

# AIKIDO FORUM <sup>B38</sup>

合氣道

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## WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

One of the central teachings of Aikido is finding and strengthening one's centre or, hara. Aikido helps us maintain the centre in body movements and in dealing with conflicts and upsetting situations. It is an art for developing one's own centre physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. How did I live my life today? Did I keep or lose my centre in any situation? Such reflections allow us to apply Aikido to situations beyond the physical level.

Aikido is a circle with a dot in the middle, according to O-Sensei. It is a symbol of completion and harmony. The circle represents wholeness, the universe. The dot represents the invisible centre of the circle, we call it hara or tanden (lower abdomen) in Aikido, symbolizing the centre of the universe internalized in our mind-and-body. The late Master Bansen Tanaka, under whom Kawahara Shihan and I studied, used to say, "This dot is the essential part of human existence and Aikido techniques. You can't walk without the centre. You can't have children without the circle and the centre coming together. In doing Aikido movements (such as ikkyo, shihonage, iriminage and kokyunage), you must find the centre and begin techniques from there even before the body starts moving. Forms (katas) become fluid and formless, and perfect movements are created." We need a sense of centrality and solidity in daily living, moving physically and building a harmonious dojo. I hope that the Forum is one of the vehicles which help you reflect on the above.

This is my last issue to edit. Due to my demanding work schedule, I have asked Bob Moline to take over my role and Cindy Verheul to be assistant editor. This will allow me to find time for writing articles for the Forum, rather than editing it. Bob is the most suited person for this job

because of his commitment to Aikido and communication among practitioners, clear and reliable sense of judgment, and his expertise in editing and publishing borrowed from his current occupation. Cindy, likewise, has shown both competence in, and dedication to, the publication of the Forum. I will serve as an editorial consultant for these new staff.

I would like to add that we are planning to publish a series of technical instructions with sequenced photographs of movements demonstrated by Kawahara Shihan and other local instructors. We hope beginners and seasoned practitioners will find the series informative and inspiring to their training.

I want to thank the staff and the readers of the Aikido Forum for their support and encouragement during my editorship. I beg your continued support for the Forum. Farewell.

**ISHU ISHIYAMA**

## FU-SUI-NO-KI

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the enlightening interview with Tanaka Sensei in issue number six of the Aikido Forum. I was struck by his description of "fu-sui-no-ki". His concept of the ki of wind and water reminded me of a poem I wrote last year, before I became acquainted with Aikido.

The poem is the result of my personal attempts to understand and reconcile an apparent contradiction in the natural order, where beauty seems always to rise out of the storm of greed and violence. The thoughtful person must observe that pathways open through this confusion, which we are sometimes wise enough to follow. Is some power, subtle and wonderful at work, weaving disparate threads into a higher pattern, or does the prevalence of ugliness prove we are subject to barren, merely random forces?

A similar contradiction appears in Aikido. A philosophy of harmony has developed from martial tradition, and now the practice of apparently violent techniques teaches mutual respect and tolerance. For this reason, I feel the poem might be appropriate for the Aikido Forum.

Yours truly, Jim Roth

### FU-SUI-NO-KI

We came to the world of change and our tool was death.

In the early waters, we took up the elements of this world and began our work. We first made simple things and these were things of beauty. With their death came change;

new wonders grew and so the temper of our youth was set,  
for we would not see the end of beauty.

Now we had created time and we endured it. Long was  
our age of labour, but not fruitless. Light came to the  
world, colour, sound and scent. The fact of living had  
begun.

Many forces shaped us then. The chief was death, but  
greed was also given at that time. All creatures strove  
and longed for life in the new mornings and the earth was  
filled and great works were done.

Joy and joy! Birds found far places of the air and on the  
earth raw paths were worn. Root deeped, tree sweetened  
breath for the first gatherers of fruit, and in the oceans  
fishes swam our old memory round.

In all this time a new thought came slowly to the earth.  
The work of roots and the walking of the soil went on, but  
quietly the new thought grew.

A new force in the world. That which conceived us long  
ago and set death to shaping and greed to toil. For the  
making of the world. For the making of the world we  
laboured. Now we must set our tools aside.

-----*Mr. Roth*  
*is a computer analyst who practises as Victoria Aikikai.*

# COMPUTER DATABASE OF AIKIDO STUDY

RALPH KOPPERSON

During the time that I have practised Aikido, I have often taken notes after practice, filing them away in a three ring binder. It's a messy collection, written on paper scraps in a smeared mix of pen and perspiration. It came in handy for my 1st Kyu test, as I struggled to identify five koshinages and five kata tori menuchis. I did some sorting and organizing during that test preparation (again on paper scraps), added some new stuff over the next few years, then pulled it out again as my shodan test approached.

As I continued to add to the list, I wanted to summarize all the notes in a variety of ways, such as listing by attack, or by technique. About two years ago I set about to restructure them and enter them in a computerized file manager. My goal was to see all notes on one technique on one page, or a list of all ways of responding to a particular attack. In this article, I'd like to describe some of the problems I encountered, as well as the results.

## PROCESS

I used software called Watfile Plus, produced by an affiliate of the University of Waterloo. It combines the basic functions of spreadsheets and database. The functions I needed were:

1. the ability to define columns of information
2. the ability to manipulate those columns freely: change their order across the screen, join columns to produce new ones, sort the records according to the contents of specific columns
3. the ability to produce formatted reports from the col-

umnar information.

I started by entering attack-name, technique-name, and technique-description for the most interesting items in my notes. I also worked harder at making notes of interesting aspects seen in practice. Soon there was more new material than old. I adapted the format of the entries as I went along, working towards a structure that could describe a technique in one line.

I didn't try to record "all" techniques. My focus was to record variations I saw in practice, and various nuances of techniques. Because of the difficulty in describing in a few words something as dynamic and active as an Aikido technique, the descriptions assume an advanced understanding of the various techniques. They provide a sort of index of variations, rather than a basic description of how to perform shomenuchi ikkyo. I was also forced to develop a "personal shorthand" to use in describing common elements of practice, in order to capture in a few words the flow of the technique.

### **STRUCTURE OF ENTRIES**

I divided the information used to describe a technique into the areas listed below. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of characters devoted to each field.

1. Category of techniques (15): tachi waza, suwari waza, kaeshi waza, renraku waza, henka waza, etc.
2. Attack (12): shomen uchi, katate tori, tsuki, etc.
3. hanmi (7): ai hanmi, gyaku hanmi
4. Static or Moving (1): whether the particular practice was from a stationary or moving start. This mainly applies to attacks that involve uke holding nage.
5. Technique(10): Ikkyo, shiho nage, irimi nage etc.
6. Note(10): General space for information not fitting



under other headings.

7. Type of entry (1): An indicator that tells me one of three things; 1. that the entry refers to a complete technique, or 2. that the entry refers to some nuance of a technique, or 3. that on rereading the entry, I found I'm not quite sure what it means.

8. Description (80): A cryptic description of the flow of the technique, complete enough that I will be able to reconstruct the motion weeks later.

9. Date/Instructor (11): The date of a particular class, and the initials of the instructor.

To make the various information both concise and meaningful, I adopted various conventions and abbreviations. The major ones are outlined below:

#### 1. Description field:

a) The major convention is that a; techniques are described with the nage standing in right hanmi.

b) The description field ended up with a limit of about 80 characters. Abbreviations are used in order to get enough information within this limit. Left and right hand are denoted "lhnd" and "rhnd". The same pattern is followed for feet. The front hand and foot are indicated by 'hand1' and 'hand2', with the trailing hand or foot 'hand2' or 'ft2'.

c) Basic body motions are abbreviated. Tenkan becomes "10k". Tenkan of 180 degrees becomes 10k180. Tenkan of 90 degrees, finishing on one knee is 10k2ne90. Tenkan involving the foot stepping, then forming the pivot for a tenkan of 180 degrees is s10k180.

#### 2. Hanmi field:

a) The starting position of the two practitioners is described in the hanmi field. It describes the relationship between the two at the moment the attack would connect, and it assumes that nage has not moved in response to the

attack.

b) In some cases, clear understanding of the description was only possible if I included whether the technique was being done as a static or a moving technique. This I've included as 's' or 'm' with the hanmi information. Also, to make it clear what motion is involved I've added a note of what hanmi the partners were in before uke moved to attack. For example a tsuki attack might be described as "ai:m/gy". This would mean that at the moment the attack connected (or would have connected if nage had not moved), the two partners were in an ai hanmi position. Also, it means that the partners beginning position had been gyaku hanmi, and that uke stepped through and punched with his right hand (we know it was his right hand because the description is always based on nage being in right hanmi).

#### **AN EXAMPLE**

a) **ATTACK** - Shomenuchi

**TECHNIQUE** - Kokunage

**HANMI** - ai:m/ai

**NOTE** - in & pivot

**DESCRIPTION** - Grip shomen lbow & wrist, ft2 step in, hip turn 180 and extend.

#### **b) Explanation:**

This is the koku nage in which the nage meets shomen uchi before the uke arm starts to come forward. Nage grips with his left hand on the uke dogi at the elbow, and grips or just maintains contact with his right hand on Uke's right wrist. Also, at the same time that all this contact happens, Nage steps his back or left foot to Uke's inside. The moment Nage's left foot touches, he pivots on both feet with a hip turn, ending up beside Uke in exactly the same position as Uke. Nage is meanwhile leading Uke's moving shomen uchi arm forward and down. Uke falls into the

vacuum left by Nage, and does a forward roll.

## **PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

The major problem has been in getting the description of each technique clear enough that it is not ambiguous. This is difficult for a number of reasons.

First, there is a problem of a lack of terminology for some basic aspects of practice. For example, a few hand motions are important for a variety of techniques to generate flow. As far as I know there are no generally used terms to describe them. Being forced to adopt my own terms, I've ended up with things like "wrist fold", that means "the nikyo-like, wrist folding motion that is often used in ryote tori kokyu nage".

Another problem is that notes taken after class are prone to error. It is as if my mental state after a good practice is totally unsuited for the analytical task of accurate description of the techniques.

Finally, only slowly have I learned what really needs to be recorded in order to clearly describe a technique so that when reading it a month later I will still understand the flow.

## **RESULTS**

Many points of confusion have come to light as I've worked on the log. I have found major areas where confusion in how I was describing a number of techniques highlighted confusion in my understanding of the techniques.

I've developed a more critical eye for how a particular technique fits in with the general body of similar techniques. I don't think compiling this list has improved my

execution of the techniques. I do believe it has helped me to see overall patterns and assist in the focus of my study of Aikido.

## **CURRENT STATUS**

There are about 500 lines in the file. Of that, about 40 are explanatory overhead and 60 are notes to myself. For the remaining 400, each line is the description of a technique as it was practised during a particular class.

My main effort for the past couple of months has been to make the list understandable to others. This has involved cleaning up confusing terminology, as well as throwing out entries that I just couldn't make clear enough. I continue to add any technique I see that is not included already, or that expresses better some point of interest. I try to make the technique descriptions straightforward and objective. Points that are more subjective, usually involving new understanding on my part, I enter as "nuances".

I am starting to use more than one 80 character field for descriptions because I would like to be able to share this work with others, and the 80 column limit is just too short for clear understanding. I've also begun to add a field that describes the first entry that nage makes. I plan to use this to sort the techniques by attack and entry, so that I can better see how different entries in response to an attack lead to the various techniques.

I would be interested in hearing from any other practitioners who have done any work similar to this.

-----*Mr. Kopperson, 2nd degree blackbelt, instructs at University of Victoria Aikikai and trains at Victoria Aikikai. He is a computer systems manager with the B.C. Ministry of Forests.*

# USA SUMMER CAMP 1988

FRANK BURLINGHAM

"When I first started Aikido, we would arrive at the dojo early and wait for O Sensei; we waited in line in order of arrival. O Sensei would enter the dojo and use the first in line as uke, then each would uke for the others down the line. If you were the last to arrive you only took ukemi and did not have the opportunity to practise the technique"  
- Osawa Sensei, USA Summer Camp, August, 1988

I have just returned from a summer holiday spent in Canada and the USA. During this time I had the opportunity to attend the east coast summer camp in Bristol, Rhode Island, USA. The camp was taught by Senseis Osawa, Yamada and Kanai.

Prior to camp I spent a few weeks in preparation in Toronto, Canada training at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre under the tuition of Senseis Obata and Ochi, both 5th dans. These practices were hard and demanding in temperatures in excess of 35 Celsius. Apart from these regular practices, I had additional work-outs with my old friend George Hewson, 3rd dan. All this extra training proved most valuable come examination time at camp.

A group of us set out for the camp in the early morning of Monday, August 15. We completed the long journey to Rhode Island in eleven hours, stopping only for gas. The summer camp was located at the Roger Williams College campus and was organized by the New England Aikikai. Training consisted of four one hour classes per day; the remainder was free mat time and the opportunity to sight-see and relax. The classes were taught by Yamada Sensei of New York, 8th dan and Kanai Sensei of Boston, 7th

dan. Special guest instructor was Osawa Sensei of Japan.

Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, 9th dan, was one of O Sensei's earliest students and studied under him for thirty years. Osawa Sensei was made assistant to Waka Sensei (the present Doshu) more than forty years ago and has been a mainstay at Headquarters ever since; with his support of Waka Sensei, Osawa Sensei has served three generations of the Ueshiba family.

Osawa Sensei's moves are extremely smooth and gentle, yet powerful and unrelenting. His expressions and characteristics seem to mimic those of O Sensei, as we have seen on film. This small, 78 year old man demonstrated the importance of TAISABAKI and its great power.

During one class, time was set aside for students to question Osawa Sensei on any aspect of Aikido. Of the many questions asked, all received an honest, well explained reply; the following are two examples:

"What was O sensei like when he taught?", asked one student. Osawa Sensei replied, "Hard, strict and very firm, but gentle and kind." When further questioned, "What was he like as a person?", Osawa Sensei took a long pause and said with a sly, cheeky grin, "The same."

"I have difficulty in co-ordinating my mind, body and spirit; can you give some hints on this?", asked another student. Osawa Sensei replied, "When you can, then I am out of a job - keep trying and eventually you will."

Thursday, the last day, consisted of a morning practice followed by the examination of Kyu grades. After lunch, Dan tests commenced and were most enlightening to watch and participate in.

Friday morning started with a 6:15 AM class attended by many with sore bodies from vigorous practise...and sore heads as the result of the previous night's celebration. After a shower and breakfast came the long journey back to Toronto.

It was a thrilling and very worthwhile experience to attend the camp and to practise with so many high grades from all over North America. Also, to see 250 - 300 Aikido students lose weight through a combination of strenuous practice and cafeteria food was the sight of a life time.

Each year, the USA Summer Camp invites a prestigious guest to teach. In this, my second attendance of the camp, I felt a great honour to experience the unique combination of studying under Osawa Sensei and meeting fellow Aikidoists. I would like to strongly urge any reader who is contemplating a trip to the states to take time out and attend a future Summer Camp.

-----*Mr. Burlingham, 1st degree black belt,  
practises at Victoria Aikikai.*

# AIKIDO FOR CREDIT

ALAN R. DRENGSON

This article describes the introduction of a credit course in Aikido at the University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada. The course is listed as P.E. 104, an activities course, which carries a credit of .75 units. For comparison, an academic course that meets for one term (roughly 13 weeks of classes), for three hours each week, is usually given 1.5 credits. Activities courses generally meet two hours a week, they usually have not only a physical skills component, but also an academic one, which involves content and structure, and a grading system that must be fully explained in a formally prepared, and approved, course outline. Activities courses can require passing tests and/or writing papers on topics related to the activity in question.

The P.E. Department at UVic had not offered a credit course in a martial art before this Aikido course was introduced. When a proposal to teach Aikido was made, the Head of the Department was receptive. After discussions with others, we agreed upon offering Aikido as P.E. 104, on an experimental basis. The course would cover basic techniques and philosophy of Aikido. The first class was held in fall 1987. The course was taught again in spring and fall of 1988, and the spring of 1989.

Preparing the outline and the overall plan for the course was not easy, for it meant attempting to fit the practice to an academic format. The Department supplied sample course outlines and explanations of Department policy. The first efforts at producing the course plan were given to the recycle paper pile. After leaving the matter for a while, the time for writing made itself known. Some of the results are reflected in this article.



This Aikido credit course was not only a new undertaking for me as a teacher, it was also a totally new undertaking for the students who took the course. Only two class members had prior experience when the first class assembled. One of them, Tim Thomas, became my assistant and continues to help greatly with the course. During 28 years of teaching philosophy at the University level, this is only the second time I have taught a P.E. course. Years ago there was a course in basic mountaineering, which taught philosophy and techniques through actual mountain climbing experience away from campus. From teaching both of these experiential practices, I have learned far more applied philosophy than in the classroom.

In P.E. 104 students earn part of their mark by attending and participating in class. Their final grade depends on three things: attendance, proficiency, and an essay written out of class. In the case of attendance, each class meeting is given a set of number of points. Proficiency is measured by the skill-level that can be expected to develop in an introductory course that meets for 25-26 hours of practice. In the P.E. 104 course, we worked with a small number of basic techniques which were decided upon through discussions with Senseis Kopperson, Mcphail and Ishiyama. The technical and formal aspects of the class correspond to the approach used at the Victoria Aikikai.

The outside essay assignment allows students a wide range of choices with respect to topic and approach. It can be a research paper. It can be a technical paper. Most importantly, students are asked to reflect upon Aikido, as they learn and practise, to see how its philosophy and practice are relevant to other areas of their lives, e.g. to their work, recreation and in their interpersonal relationships. They can concentrate on Aikido philosophy, or they can focus on technical aspects or comparisons with other

Budo or activities. In developing their essay, they are expected to read material on Aikido philosophy, in the form of class handouts and books on reserve. Above all, their essays should contain some personal reflections. Talks are given in class on philosophy and technique. The main text we use is Doshu's book **The Spirit of Aikido**, which is the best, all around, thorough introduction to the philosophy and practice of Aikido published in English.

It took time to adjust my expectations to realities, with respect to evaluating proficiency. This is a common problem for beginning teachers, or for teachers entering new subject areas. Since you have not taught the material before, you can not know exactly what to expect. You have little first-hand experience observing such a class as a whole through time, while noting each person's development. Moreover, teaching a beginning course is certainly different from leading a practice with advanced students, as at Victoria Aikikai. With a wide range of experienced practitioners a class flows by itself. This smooth flow has to be worked toward with a class full of beginners.

At the University, an instructor is expected to be completely explicit with respect to expectations and requirements. This is not always easy to comply with, since some things are best learned indirectly. In any event, experience is the best teacher in gaining some sense of reasonable expectations. The first time through this course was very challenging, and I had to learn to observe and participate in new and, for me, revealing ways.

There were the usual sorts of doubts surrounding a new undertaking: I wondered if the demands on time, ability and vigor could be met. A good rule is, when doubts arise, practise! Aikido had already shown me many things about teaching and learning in general, which have become part

of my practice in other courses. Through teaching regularly one begins to realize that practice over time internalizes a great deal more of an art or subject than we are usually aware of at that time. In the harmony of practice, instruction comes in many ways. There is a natural, spontaneous sense of direction that comes through the ceremony of Aikido practice. Practising together creates receptive and attentive states, out of which inspiration arises.

Some students in each of the groups had problems with the essay assignment at first. I talked about writing problems in the following sort of way. Many of us are reluctant to try writing about Aikido. It is very difficult to do justice to such a vast subject, and our ignorance seems very great. Aikido becomes more mysterious to us and more and more intimate. Also, it is a subject to which deep respect must be given, and perhaps we fear that we might say something which is not quite right. This is more than fear of personal mistake, it is fear that we might unknowingly say something not fully respectful. In facing these fears, it is well to remember that reflecting on practice and sharing with others adds dimensions to our understanding, and it is yet another way to practise. We should approach a writing assignment in the same way we approach practice. The blank page is the dojo floor, the pen the jo, the tradition and philosophy the unwritten outline (order). In Kata practice, we learn to relax and concentrate so as to let the actions flow, trusting to the spirit of aiki. If we practise Aikido in writing, the thoughts and feelings will flow through words that spontaneously arise as we focus on the task at hand. Perfecting a paragraph is like perfecting a technique, a jo or sword stroke; we work at it again and again, aiming to make the words transparent to the reader, so that the meaning and intent are clear. Like the repetition of practising katas and techniques, writing

and rewriting is a way to practise skills of communication (aiki) as part of Aikido practice. Practice brings increasing clarity in both contexts. Writing in this way becomes an adventure, as we learn to trust our inner sense of what is right, what fits. As we work on the material, as we practise, new insights emerge and new connections are made. Writing, then, becomes a practice, rather than a chore, a task, or an unpleasant thing to be over and done with. It can be treasured for its own sake, as well as for its other values.

The paper by Tim Thomas (Aikido Forum #6), and Scott Redgrove's paper in this issue are samples of essays written for P.E. 104. Both of these essays provide observations and insights relevant to our collective learning. They are also a pleasure to read for their clarity and parsimony. We are grateful that Tim and Scott have shared with us their personal reflections on the practice and philosophy of Aikido.

The other papers written for P.E. 104 have also been, on the whole, quite good. Some of them were beautiful pieces of writing, which had been given a great deal of care and time. Others were sincere and, even if not finely crafted, insightful. These various exercises together taught all of us many things. I am grateful to the people in these classes for giving me the opportunity to enter the role of learner through assuming the tasks of Sensei in this credit course.

In terms of progress in proficiency of techniques, the classes have been more or less the same. They reached skill levels comparable to the same number of hours in noncredit beginning courses. The structure and the context of a credit course did not interfere, as I was worried it might, with authentic practice. In two out of three courses, we enrolled to near capacity, which is 16. The average for four courses was 12 persons per term. At UVic there is

also an evening noncredit course taught by Kopperson Sensei, and there are club practices, so students taking the credit courses can continue in either of these other practices. P.E. 104 can only be taken for a credit course once.

Students who have taken the P.E. 104 Aikido course have been from a variety of faculties and departments at the University. The course is open to any UVic student. The feedback that has been received indicates students have found the course a rewarding one. Some continue to practise with the UVic Aikido Club, or with Victoria Aikikai.

What seems to have impressed students most is the depth in Aikido, that we cannot, at first, see on its martial surface. When one observes it for the first time it might seem just a set of martial techniques. As practice continues students began to learn the philosophy through practise. Many students have remarked to me that they were amazed that practising such techniques could enable them to see more deeply into self, others and world. Some say they are surprised when old wounds, psychological, spiritual, and physical, began to hurt in practice, and then maybe in their daily lives. Some are also struck by how during practice they sometimes sense the flow of energy, warmth and well being that comes through our practice together.

-----*Dr. Drengson, 1st degree blackbelt, is a Philosophy professor and Aikido instructor at The University of Victoria.*

# MUSIC AND AIKIDO -- A COMPARISON

SCOTT REDGROVE

The purpose of this paper is to discuss a relationship between the study of Aikido and the study of music. It is the author's contention that the philosophical basis of Aikido can be readily applied to the study of the classical guitar, and, moreover, that both of these arts demand of the artist a conception of his discipline which goes beyond the merely technical to the spiritual. (Although this discussion will limit itself to the guitar, it will become apparent that the principles discussed could easily be applied to many other musical instruments as well.)

Insofar as Aikido describes a relationship between two or more people, it does not speak directly to the study of music (considered here as a relationship between a solo performer and his or her instrument). However, there are a number of other similarities between these two arts. For instance, there is the concept of "relaxed alertness". Many people would claim that such a concept involves a contradiction, that one cannot be at once both relaxed and alert. The student of Aikido does not look at it this way in fact, the Aikidoist would say that to be fully alert, one must necessarily be relaxed. But what do we mean by "relaxed" and "alert"?

Difficulty with this concept stems from a misunderstanding of what constitutes relaxation and alertness. To most Westerners (that is, "western" not in the sense of Levis and cowboys, but distinct from the philosophical and spiritual mindset of the far east), to be relaxed is to be in a more or less drug-induced state, in a semi-prone position on a Lazy-Boy, glued to the proverbial tube... Similarly, to be alert, it is thought, is to be keyed-up, in a sweat, teeth and

fists clenched, pupils dilated -- on the peak of a fit! This is not how the Aikido student thinks; nor, I would claim, is this how the competent musician thinks.

To be relaxed and alert in Aikido is to be alert enough that one cannot be taken by surprise, but relaxed enough that one is capable of responding when called upon, that is, one is not so tense that one's muscles, ligaments, etc. are fatigued and therefore unable to function effectively. The mind and the body are wide awake, yet both are quiet, still. A similar state of affairs exists for the musician.

To play the guitar well, one must be at once both relaxed and alert. If one is tense one cannot effectively, smoothly and accurately, pluck the strings, or finger the board. If one is too relaxed, however, one loses a sense of direction and purpose while playing. The piece comes across disjointed, difficult. This is related to a point regarding the role of the ego in music and Aikido: it has no role!

If one is trying to execute a technique in Aikido and one is at the same time thinking about one's appearance: do I look silly doing this? will others laugh at me here? etc., the technique is forgotten and consequently is poorly executed. Similarly, if while playing the guitar one thinks: am I playing well? what do people think of my playing? etc., the music is forgotten, and consequently the piece, passage or phrase, loses its meaning, its "art". In fact, if the ego is very active, the music (as the Aikido) may break-up altogether! Consider what the Aikido practitioner means when he claims that the attacker in a situation is at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the one attacked. To be the attacker is of course to make the first move. To make a move is commit oneself. To commit oneself is to exhaust, or at least to limit, one's options. And to make a move is to telegraph one's intentions to the defender. Now if the

defender is relaxed and alert, if he has a quiet mind and an open eye, then he has unlimited options. He is, therefore, in a state of awareness that allows him to "respond" rather than "react" to the attacker.

Thus, a certain state of body and mind is necessary in order to master both Aikido and the guitar. This points to a remarkable similarity between these arts (perhaps this is what distinguishes them as arts). In both cases, one must learn that a proper execution of technique can only come by way of a certain state of being, which suggests that neither art can be reduced to mere technique.

Aikido is not simply a glossary of techniques that, once learned, afford the practitioner the right to claim mastery over the art. Similarly, music is not reducible to a corpus of techniques the mastery of which produces a master musician. This is true for at least two reasons. On the one hand, Aikido recognizes that no two situations are precisely alike: one may encounter an enormous number of situations, both in the dojo and on the street. The same conditions obtain for the musician. Since new and innovative music is composed every day, no musician can hope to get "the" vocabulary down pat.

On the other hand, Aikido is more than physical movement, e.g., this foot moves here, this hand there etc..., it is, as suggested above, an activity of the mind as much as of the body. I have already mentioned two roles played by the mind: adopting a disposition of relaxed attentiveness, and suppressing the ego (which might really be called "non-suppressing" the ego, insofar as the "activity", suppressing the ego, involves the departure of one's concentration from the immediate technique, and inhibits one's performance as much as the very problem one is trying to suppress, a sort of iatrogenic phenomenon). These mental



activities are not active only in the immediate situation, but ideally, all the time.

To adopt a philosophy is not simply to make use of a few principles here and there in life as they suit one's immediate purpose. To adopt a philosophy is to adhere to a certain way of living, to nurture a certain attitude of mind and body that remains with a person every hour of the day. To have a philosophy is therefore to "live" that philosophy in the fullest possible sense of that word. The basic philosophical tenet of Aikido is that one should strive as far as possible to be in harmony with one's environment, and with oneself. This principle is evident in the dojo in many ways, from etiquette to technique.

Unlike many other martial arts, Aikido technique is not based on the principle of meeting blow for blow. Rather, Aikido technique is based on the principle that the best defense is to blend with the partner's motion and energy and to use as a means of forming a less violent, a more harmonious and, eventually, a more humane, relationship with him. Thus the physical component of Aikido incorporates the philosophical: reconciliation and "harmony". Moreover, the principle of harmony isn't restricted to those times when one is confronted by an aggressive person.

"Harmony", properly understood, does not allow for the confrontation to develop in the first place, because to "live" this philosophy of harmony is to be aware of the situations which harbour a potential for confrontation. Moreover, to live in harmony is to present, by way of possessing, a non-confrontational disposition, thereby reducing the chance of meeting with aggression. Thus, the principle of harmony is applicable not just in the dojo, not just in-a-confrontation, but as a general disposition and attitude towards life, a way of being.

The musician, if he does not already make use of something akin to the philosophy of harmony, would certainly find such a philosophy beneficial to his practice. Of course, the guitarist does not have to worry about being attacked by his instrument. Guitars seldom leap ninja-like from behind the curtains, as does Clouseau's Kato in the Pink Panther. However, the musician, if he or she is to play competently, must have a conception of wholeness about his or her practice. To be a musician is not to be musical only when playing one's instrument, it is to "live" with music; it is, at times, to eat, sleep, dream and breathe music. In another respect, to be in harmony with one's practice as a musician is to be at one with the instrument, just as the Aikidoist is at one with his or her partner. For the guitarist, this means to hold the instrument gently, to cradle it, to sit upright and relaxed, to move one's fingers effortlessly but deliberately and accurately over the strings. For the Aikidoist, this means to be in tune with one's centre and with the partner's centre.

To conclude, if the musician limits his understanding to the notes, he will gain poor understanding of the phrase. If he limits his understanding to the phrase, he will gain a poor understanding of the piece, and, consequently, of the music itself. Similarly, if the Aikidoist limits his understanding to the particular movements in a technique, he will gain a poor understanding of the technique. If he limits his understanding to the techniques, he will gain a poor understanding of the spiritual component of Aikido, and, consequently, of Aikido itself. Thus, both music and Aikido are more than activities of the body; they are activities of the mind, body and spirit -- they are states of being.

-----*Mr. Redgrove, 5th kyu,*  
*has continued to practise Aikido at the University of Victoria*  
*since taking the credit course.*

# ELOCUTION CONTEST

**KIM RIDDICK**

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the jury, friends; good evening. My name is Kim Riddick. This evening I'd like to speak to you about the most recent of the Japanese martial arts, Aikido.

The word Ai-ki-do means the way of harmony with the universal spirit and energy. It is a physical and spiritual discipline taking the form of a martial art of self defense. It promotes peace and harmony among people.

To understand a little more about Aikido, it is necessary to know something of the life of Master Ueshiba, Aikido's founder. He devoted his life to the pursuit of the true martial art. However, the traditional martial arts did not satisfy him. He constantly questioned their values - aggression, physical force, the need to defeat others. In his spiritual pursuit of the true martial art, Master Ueshiba was profoundly inspired by the Omotokyo School of Shintoism based on love and harmony with nature.

After many years of studying the martial arts and reflection, Master Ueshiba concluded that love is the essence of the universe. Furthermore martial art training must consist of nourishing the love of God and one's breast. From these philosophical tenets, he adapted the techniques of jujutsu and the Japanese sword into a universal system where all movement reflects this philosophy.

His reputation as a master of martial arts was second to none in Japan and he was known as "O-Sensei" - Grand Master. Nevertheless he earned his living as a farmer.

Through training, the Aikido practitioner becomes stronger, but more gentle, more alert but more intuitive, more solid but more harmonious. Without adversarial relationships, Aikido unifies opposing forces in unresisting harmony. The student learns to hold himself stable but mobile, his centre of gravity low and to breathe naturally.

His force comes from the centre and is developed by breathing. This force called kokyo-ryoku, improves with age in contrast with muscular force. Each person must find kokyo-ryoku within himself.

During practice, the student marries his movements to those of others. He avoids collisions and conflicts and directs others' energy so that it reinforces his own. The techniques include falls, immobilization of the joints of both the left and right sides. Their complexity and the intensity of practice varies with experience.

The student learns to put aside his personal worries to be aware of those around him. He forgets himself to discover the force of nature within himself. Aikido helps us separate ourselves from aggression, possessiveness, dependence and the pursuit of the pleasure of the moment.

In Aikido there are no tournaments, no winners and no losers. The student perfects himself: as he masters the art he masters himself. Thus the able practitioner is inspired by Aikido principles in social settings and in everything he does in life.

-----*Kim Riddick has practised Aikido for several years at Victoria Aikikai in B.C. He is in grade 7 at L'Ecole Brodeur - public school for francophones. He presented this text at the annual school speech contest.*

# CONCOURS D'ART ORATOIRE - L'AÏKIDO

KIM RIDDICK

Mesdames, messieurs, membres du jury, chers amis, bonsoir. Je m'appelle Kim Riddick. Ce soir j'aimerais vous parler du plus récent des arts martiaux japonais, l'Aïkido.

Le mot Ai-ki-do veut dire la voie de l'harmonie avec l'esprit et l'énergie universelle. C'est une discipline physique et spirituelle, en forme d'art martial de défense. Elle proumouve la paix et l'harmonie entre les êtres humaines.

Pour comprendre un peu plus sur l'Aïkido, il est nécessaire de connaître l'évolution de la vie de Maître Ueshiba, son fondateur. Il s'est dévoué toute sa vie à la recherche du vrai et véritable art martial. Toutefois les arts martiaux traditionnels ne le satisfaisaient pas. Il remettait constamment en question les valeurs qu'ils manifestent - l'aggression, la force physique, la nécessité de vaincre les autres. Dans sa poursuite spirituelle du vrai art martial, Maître Ueshiba était profondément inspiré par l'Omotokyo Ecole de Shintoïsme basé sur l'amour et l'harmonie avec la Nature.

Après de nombreuses années d'études des arts martiaux et de réflexion, Maître Ueshiba est parvenu à la conclusion que l'amour est l'essentiel de l'univers. De plus l'entrafnement d'un art martial doit consister à nourrir l'amour de Dieu dans son sein. A partir de cette philosophie de base il a adapté les techniques de jujutsu et de l'épée japonaise en un système universelle où chaque mouvement reflète cette philosophie.

Sa réputation de maître des arts martiaux était hors pair au Japon et il était connu par son titre O-Sensei, "Grand

Maître". Toutefois il gagné sa vie comme cultivateur.

Par l'entraînement le pratiquant d'Aïkido devient plus fort mais plus gentille, plus alerte mais plus intuitif, plus solide mais plus harmonieux. Sans adversaire, l'Aïkido unifie les forces opposées en une harmonie sans résistance. L'étudiant de l'Aïkido apprend à se tenir solidement, mais mobile, le centre de gravité bas, et il respire naturellement.

Sa force vient du centre fait par la respiration. Cette force, kokyū-ryoku, s'améliore avec l'âge contrairement à la force musculaire. C'est à l'individu de la trouver à l'intérieur de lui-même.

Pendant la pratique, l'étudiant marie ses mouvements avec ceux des autres. Il évite les collisions et les conflits et il dirige l'énergie des autres pour renforcer la sienne. Les techniques comprennent les chutes et l'immobilisation des joints de coté gauche et de coté droit. Leur complexité et l'intensité varie selon l'expérience. L'étudiant peut ainsi progresser à son propre rythme.

L'étudiant apprend à mettre de coté ses soucis personnelles pour rester à l'écoute de son entourage. Il oublie lui-même pour découvrir la force de la Nature à l'intérieur de lui-même. L'Aïkido nous aide à nous détacher de l'aggression, de la possessivité, de la dépendence, de la poursuite des plaisirs momentanés.

Dans l'Aïkido il n'y a pas de tournois, pas de gagnant, pas de perdant. Par la maîtrise de l'Aïkido, l'étudiant se perfectionne, il se maîtrise lui-même. La pratique physique de l'art se manifeste dans l'esprit. C'est ainsi que l'adèpte s'inspire des principes d'Aïkido dans les occasions sociales, dans tout ce qu'il fait dans la vie.

-----Veuillez lire la biographie de Kim dans sons article écrit en Anglais.