lies where the wood grain is the straightest, free of knots, those tight circles of energy that are hard to defeat without a lot of force. Then, once the weakness is found, the wood-cutter strikes along that line. But again, there is another tough circle that is hard to overcome without force and that is the circularity of the wood block itself. If struck at the dead-centre it could hold up against a tremendous force, like a well centered aikidoist. To split the wood without a lot of energy the weak point must be found again, and that

is the edge of the circle. The axe blade must hit the outside edge of the circle, interrupting its energy. This is what my father tried to teach me, but without all the detail.

Now that I had started splitting the wood at its weakest point, my next concern was the amount of energy I used to do the job. I did not want to tire out too early or get a sore back from overexertion. (This would always happen when I was resentful of having to do the work.) I wanted to wear down my uke, not the other way around. Using proper technique as I took aim at the wood, I brought the maul up slowly, breathing in. When it reached my shoulder, I held my breath for a short moment to collect some energy, and raised the maul over my head. Then with a subtle motion of the hips (like sticking my bum out and then in) I let gravity do most of the work as I exhaled.

Soon after many strikes at the wood, I had lost track of time, for I was concentrating only on the motion of the act. The job was no longer a "chore" but more of a technique as in Aikido. There was a flow to it, at least as I look back on it now. Later I tried to tell my father about how it worked and he knew what I meant, "sort of". He had split so much wood that he got "lost in the job" as he put it. It felt good in the end to have this small, but clear, commonality with my father now, rather than a knot in my gut, in my back and in my heart.

-----*Mr. Thomas, 5th kyu, is president of the University of Victoria Aikido Club and has recently completed his bachelor's degree in English at the University of Victoria.*

FEAR OF FLYING

DANIEL KEMPLING

There's an old German proverb that goes: "Wealth lost -- something lost; honour lost -- much lost; courage lost -- all lost." Why would a practical people like the Germans value courage higher than wealth or honour? Is true courage merely overcoming our fears? And if so, how does one learn this overcoming?

As martial artists, the value of courage in our practice is obvious. Without it, we would never even have begun such a dangerous activity. We would never have taken our first breakfall, or ever practised with that notoriously vigorous yudansha, even while knowing there was something valuable to be learned in both cases. As Aikidoists, we all have visions of what we would like to accomplish in our lifetimes. These goals often include heightened awareness, greater flow, and perhaps even spontaneous and effective techniques. We usually know what sort of work is required to fulfill these visions, yet our fears hold us in place; our emotions immobilize our spirits' yearning. Perhaps, a look at the nature of fear in our practice would be appropriate.

For most of us, a breakfall requires no courage, only the desire to do it. At one time, however, this simple maneuver was a very frightening prospect. The fear of bodily injury is one of the most intrinsic fears. You might say that we are "hard-wired" with this one. We needed to see that there were those who had gone before us in this technique, and had developed a method to make it safe. Once this message had been programmed, the mind could give the green light for the body to begin learning. And yet, we were still afraid. Or at least, I was, and sometimes still am.

Is this to say that courage is ignoring or overriding our bodily responses? Well, yes and no. For if ignoring our body's signals is courage, then we might soon be brave; but we'd be dead sooner. For instance, I wouldn't recommend ignoring your body's signals when a bokken is swiftly describing an arc that will soon include your head. We need to listen to what our body is telling us in order to survive; but in non-critical situations, there should be a higher command we obey.

In learning to take ukemi for the nikyō submission, the beginner's body response is to retreat from the pain. The sensei can show the beginner that ultimately, it is safer to learn to move into the pain, despite what the wrist is screaming to your brain. In this case, the higher command to override the body's responses originated in the beginner's trust in the sensei. Afterwards, when he had discovered the mechanics of this ukemi, the Aikidoist has as his higher command his vision and desire for self-improvement. The vehicle for this self-development is his discipline in always saying yes to the needs of the moment.

The above example represents a fairly straightforward physical problem, which can be worked out on the mats with attention and time. But is not this approach also applicable to our social anxieties, like the fears of embarrassment or rejection? On this level, when we feel that our social self is threatened, the body reactions are pretty much identical to those of a physical threat, although the mind and its powers come much more into play. For instance, you might find yourself with a partner, doing a technique with which you feel fairly proficient and fluid. Suddenly, the sensei of the club (or summercamp, or seminar) breaks in to take ukemi from you. Your mind goes into overdrive, providing encouraging messages like "he thinks I'm the stiffest, dumbest, most inattentive student

he's ever encountered." Your body obliges the mind by becoming stiff, unresponsive and ungrounded. The stomach churns as if a lethal blow was imminent. And yet, we continue. That is, I have never seen anyone but a fresh beginner throw up their hands, as if to say "sorry, Sensei, I'm just too intimidated to continue".

One might say that we continue in these situations because our fear of embarrassment at quitting outweighs the intimidation we feel working with an authority figure. If this keeps us practising, fine. Eventually, as in the nikyō example, our vision for self development will be our mainstay in these fear-provoking instances. An important point here is that one doesn't need to understand the workings of the mind or the psychological basis for these "needless" fears. For understanding does in no way effect positive action. Only positive action does. Understanding is a nice bonus.

It would be great if we could control or overcome our fears. Obviously, we cannot, anymore than we can control the weather or other people's opinions of us. What we can control is what we do; and herein lies the beauty of Aikido. For Aikido is grounded in regular, focussed practice. Without this daily discipline, Aikido is just another high sounding philosophy with no teeth.

As a final analogy, we might view fear as an aggressor in a martial situation. No matter how much we understand him or wish him away, he remains, taunting and harassing us. When we accept his presence and deal constructively with him, he will no doubt reappear; but he will no longer be able to use the power of our own resistance to badger us. In so doing, we express our courage while having our fears, and all is not lost.

-----Mr. Kempling, 2nd kyu,
is president of Victoria Aikikai.

ON BEING AWAY FROM THE DOJO

JOHN OSTRANDER

Since beginning to practise Aikido two and a half years ago, I have been able to attend practice on a regular basis. This past summer, however, I worked in the bush country of northern British Columbia. Living in a tent for weeks at a time while working ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week left me cut off from dojo practice, instruction and interaction with Aikidoists. The situation forced me to deal with keeping Aikido "moving" within me while isolated from the dojo for an extended length of time.

Before leaving Vancouver in May I had plans to practise Aikido in the bush. The plans focused upon a few basic aspects such as ikkyo and jo exercises, and I had some books which I hoped would help me avoid reinforcing incorrect habits.

Unfortunately, once I was in the bush I found myself including Aikido practice less and less in my routine. The weather was cold and wet, work was initially overwhelming, my campmates were wary -- these were some of the reasons/excuses for an erosion of my practice. Within three weeks the Aikido books were underneath half-written letters in the corner of my tent and my weapons were in the trunk of my car.

Once in a while, however, I thought of the practice I was missing and I would try to think of basic movements or points of my technique which I could work on. Soon the mental "pondering" of my practise became my practise and my way of keeping Aikido with me.

Prior to leaving I knew that certain areas of my practice were not progressing as well as others. The difficulties hindered my practice and hindered my partners' practice as well. One of these areas concerned flowing. I knew I was not responding well as uke and as a consequence I interfered with their practice. I did try different things to help correct my problem, and on occasion partners would offer suggestions that they thought might help, but up to when I left, improvement of my flowing continued to lag.

As I mentally reviewed my practice, the difficulties I was having in the area of flowing dominated my thoughts. It was an impasse that I needed to overcome in order to free many parts of my Aikido. I found that while I enjoyed an energetic practice, it worked against my responsiveness to my partner. It seemed to be throwing my synchronization off. I began to isolate the mental review of my practice to a few techniques -- mainly shihonage. I reviewed it from as many attacks as I knew and tried to picture myself doing it. I then cross-referenced my thoughts and images with comments, suggestions and criticisms I had received. Occasionally, I would grab one of my co-workers in the cockpit after supper and try some things (much to their chagrin). I also spent time reflecting upon the technique of those with whom I practised regularly and who I felt were not experiencing the same difficulties in the same areas as I was. Soon the process began to provide alternatives for me to test on the mats and I was eager to return to the dojo to try some things out.

Of course, the whole process was not as structured in my mind as I may have made it sound and, when I did return to the mats, my practice did not miraculously rocket ahead, but I do feel I made headway against my problems with flowing. My energetic practice was a selfish one that did not adjust to my partner. As uke I was not adjusting

to my partner's needs for his/her practice at that moment in time when we practised together. I was able to use my time away from the mats in a manner that helped me when I returned.

-----*Mr. Ostrander, 3rd kyu, practises at the University of British Columbia and Point Grey Aikikai. He is a librarian at the curriculum library of the University of British Columbia and is also involved in assisting handicapped adults in a counseling capacity.*

AUTHOR'S GUIDE

Articles submitted for inclusion in the Aikido Forum must be type written (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 the articles to be submitted in English, but 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 of the Publisher on the inside cover.

CENTERING WITH AIKIDO

ANNE D. FORESTER

Stepping onto the mats in the college, after dashing over from the office, never fails to produce a transformation. The preliminary stretching and breathing shift my focus to my hara, and stored-up irritations give way to a feeling of well-being. "Breathe in, do nothing; breathe out, release the spine. Breathe in, let energy move in; breathe out, lengthen and soften." As I focus on my breath and begin to let go of tense muscles, my brain stops its chattering, my body releases its tensions, and my spirit brightens. Stretching from within begins the process of centering, of moving me out of my head into my body. During the quiet moments of the line-up, a look at O-Sensei's photograph transforms breath into inspiration.

The process of centering continues as demonstrations and practice demand my full concentration. I know I am slow to learn and poor at visualizing spatial connections. If I allow my mind to wander from the practice, I become a hopeless tangle of arms and legs. But paying attention to form and breath engenders a sense of power and effectiveness. Movements take on precision, become light yet strong, and the exhilaration of moving well adds joy to the flow of practice.

Yet there is also safety to try new moves, to be clumsy, dead wrong and very slow. Patience, forbearance and, at times, laughter make ample room for acquiring new skills gradually. The spirit of harmony that stands at the heart of Aikido pervades the dojo and allows beginners and more advanced practitioners to practise at their own level and pace. Because no one has ever lost his temper with

any of my inept moves, I am willing to try again and again. Instead of wasting time and energy on feeling embarrassed or angry, I concentrate on the work itself and come away feeling satisfied with my efforts.

If my progress has been slow, the rewards have nonetheless been plentiful. The regular lunch-time practice of Aikido has eased the tensions of being shifted into a new and stressful position at the college. Centering on body and spirit clears my mind to let problem-solving flow more freely. I may enter the dojo feeling rushed, fatigued and upset, but I come away from practice feeling energized, relaxed and content.

I have a sense that as I am learning to move more effectively during practice, I am also learning to deal more effectively with the problems I encounter at the office. The ability to let go of rigidities and fears is protecting me from getting hurt. Progress is slow in this area as well, however, I am gradually learning to flow with the energies directed at me, to turn in order to see the other person's point of view. It seems that regular centering during practice has improved my ukemi not only on the mats but outside of the dojo as well.

-----*Dr. Forester, 4th kyu, is a reading and learning specialist with a special interest in holistic ways of learning through mind-body integration. She practises Yoga as well as Aikido, which she practises at the Camosun College dojo in Victoria, B.C.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANNERS IN AIKIDO

IAN MOUL

In a recent Aikido class Ishiyama Sensei spoke about the importance of manners and how they relate to a student's development in Aikido training. After listening to Sensei, I reflected on his words in relation to my experience and understanding of the importance of manners in Aikido.

In the two and a half years that I have practised Aikido my greatest joy comes from the equality of all students. Aikido is a very special martial art in which students of any combination of size, weight, age, sex and experience, can practise together with both partners learning from each other. The key to learning from all partners is the respect developed very subtly through the use of manners and formal etiquette.

For the beginner the formal etiquette can be a little mystifying. It is important for some of them to know that bowing to a picture is not worship. Aikido is not a religion. Bowing is a way to respect yourself, your partner, and your teacher.

Aikido training begins as one enters the Dojo. By bowing as we enter the room, we pause, let the day slip away and become aware of what we are doing. This pause occurs again as we move onto the mats and bow to O-Sensei. By bowing to O-Sensei we are accepting the practice for what it is, and respecting the tradition of the martial arts. It is very important to set the ego aside, to give in to the teaching, to experience and not judge. This letting go of the ego can be very hard as we are strongly conditioned to be

self important, to seek power, and to win.

After showing respect to the Dojo and to O-Sensei we show respect to the Sensei who will be leading the practice session. If this is not your home dojo it is important to seek out the Sensei, introduce yourself and ask permission to practise before stepping onto the tatami. This show of respect establishes a relationship with the Sensei, he will then be all the more aware of you and more interested in assisting your technical development.

In practice with other students we also bow and show respect. In this way we can practise recognizing each other and learning each others limits. Aikido without awareness and respect can lead to competition and the possibility of serious physical injury. Aikido with respect is being able to learn from all partners.

The importance of good manners cannot be over-emphasized. It takes years of constant trying and endless mistakes to master the techniques but manners can be learned instantly. Manners lead to respect and a positive mindful attitude that in my opinion is the true essence of Aikido.

The development of the correct attitude need not be restricted to the Dojo or practice session. By training our bodies and our minds in direct contact with others, we develop living skills. I believe that the true goal of any martial art is to never need to use it. This was demonstrated by Paul Weideman (Aikido Forum #4) in his story about Bob. In this case Paul, through careful judgement turned a potentially ugly situation into one of mutual respect. Paul's story demonstrates in real life the importance of developing the mind as well as the body. The correct use of manners is the first step in developing the mind.

-----Mr. Moul, 4th kyu,
practises Aikido at The University of British Columbia.

JAPANESE FOR AIKIDOISTS

BOB MOLINE

The following is the second part of an excerpt from "A Dictionary of Useful Words and Phrases for English-Speaking Aikido Students" written by Bob Moline. Counting and basic techniques were covered in Aikido Forum #5.

1. STRIKING

tsuki	straight punch
chudan tsuki	straight punch to the chest or stomach
gedan tsuki	straight punch to the abdomen
jodan tsuki	straight punch to the head
men-uchi	strike to the head or neck with the handblade
mune-tsuki	straight punch to the chest
shomen-uchi	straight strike to the top of the head with the handblade
yokomen-uchi	side strike to the neck or head with the handblade

2. GRABBING

morote-tori	two hands grab one wrist
muna-mochi	one hand grabs the chest
ryote-tori	two hands grab two wrists
ryokata-tori	two hands grab two shoulders
ushiro-kubishime	two handed choke from behind
ushiro ryokata-tori	two hands grab two shoulders from behind
ushiro ryotekubi-tori	two hands grab two wrists from behind

