

## Aikido Seminar at Lilleshall, England, August 3-5, 2007 by Hoa Newens Sensei

At a recent seminar that I conducted in August at Lilleshall, England, there was no tea time provided on the schedule, as you might have expected from the English organizer. With a daily schedule of five classes on three consecutive days, we had not time for tea.

Originally built in 1831 as the hunting lodge and family retreat of the Duke of Sutherland, Lilleshall Hall is now better known as Lilleshall National Sports Centre. Set in a lush and secluded surroundings, Lilleshall is a flagship residential training centre and an award winning national center of excellence for many of the UK's top sportsmen and women.



There were about 50 participants from seven dojos from different areas of England. Most of them stayed in the dormitories at the center. A typical day starts with a full hot English breakfast at the dining hall followed by a short break then two classes in the morning. We take a break at noon for a hot lunch served at the dining hall. Then three classes follow in the afternoon. Considering that English meal almost always includes gravy (I have fond memories of the Yorkshire pudding. It's actually an open-shell pie with sausage and lot of gravy) they were glad that I taught mostly *bukiwaza* in the afternoon. At about 3:30 PM tea is served in the tea room, but no aikidoists were in attendance since they were all absorbed in the task of perfecting their weapon techniques. At six

o'clock we have dinner which always includes a type of pudding. Despite this meal regimen, it was surprising that I did not gain any pounds at the end of the trip except for the few in my pockets.



Since this was a national sports center, the dining hall has instructions posted on the wall about how to observe a healthy diet and the food served is rated as "excellent", "good" or "avoid", according to their contribution to the sports diet. As you can guess, most of the good tasting stuff such as raising bread pudding with custard sauce is on the "avoid" list. It was also inspiring experience since we always dine in the company of athletes from other sports such as soccer and hockey and they are all fit and lean. I wished that our government would follow this example and regard sports and fitness as national priority and set up national training facilities.



After dinner, the activities continued in the next building, the pub. This is a typical English pub with a variety of beers on the tab and pool tables. This is an English tradition as well as an Aikido tradition in which students gather around the teacher at the end of day at seminars to get the teacher's view on various Aikido topics. I did most of the talking while my hosts did all the drinking.

The organizers were senseis Paul McGlone, John Longford and Tim Buswell who are on the board of directors of the Takemusu Iwama Aikido Europe, an organization that is headed by Tony Sergeant Sensei, 6<sup>th</sup> dan, a long-time student of Saito Morihiro Shihan, and a good friend of mine. I could not find better hosts than these gentlemen and their students. Tim Buswell in particular found the time and resources to take us sightseeing in Stratford-upon-Avon (Shakespeare's birth town), Warwick Castle (the largest medieval castle in England) and the Iron Gorge (the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution). Information about our British sister organization can be found at <http://www.takemusu-iwama-aikido.org/>

All seminar participants came in good spirit, trained really hard and left highly energized, looking forward to next year's event, which will be held on the island of Jersey, off the southern coast of England, with Bill Witt Shihan and Tony Sergeant Sensei leading.

Note that Sergeant Sensei will be the guest teacher at the 2008 Memorial Day Gasshuku in Tahoe next May.

It is always inspiring to me to travel thousands of miles away and find many people who are as dedicated to the same cause as we are and to be able to make instant connection with them at the gut level without exchanging any greetings other than "onegai shimasu". For this reason I encourage all students to seize opportunities to travel far and wide on your aikido journey and find inspiration to renew your commitment to this path.

## Notes from the Tahoe Gasshuku 2007 by Toby Hargreaves

(Editor's Note: At the beginning of this academic year, Toby traveled to Japan via the University of California foreign study program to study the Japanese language and culture. He will return to the dojo in 2008. Thanks, Toby, for contributing these detailed personal notes on the seminar!)

### Friday night

Judith Robinson from Tucson taught Shomen Uchi Ikkyo omote and ura. These represent the two main techniques of Aikido: irimi and tenkan. Irimi is taking control, entering and being unwavering and confident. Tenkan is turning, opening, receiving, sensitive technique. Yang and yin respectively, though I think there are yin and yang elements in all techniques.

Judith taught that in order to protect uke, you must be in firm control, even more so with children and old people. I need work on this. I lack the confidence to go in and really control someone's body—I can hardly control my own. And not just people who I've trained with in Davis for a while, but complete strangers I don't know anything about. Especially difficult is training with people who are even more beginners than me. Then I really have to know what I'm doing.

She also said: move at the touch, don't hesitate. Don't worry about getting stuck because in Aikido you're never stuck, there's always something you can do.

### Saturday

Amazing training today. I woke up from inspirational dreams and went outside in the beautiful Tahoe morning. I went down through the campground to the lake and touched the calm, limpid water. Came back and had a breakfast of toast and oatmeal.

Training began with Bill Witt Shihan, then a class by Michael O'Quinn, both from Silicon

Valley. Then there were four dan tests. 3 Sandan tests—Richard from Oakland, Simone from Marin, and David from Silicon Valley—and a Yondan demo by Steve from Oakland.

What was interesting was how different the tests were. Simone looks about 75 years old and everyone clapped and cheered after her randori. I think the point is that the tests are an expression of each person's spirit, maturity, and attitude. It is not a fixed standard—they all passed their tests even though they were all at different ability levels. But it's cool to see how tests make people grow in confidence and ability.

Lunch was delicious. Bread and cheese with mustard and mayo and salad and carrots and ranch dressing and ½ of a banana and 1½ cookies. It think it was the same as last year, but it tasted new and delicious this time. We all hung out on the blacktop together. Tom (from Reno) and Joe (from Truckee) joined us. It was like elementary school all over again.

The next class was Hans Goto Sensei. He talked about how incredible an experience it was to be thrown by Saito Sensei. He also talked about the importance of connection and extension by both uke and nage.

Then Sensei did a class and was in fine form. In Tai no Henko, look straight ahead, in the same direction as uke, and let out a mighty kiai, extending ki both out through your hands and down through your legs. The Sensei did Shomen Uchi Shiho Nage and talked about the spiral nature of energy. Then we did more spiral techniques, working more and more with ki no nagare energy flow than with static.

Sensei talked about how Terry Dobson—the first Westerner to study with O'Sensei—was this huge guy but was always talking about love and his movements were very spontaneous, flowing and soft. Sensei also talked about Wu Wei, the Taoist philosophy of “not doing” and how O'Sensei would hardly move an inch and the attackers fell down. He was just a magnet or vacuum of energy; he drew his opponents in and

they fell. The more firm, stable, centered, calm, and grounded you are, the more you can do this.

The Gasshuku was great. I'm sure I learned a lot more than I'm aware of. I just soaked it all in—a lot of new ideas planted in my head. There's something magical, mystical, and deep about Aikido. It works into your bones and dreams. I feel changed, enhanced a little by this weekend. It's a totally different world up there in Gasshuku-land, a kind of utopia. If only the rest of the year could be as filled with hard work, learning, friends, and joy...

### Sunday

The most memorable thing about Sunday was the bokken class by Rosemarie Herzig. We began by meditating with our bokken, holding like a newborn infant. Then we did some of the suburi. I remember she said “Don't just do it for yourself; Bring something into the world.” Then we did the Migi and Hidari Awase with a partner. We were in two concentric circles and the inner circle would rotate each time we changed partners. Herzig Sensei was radiating love and I could feel her warmth in sharing her teachings with us. If I'm every in Switzerland, I'll be sure to stop by her Dojo.



**Outdoor photo of Tahoe seminar participants.**

## Davis Martial Arts Festival is Born by Rebecca Garabed

It all started with a list. Since becoming a student of martial arts in Davis, it seems that I notice things related to martial arts. Last fall, after I had commented for the twentieth time that there seemed to be a lot of martial arts schools in Davis, I started keeping a list of schools. First it was a mental list, then a piece of paper, then a spreadsheet with locations, styles, phone numbers, meeting times, websites, etc.

Did you know there are over 39 martial arts groups in Davis? Though most of these groups are based at the University and groups form and dissolve on a regular basis, that's still a lot of martial arts knowledge to be floating around a town of 60,000 people. But, to see all of these groups in action, you would have to go to more than fifteen venues and spend several weeks, because some groups meet only once a week and many practices are held during the popular 5-8pm time slots on weekdays. Many martial arts stories from kung-fu movies to O Sensei's biography show how martial artists can improve their practice by studying different arts, but the stories never mention how to find the time to see all of the martial arts and figure out which one(s) to study.

So, I thought it would be nice if all of the groups could get together on one day to show off their arts to each other and to the town as a whole. With lots of help and encouragement that idea became a reality on April 28, 2007. True, only 7 of the 39 groups participated, and instructors couldn't teach their arts in clinics as planned due to problems with liability insurance (a seldom-studied branch of self-defense). Still, the approximately 200 participants and spectators got to learn about Kendo, Jujitsu, Capoeira, Tai Chi, Aikido, Fencing and Judo.

For me the experience turned out to be more learning about event planning, fund raising, advertising and management than learning about martial arts. But getting to know the different martial artists in town and watching as everyone enjoyed the demonstrations was rewarding and helped to motivate me to continue with martial arts and community service. I suppose the best Aikido lesson I can draw from this experience is that preparation for any event whether it is a festival or a test begins long before the date of the event – even longer than you'd think it would. Now recruiting for Davis Martial Arts Festival 2008!

## Davis Martial Arts Festival Photos and Photo Captions by Kent Standley



**Newsflash: KI CAPTURED BY CAMERA!**  
Terrance learns similarity between ki and a pressurized fire hose while attacking Sensei and receiving this irimi nage *Smackdown!*



**The blood feud between Aniel and Paul begins with this punishing kokyunage as Paul is helplessly flattened to the ground.**



**Sean winds up for a devastating shihonage on Zogt...**



**Rebecca mercilessly pile drives Paul with this pulverizing kokyunage.**



**...and ruthlessly pins Zogt as payback for the brutal koshinage seconds earlier.**



**Relentless Zogt finishes off Sean with this merciless koshinage. Or so he thinks...**



**Zogt's attempts a surprise bokken strike while Sean savagely plots his attack with a staff but Sensei's already to rumble.**



**Sensei wreaks destruction in response to the unwise gang attack by Sean, Zogt and Terence.**



**Zogt's advantage with his surprise bokken attack is quickly reversed as Sensei disarms and grinds him painfully into the turf.**



**The Final Result**

## **Aikido and Therapy** **By Owen Lawyer**

One of the things I've noticed as a practitioner of aikido is that it is present in every aspect of life. Whether I'm driving in traffic or navigating the needs of my mother in law, Aikido is always present and "practicing aikido" has assisted me in many situations outside of the dojo.

I am currently attending National University with the Goal of becoming a Marriage and Family Therapist. As I learn more about therapy, I see the concepts of Aikido within the methods of effective therapies. This makes sense to me as therapy is essentially assisting someone who is out of balance in finding truth and regaining balance in their life, which is a fundamental aspect of Aikido. One aspect of therapy in particular has mirrored my experience at Aikido Institute Davis. That is the process of leading another to clarity and harmony with their goal.

This is an integral part of therapy, as one cannot force a client to move out of dysfunction and into self-harmony. In fact, a therapist must not only be able to see what is not functional but also be able to assist a client integrating the understanding of the dysfunction into their awareness of reality. For example if the therapist tells the client what they think the client's problem is, the client might not claim it as being true or be unable to fully connect it to their center or sense of reality. Whereas if the therapist can assist the client in moving to a place of discovering the insight "on their own" then the client is much more likely to claim this new understanding and assimilate it into their framework of reality.

I find this so beautifully parallels the process in which a Sempai leads me into harmony with my own technique. Sometimes a Sempai will know the technique and try to force my body into the "correct" position. But because the "insight" is in the Sempai's mind and it has not occurred in

mine, the fact that my body is moved to the correct position does not give me the knowing to flow to that position during the next usage of the technique.

On the other hand, I've had many experiences with Sempai here at Aikido Institute Davis in which the Sempai not only see where I am not connecting with a part of the technique, but they also have the awareness to have me try something or to say something that brings an insight to my mind. This allows me to "own it" and integrate it into my technique. In these moments rather than keeping the insight in their mind and trying to manipulate my body into the right position, the Sempai attempts to transfer the insight into my mind and then my mind manipulates my body closer to the appropriate position each time I practice the technique.

It reminds of the famous anecdote: If you give a man a fish he will eat for a day, if you teach a man to fish he will eat for a lifetime.

Another way to say this is: If a Sempai puts your body in the right position you will be there for one technique. If a Sempai helps your mind get in the appropriate position your body will move closer to that position whenever it is appropriate to flow there.

I am very honored for the gift of the aikido that is shared with me by everyone that practices at Aikido Institute Davis. I would like to bow deeply and with reverence to those who have reached the place of seeing that they must connect with my mind to connect with my body.

## **The Discovery of the Kiai** **by Marion Donehower**

When I started aikido in the seventies and heard for the first time a kiai, the loud and deep sound surprised and startled me, especially since my teacher gave a long and complicated explanation

of how to do it right. It sounded too difficult for me. I didn't even dare to try. I certainly didn't feel qualified.

Later I concentrated more on Tai Chi, with the emphasis on natural hara breathing. My natural breathing rhythm and the basics such as posture, complete relaxation, moving as a unity, energy starting upwards from the hind leg became the focus of the next years' practice and I forgot all about the kiai.

A couple of years ago when I lost my physical balance, all these basic elements, which I had worked on, helped me to go back to aikido. Surprisingly for myself, I discovered the key element to my puzzle ("how can I be upright and not fall down?") was actually my breathing. The more I concentrated on my breath and coordinated my breath with my movements, the more stable I was on the ground. By organizing my mind with my body I was able to overcome a lot of my disabilities. I also discovered that a harmonious rhythm occurred when I paid attention to the extension and concentration of my breath. Consequently I started to experience the inner and outer circles of the aikido movements and I felt that my aikido was more extending. I was thinking and feeling more in harmony with the spirals and circles of the aikido movements. The most enjoyable experience, however, was the rediscovery of the kiai and the use of all kinds of soft and hard sounds. The sounds were a tremendous help to focus and ground the energy. At the same time, the sounds moved energy out to the partner and brought a sense of relaxation. So please have fun experimenting with the kiai!

### **The Importance of Dojo Cleaning by Terence Phan**

Though it may seem trivial, cleaning is integral to Aikido practice. It is a student's most basic responsibility to help maintain the dojo in

immaculate condition. The act of cleaning fosters awareness, gratitude and humility within the student. By sharing in cleaning tasks, a student focuses his full energy towards ensuring the safety and comfort of others during future training. Idle thoughts cease and one's mind and body harmonize towards a positive goal; a parallel to ideal Aikido training.

### **Aikido and Macrobiotics: A Review of *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido* by William Gleason by Bruce Donehower**

One afternoon about thirty years ago I was practicing my Tai Chi form in what I thought was an empty classroom of the Kushi Institute in Brookline, Massachusetts. I had been living in the Boston area studying macrobiotics with Michio Kushi, and part of my questioning at the time had led me to an interest in martial arts. Since macrobiotics places great emphasis on "the unique principle" (meaning: to see life as an interplay of contrasting principles, contraction and expansion, yin and yang) I had gravitated to Tai Chi as a way to explore this concept through movement discipline.

It was a quiet afternoon in spring or early fall, and the sunlight shone into the vacant classroom and made the polished warehouse floor shine with a golden glow. I felt very peaceful as I moved through the Tai Chi postures.

Suddenly there was a great CRASH! on the floor behind me. It sounded like bookcase had fallen over, but there was no furniture in the room at all.

I startled and looked about.

I saw a fellow of about thirty-something years of age getting up off the wooden floor behind me in the middle of the room. I thought he must have slipped. But then he did the same thing a second time!—he threw himself head over heels and

landed on the wooden floor in what I later came to recognize as an aikido hard fall.

The stranger stood up and smiled, none the worse for the exercise, and he excused himself for interrupting my Tai Chi practice. He said he was testing the resiliency of the floor for aikido practice. His name was William Gleason.

Shortly after that encounter William Gleason started an aikido dojo on the first floor of the Kushi Institute in or next to the yoga classroom run by the Korean macrobiotic teacher Bo-in Lee. Several of the members of my study house joined the dojo, and I tried the practice, too, although at that time I was more interested in Tai Chi, and I soon left Boston to teach English in Japan.

Many years later in Sacramento and now a student of aikido, I heard William Gleason's name again. My sensei at the time was reading William Gleason's book, *The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido* (Destiny Books, 1995), which we have in our library at the Davis dojo.

I'd like to share something of this book with you, for the book gives a very clear and detailed introduction to two topics of great relevance to aikido: kotodama and the unifying principle of yin and yang known as macrobiotics.

In the short space of this article I can't do more than hit a few key points, but let's start with macrobiotics.

The person responsible for bringing macrobiotics to the west, Sakurazawa Yukikazu (known popularly as George Ohsawa) was a friend of Osensei and had a great respect for Osensei's aikido. Ohsawa was a philosopher of life, spiritual adventurer, and prolific author. In *The Book of Judo* he wrote:

*Aikido constitutes a principle underlying all religion, philosophy and science and it can, therefore, help to solve the ideological problems of the world. Through practical movements which require judgment, reasoning, and instant*

*action, it teaches respect for others, the superiority of softness and adaptability over strength and unreasonableness, and a view of life based on harmony and natural order.*

The goal of macrobiotics is freedom, and this freedom—mental, physical, and spiritual—is realized through daily practice in the application of what Ohsawa called “the unique principle.” This unique principle is his way of referring to the interplay of two constitutive principles of existence, often named yin and yang. While the foundation point for macrobiotic practice is an understanding of the unique principle as it relates to food, macrobiotics is not a diet—macrobiotics is the practice and application of the unique principle to food and every other aspect of life, and as such it is an attempt to find ethical harmony in the midst of constant change.

Likewise, as William Gleason writes: “aikido is the study of nature's laws and the universal principle underlying them.” Aikido expresses this study and understanding through movement discipline (“aikido is a form of moving prayer,” Gleason writes), whereas macrobiotics begins from a more philosophical point of inquiry and attempts to develop our understanding of the application of the unique principle through the study of food, health, natural events, and changing environmental conditions. Given its practical emphasis, macrobiotics starts with health and diet and thus is often mistaken as a diet or medical regimen; just as, on the other side of the coin, aikido starts with martial techniques and is often mistaken as being solely a martial art.

However, the larger spiritual goals of both disciplines (harmony, happiness, and freedom) are the same, and William Gleason's book helps the student of aikido to appreciate the more profound philosophical foundations underlying aikido techniques.

*The movement of the solar system exemplifies aiki principle. The*

*centrifugal force of earth tries to fly the planet off into the realms of infinite space; at the same time, the centripetality created by infinite expansion (heaven's force) balances this, and thus is earth confined to cycling peacefully within its orbit around the sun. This same principle exists in the spiral form of irimi nage.*

In a chapter of the book entitled "Practice and Principle" Sensei Gleason makes the comment that:

*To practice aikido is to manifest our natural state; to bring true nature to the surface. Aiki is our innate perfection. It cannot be taught; we must discover it within ourselves.*

Aikido and macrobiotics share a common viewpoint derived from ancient times: that just as human beings can never separate themselves from the dynamic interplay of yin and yang, so too in aikido or macrobiotics we are not practicing to acquire anything, we are practicing to allow our innate spiritual nature to shine.

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I recommend that you check out this book from the dojo library. In the next issue of the newsletter I will try to summarize the second part of the book's contents: kotodama.

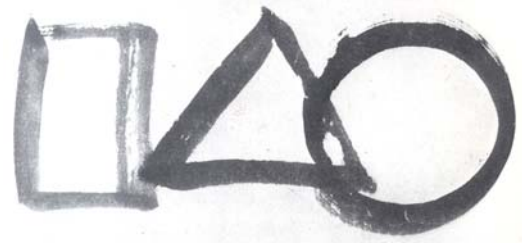
In closing, here are two quotes, one from Osensei and one from George Ohsawa:

*If you think practicing aikido is hard work, try eating all morning.*

– Osensei

*If your way to nirvana seems infinitely long, your orientation can't be right.*

– George Ohsawa



## Promotions

### Spring 2007

Toby Hargreaves	3 K
Katheen Holder	4 K
Joseph Galamba	5 K
Saif Baig	6 K
Bene Eibensteiner	6 K

### Fall 2007

Shannon Newbold	3 K
Bene Eibensteiner	5 K

**Congratulations to all the candidates!**

## Dojo Calendar

- **October 13**  
**Dojo Cleaning.** 11:30-12:30  
Please sign up for a task. Sign-up sheet is posted on the dojo bulleting board.
- **October 17, 27, Nov. 3** Tai Chi  
Canceled.
- **November 3**  
10:00-11:00 Class with Bill Witt Shihan.  
11:00-12:30 Dan Exams  
12:30-1:00 Party
- **November 17**  
9:00 - Noon  
**Chi Kung workshop "Release Tension, Emotions and Attachment".** No regular classes.
- **November 22-23**  
Dojo closed for Thanksgiving.  
**Check the website calendar for updates!**