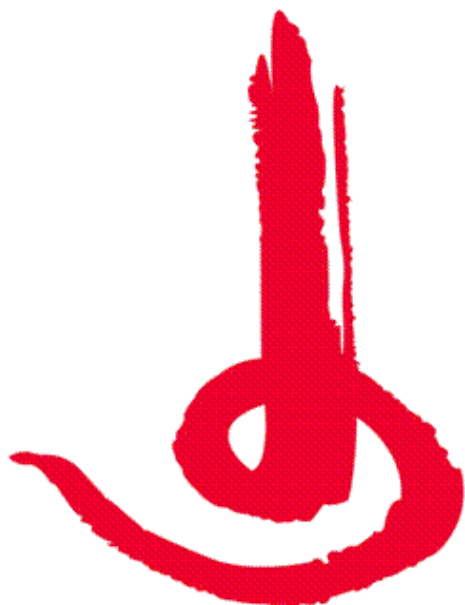


**Awase** is the newsletter of the  
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## Ranks in Aikido

by Hoa Newens, Sensei

Going through the ranks is an integral part of the Aikido experience. An adult student typically begins at the rank of 6<sup>th</sup> Kyuu and undergoes a series of exams during the next three to five (four on average) years of training to get to the end of 1<sup>st</sup> Kyuu. Thereafter one takes the exam for the rank of *Shodan* (translated as “beginning grade”), also known as black belt first degree. The Kyuu grades are in effect a countdown to the rank of *Shodan*. In this way the first four years of Aikido training in Kyuu grades are viewed as preparatory training for the journey that begins with *Shodan*. Thereafter, one progresses through the ranks of *Nidan* (2<sup>nd</sup> degree), *Sandan* (3<sup>rd</sup> degree), *Yondan* (4<sup>th</sup> degree), etc. The top *dan* grade of *Judan* (10<sup>th</sup> degree) is held only by a handful of people in the world who are outstanding exponents of the art. This journey can take several decades and last till the end of our life.

The rank of *Shodan* thus denotes a significant threshold indicating that the student is now ready to receive, or deserving of, the full Aikido teaching; in other words, *Shodan* is when one begins the study of Aikido in earnest.

In the old times, Japanese martial arts students did not get ranks. Typically, after having unloaded his complete teaching unto the student the teacher would award him a teaching license (*Menkyo Kaiden*) certifying that the holder is qualified and authorized to teach the art. Some schools still operate on this *Menkyo* method. This system worked when life was simple. In a modern lifestyle students are faced with many choices and need a form of recognition to reinforce their commitment to the art.

The Kyuu-Dan ranking system originated from the art of *Go* and was applied to martial arts and popularized by the late Jigoro Kano, founder of *Kodokan Judo* in the 1880's.

Kyuu rankings are administered independently by each *Dojo-Cho* (Head of the Dojo). In some dojos, Kyuu-rank holders may be differentiated by the color of the belt. In others, they wear the same white belt. On the other hand, dan ranks are awarded by the Aikikai, the worldwide Aikido association led by the *Doshu* (The Leader of the Way), who is currently the grandson of the Founder. The Aikikai awards the rank based on a certification of examination or a recommendation by an Aikikai-recognized Dojo-Cho or association. In our case, the *Takemusu Aikido Association* (TAA) is recognized by the Aikikai for awarding Dan ranks and our Dojo is a member of the TAA.

Dan ranks may be issued by other Aikido organizations not affiliated with the Aikikai, which are led by a *Soke*, the headmaster of the style. One such Soke who is relevant to our lineage is Hitohiro Saito, son of the late Morihiro Saito, the leader of what has been commonly referred to as *Iwama* style Aikido. It should be noted that the late Saito Sensei always insisted that he taught only what he learned from *O Sensei*, the Founder. Therefore, in his view, there is no Iwama style, there is only O Sensei's Aikido. However, the younger Saito Sensei, having recognized certain irreconcilable differences between the Aikido that he learned from his father and the Aikido that is promoted by the Aikikai, decided to secede from the Aikikai organization and form his own Shin Shin Aiki Shurenkai. As a Soke, Hitohiro Saito Sensei administers his own dan rank system.

The first four years of training may not appear significant when one reviews a 40 year training career in Aikido, but they are truly the most important years, similar to the first five formative years of a child. During this Kyuu grade period the student learns all the basic techniques and principles that serve as the

foundation for advanced training. The advanced training is only as good as the foundation. Unfortunately, there are no standards for this essential basic training. *Hombu Dojo*, the headquarters of the Aikikai, does not prescribe standards but issues guidelines for rankings with no illustration of standard techniques. In the 1970's the late Saito Sensei published a series of five books describing the traditional techniques of Aikido; this was the first authoritative publications of any technical standards, although they were not sanctioned by the Hombu Dojo. Saito Sensei refreshed this series with a new seven volume version in the 1990's entitled *Takemusu Aikido*. Then, a few years ago, the current Doshu authored his own series of books aimed at filling this gap at the Aikikai.

In the 1980's, upon taking charge of the Aikido Institute in Oakland together with Kim Peuser Sensei I strengthened the ranking requirements which was based on a simple ranking guideline issued in the 1970's by the former Aikido Association of Northern California. At the time those guidelines loosely reflected the guidelines from Hombu Dojo. I added relevant key elements of the Iwama Style and other structural elements to reinforce the curriculum. I brought forward these requirements to the Aikido Institute Davis (AID) and modified them slightly. This curriculum is referred to as *Ranking Requirements* and is posted prominently on the Dojo bulletin board as well as the Dojo website. A few years ago I produced the seven volume-DVD series entitled *Aikido Curriculum* to illustrate the techniques contained in the Ranking Requirements.

In 2001 when the TAA was founded following Saito Sensei's urging before his demise, I helped craft the Ranking Policy of the Association which applies to all member-dojos. This Policy is stricter and more detailed than the ranking guidelines of Hombu Dojo. Our Ranking Requirements at AID is consistent with and contain more detail than, the TAA's Policy and is designed to guide students' training to achieve ranks awarded by the Aikikai while also

maintaining the specialty of our lineage. Eventually these Ranking Requirements will lead the dedicated students to the ultimate state of *Takemusu Aiki*.

On a day to day basis, AID students should refer often to the Ranking Requirements as a blue print for their training plans. Students should always train for their next rank. The emphasis is not so much on the end result, the rank, but on the contents of the training. Ranks exist for three main reasons. The primary reason is to provide a methodic approach to training so that a student can take personal responsibility for her growth. Going to class regularly is a necessary but not sufficient condition for proficiency in Aikido; the student should review the ranking requirements and determine her own training needs and work on them in addition to attending classes. Such personal training effort can take place during open mat times or other available times before and after classes.

The second reason to have ranks is to provide for an orderly framework for learning. Ranks create a hierarchy which is consistent with the way knowledge and skills are passed on in traditional societies. The basic tenet for learning is that your senior is always and right and you learn by following his/her example or instructions in all matters and without question. This rule simplifies the learning process and provides an orderly environment for training in the Dojo. However, to accommodate the questioning western mind, the rule has been relaxed considerably in most contemporary dojos in the West. Students still have to follow the senior's example and instructions but only in the Dojo and they can ask questions.

The third *raison d'être* for the ranking system is to provide a systematic way for preserving and transmitting Aikido. For instance, if the key elements of *Bukiwaza* are not incorporated in the ranking requirements, the weapon system of Aikido may not be completely preserved or properly transmitted. Furthermore, to be effective, learning needs to occur in a particular

sequence; e.g. students should first become proficient in the *Ken Suburi* before learning the *Kumitachi*; the basic *Kumitachi* forms should be mastered before attempting the *Henka* (variations).

On the minus side the ranking system has undesirable by-products. One is the excessive focus on the rank itself and the associated status. When the focus is shifted away from the training and toward the rank the student's progress is misguided. The student may take certain action that would win him a promotion but is detrimental to his growth; for example, he may decide to leave a strict teacher to affiliate with another school for a faster track to the next promotion. The other by-product is the tendency to associate rank with proficiency level. This is not usually an issue at the *Kyuu* or lower *Dan* ranks but there is a discernible problem at the higher rank levels, say from *Yondan* on. The problem stems from the fact pointed out earlier that there are no uniform and specific criteria for awarding *dan* ranks and each teacher and organization may apply their own, even within the Aikikai-recognized organizations. Some organizations or leaders may put more weight on technical proficiency than others; some may emphasize contribution (service or monetary) to the organization; and some may focus heavily on the development of the art. The discrepancies in ranking criteria may be imperceptible at the lower ranks but become more noticeable at the higher ranks. So, not all *Godan* are equal in all respects.

As a reference, below are the ranking requirements stipulated by the Aikikai. It is stated in terms of minimum time in training and age. Candidates may take an exam or be recommended by a recognized teacher. As you can see, allowing three years to achieve *Shodan*, the shortest time it would take for a beginner to achieve *Hachidan* would be about 48 years.

Rank Requirements by Hombu Dojo			
Rank	Examination		Rec.
	Time	Age	Time (age)
Shodan	100 days 200 days / 1 year	15	2 yrs (20)
Nidan			2 yrs
Sandan	300 days / 2 yrs		3 yrs
Yondan	300 days / 3 yrs		4 yrs
Godan	5 yrs		5 yrs
Rokudan	6 yrs		6 yrs (33)
Nanadan			12 yrs (45)
Hachidan			15 yrs (60)

So you see, if we were in this for the ranks, it would be a long and complicated affair. Ranks exist for very practical reasons but their ultimate purpose is to facilitate learning. Let us keep this firmly in mind lest ranks become our ultimate training goals. Let's not train for the ranks but use the rank requirements to train.

## Proximity -- My Brief Aikido Experience

by Brian Campbell

In February of 2008, my work moved to the "office space" adjacent to the Davis Aikido Institute on Second Street. I could leave my desk, exit, walk one door south, and be at the entrance to the dojo. I was fortunate to meet our Sensei, Hoa Newens, before joining the dojo. He was arriving to teach either Aikido or Tai Chi and I was leaving work. These brief chats made a nice impression and I could sense care or empathy in him.

One day, I asked my one of my training partners about the Davis Aikido Institute during a Ju-

Jitsu class. His response, "those guys are intense" made another strong impression. My training partner at the time spent some years studying Tai Chi, Dan Zan Ryu Ju jitsu and is currently in competition Judo and submission wrestling. My preconception was that Aikido was technical but maybe not "intense" or rigorous.

I was drawn to the dojo next door: I was watching students arrive for class as I was leaving work. It was synchronized. Next, I met Sempai Kent and he allowed me to watch classes and introduced more of the art. A picture was starting to form. I saw one of Sensei's hand classes. I explained to Sensei that I would stay and observe half the class (which was my habit with other classes I observed). Sensei, during a break, came up and asked "I thought you were only staying for half the class?" My butt was getting sore from sitting on the wooden bench, but I stayed the entire class.

One lovely summer afternoon I stopped by work with my daughter Amanda when the Saturday class was just getting out. Kathleen was on her way to her car, she looked happy, glowing and she smiled when Amanda and I greeted her. I thought to myself, "What can they possibly be doing in there"? I had to stop her. I asked to her opinion of the dojo and the curriculum. She responded by speaking mostly of Sensei and the students. Up to this point, most discussion around martial arts I had experienced focused on technique or discussions around different forms and opinions. This chance encounter turned the tide and I decided then that I would join.

Several months later I am reflecting on what I have experienced and what I thought I might experience. Four points come to mind:

1. Being a beginner was difficult - more so than I expected in Aikido, this was counter balanced by the support of the Sensei, Sempai and Students.
2. We practice a lot of randoori and I underestimated the transition to Aikido

as Ju-Jitsu was “second nature” for a response.

3. My fear of the weapons class waned and with added help of Friday’s class occasionally trickling over into to Saturday morning class, but I still feel intimidated by the weapons class.
4. Amanda, my daughter, joined the children’s class and I didn’t anticipate my family’s quick embrace of the Davis Aikido Institute (i.e. joining Aikido meant more time away from home).

I also found Aikido to be very practical in my everyday life. However, found it difficult to separate my study of Aikido as system and from our Sensei and our Sempai, Students and the dojo as I can other subjects, like chemistry and languages, for example. I thank all for their patience and willingness to teach me and practice with me. I confuse myself when I am inept and then am surprised when Aikido happens. In a recent commentary from the Harvard Business Review, “People tend to see warmth and competence as inversely related.” Warmth in this context refers to personality or character trait. This stereotype could easily be true for martial arts, too. My brief Aikido Institute Davis experience, including the recent seminar with Sensei Hans Goto, helps shatter this inaccurate perception. Observation tells me that warmth and competence can go hand in hand, not in theory but in practice. The choice of my title “Proximity” = the state of being proximate; proximate =immediately preceding or following (as in a chain of events, causes, or effects)<sup>2</sup> helps to capture how I encountered our dojo through a series of events rather than a conscious searching and how I became more aware of this concept of warmth and competence, amongst other things in this short wave of time.

## **Doing It the Right Way** **A Poem by Amanda Campbell**

The floor spins below me  
 My hands are at my side  
 My opponent approaches me  
 I do not try to hide  
 Strong will and skill  
 Will be my guide  
 My opponent moves toward me  
 With a kiai like the roaring tide  
 He is strong: I am strong  
 But all his blows miss me wide  
 I can do this!  
 I bring him to the ground and hold him fast  
 He knows he is defeated, and stays still as if he died  
 I bow to him: he bows to me  
 And now it is over.

Explanation [words from the poet]:  
 I think the person in this poem defeats his opponent the ‘right way’. By that I mean thinking positively, not hiding, and acknowledging his opponent’s skill. It is good to think positively, because that can give you strength. It is also good not to hide – this is bravery. It helps you from becoming to self-righteous if you acknowledge that your opponent was skilled. Defeating a person the ‘right way’ helps induce the skills that I value most in a person; positive thinking, bravery, and humbleness.

## **Toby Hargreaves Becomes Uchi Deshi**

Toby Hargreaves began his one-year commitment to the dojo as Uchi Deshi at the end of January. An Uchi Deshi is a fulltime live-in student apprenticed to the Sensei.



**Sensei and Toby, January 2009**

## **Martial Arts by Toby Hargreaves**

Though I began learning martial arts about four years ago, in all that time I have never really thought of myself as a martial artist. I guess I haven't understood what it is to be a martial artist. As a martial artist what is one's role in society? What are one's responsibilities? What is the point of being one?

Obviously the answers to these questions will be different between say medieval Japan and modern day America, or between an MMA cage fighter and an elderly person studying Tai Chi for health. There is a huge spectrum when one considers the martial arts, but I think it is valuable to think about where we lie in that spectrum and what it is that Aikido actually does for the world. "What is Aikido?" is a question that I come back to over and over again.

What does Aikido do to us? It is, in the very best sense of the word, it is a type of brainwashing. That word has negative connotations, but I think it is apt in several ways.

First of all, along the long road of life our minds become dirty. They become lazy and pick up bad habits. They go places we don't want them to go and they get us in trouble. So our minds need a good cleaning, a brainwashing.

Second, Aikido training affects us largely on the subconscious level. When you come and train, it is best not to think about anything other than doing the technique as best you can and being open minded. We don't need to think about concepts and ideas like harmony, peace, love, oneness with the universe, or whatever. These can actually get in the way and be a distraction, I have found. The reason for this is that the techniques themselves are divine techniques--they have all of that peace and harmony stuff imbedded in them.

That's not to say that it isn't useful to read and study about Aikido, Zen, Taoism, etc. On the contrary, I think it is essential for us to study in any way that we can, and learn from all aspects of life. Mental and physical training, conscious and unconscious training are not as separate as we think.

Martial arts were originally tools for violence. But in this place and time, they are much more of a human path or a "Way" to become human. This is what the word Budo means. When I look at myself, I sometimes get the feeling that I am incomplete, undeveloped, not yet a full person. What draws me to the martial arts (and to art in general) is that they feel like a way to complete myself, to become human.

One of my favorite quotes of O'Sensei is, "Aikido is not for correcting others, it is for correcting your own mind." This is the purpose of Budo: to let your original self shine through.

## Balance

by Rob Kamisky

Aikido is The Way to Harmonize with the Spirit of the Universe and balance is integral part of harmony. When in balance one is stable but aware and ready to blend with the environment. You must be in balance to be ready to react to changing conditions and situations in life. In life, balance takes many different forms. Some are obvious, some are not. The simple acts of standing and walking require tremendous amounts of balance. Maintaining hanmi in Aikido is another example. In proper hanmi, a person is in balance both physically and mentally. Body firmly connected to the ground, and mind focused on the task at hand. If the body is out of balance, with your weight off center, you are not able to quickly and easily move in any direction. If the mind is out of balance, with your attention wandering, you may not be aware and able to blend with your uke's next attack. But the true practice of Aikido is not only on the mat, but in all aspects of life.

To remain in balance, requires infinite, continuous adjustments. Small adjustments are easier to make than large ones. If you over-extend your energy and are out of balance after an action, you have fewer choices when reacting to your uke's next movement. You may still be able to blend with your uke, but it will require extra energy. The same is true off the mat. If you focus too much energy at work, extra effort is required to mend relationships at home. There are always disturbances in life that require extra attention. A deadline at work or a celebration at home. But applying the principals of Aikido with diligent attention and practice, one can learn to efficiently use your energy to maintain balance and harmony in all parts of your life.

Here is one interpretation of how to harmonize with the spirit of the universe when faced with a conflict:

1. Receive the energy. Identify, discuss and accept the conflict.

2. Realign to flow with the incoming energy. Look at the situation from a different point of view.
3. Redirect the energy in a non-harmful way. Take the lead and offer a compromise solution that both/all parties can live with.

On the mat, we can look at the example of morote dori kokyuu ho.

1. Receive - drop hips and elbow
2. Realign – step in next to uke and become the center
3. Redirect – extend upward, take uke's balance, and throw

The principles of Aikido can be applied in many different ways to help maintain harmony in life. And to make these principles most effective, one must start with a balanced mind and body.

## Dojo Movie Night

by Bruce Donehower

This spring the dojo folks got together for a movie night on the mat. We watched the Samurai Trilogy, starring Toshiro Mifune as the legendary swordsman Miyamoto Musashi. Folks shared food, drink, and conversation as we spread ourselves out on the mat and watched the show. Watch for more cinematic events!



## Mongol Wars on Japan

by Alicia Lepler

In 1267 Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan, and ruler of China) demands tribute of Japan, he sends messengers 5 times; there is no answer each time. In 1274 Kublai Khan constructs an armada of 300-600 warships, and 40,000 men. Japan has a force of only 10,000 men to fight against them. Kublai Khan's armada takes the islands of Tsushima and Iki, meeting little resistance. Upon November 18, they reach Hakata Bay, on Kyushu Island. The Japanese and Mongol troops fight, only supplementary troops save the Japanese soldiers. During the night, a storm comes in, and Chinese and Korean soldiers convince Mongolian generals to move their ships into the ocean to escape it, in the open ocean there is a typhoon, and a few days later a third of the armada lays destroyed in the ocean and 13,000 soldiers dead. There is a seven year interlude before Kublai Khan starts his second invasion in 1281. The Japanese muster 40,000 Samurai and other fighting men as they have forewarning of the attack this time. The Mongol invasion had a force of 900 ships containing 40,000 men, while another part of the invasion force from southern China had 100,000 men and 3,500 ships; the plan is for the attack to be a coordinated full force strike. The smaller fleet reaches Hakata Bay on June 23, 1281, but the larger force has not arrived. The smaller force attacks, but unable to breach the wall surrounding Hakata, has a stationary battle. For 50 days they fight, then on August 12, the larger force arrives. Three days later after the arrival of the other force, a Typhoon comes on ashore at Kyushu, only a few hundred ships survive, and only a few thousand invaders survive, those that do are hunted down and killed

The Japanese believe that the gods sent the storms to save them, calling them "Kamikaze," or "Divine Wind." The Mongol leader, Kublai Khan believes supernatural forces guard Japan, and abandons all other attacks!

## Steps by Far Saiidnia

I am rusty with words to be written well  
Most likely should be tossed aside  
But I take the first step towards a promise of  
peace  
I remove my shoes

First glance, a play of actors in full  
choreography  
Second glance, a dance, striving for  
understanding  
Wrapping their bodies and minds together  
Each stepping in time with the music

Silence is butted with defining bellows  
Beginning a journey from the heart to every limb  
Out into each partner's grasp, to the next and the  
next  
Until all are merged into a palpable energy,  
indefinable

A bow to begin, a first step on the mat  
Eyes open, soaking in each movement  
Whispering silent details of motion  
Ears closing gaps with every word of guidance

I take the words, sights and feelings shown  
Blend them with my blood and begin  
Slow, steady, move, to do is to learn  
This hungry spirit shifts with all things in reach

It weaves into me to say  
I found myself in that dojo  
Found my smile, found my strength, found my  
core  
And that light I shall carry for the rest of my  
days

## The Perfect Mousetrap by Justin Azevedo

An integral part of our Aikido training is kihon waza: learning the basic forms of each technique, step by step, and how to adapt the technique to a variety of attacks. We watch Sensei demonstrate the technique, take a fall or two for a sempai, and then attempt to puzzle out how to get from our initial hanmi to a successful pin or throw. Once we get there, we start the process of repetition to drill that technique into our muscle memory.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Perform technique, rinse, repeat. It seems so straightforward, watching Sensei send someone flying across the mat in one smooth motion, or feeling your center effortlessly compromised as you take ukemi. And indeed, the concept of each Aikido technique is simple: enter. Blend. Take uke's center. Resolve the conflict. However, focusing on kihon waza has shown me the machinery behind the scenes.

When facing a new technique that I can't yet recall from reflex, or attempting a technique from an attack I'm not familiar with, I often find myself thinking of mousetraps. Not every-day mousetraps, but the mousetrap found in the classic board game; vast, sprawling, intricate, Rube Goldberg-inspired creations. Pull the string, which drops the ball, which knocks over the bucket, which fills the bowl, which tips the scale, which shoots the gun, which pops the balloon, which flips the switch, which makes the cage close... complex interactions of connected, related movements, in order to perform what appears to be a relatively simple objective: trap the mouse.

There are so many things to be aware of when we perform a technique: our hips, our feet, our hands, the direction in which we enter, the place we want to go, the integrity of uke's balance, openings that we leave for uke to attack or

counter, etc. Not to mention the wider awareness of what's going on behind and around us, which is another integral part of our Aikido training. All of these little parts come together for one simple, unifying purpose. Enter. Blend. Trap the mouse.

One of my biggest struggles as an Aikido student is to avoid getting caught up in this intricate machinery. Too often, when a technique doesn't work quite right and I get ready to try it again, I start attempting to dissect the trap. I begin to think too hard. I get so preoccupied with the placement of every part of my body, with the correction of every single angle and line, that I lose connection with my uke and thus lose sight of what I'm trying to accomplish. For example, say I pull the string in my mousetrap, but for whatever reason, the cage doesn't close at the end. It seems seductively easy to then reexamine the entire trap... what if I move the boot over here a little? Maybe oil the switch and make it a little easier to flip, too? And while I'm at it, how about making this scale a little more sensitive? I could think of countless adjustments to make the trap more effective. Meanwhile, the mouse, completely forgotten, nibbles the cheese and stares blithely at me as I take everything apart and feverishly try to put the whole thing back together.

The logical alternative would be to start with the first component that went wrong. If the ball didn't drop, then I focus on the ball. If I enter for a particular technique and find myself slightly off-balance, then I focus on that entry. Are my feet in the wrong place? My hips not pointed in the right direction? Is my center of gravity too high? The next repetitions of that technique are about fixing that particular problem, rather than fixing the entire technique. That frees me up to work on the next thing; now that I feel solid after that entry, let's see if I can compromise uke's balance a bit more than I did last time. Does that mean entering deeper? Changing the angle of my hips slightly? Finding a solution there lets me move on to the pin. And so on.

The beauty of this is that the mousetrap is never perfect. Once every part is working, and the cage walls surround the mouse, I am free to stand back and take another look at the trap: now, can I make it work faster? Quieter? Maybe take out a step or two over here, and add one over there? There's always an improvement to be made. And as each improvement is made, we get closer to a smooth, effortless achievement of that basic objective (trap the mouse), intricate and complex though it may seem by focusing on the individual parts.

I am constantly reminded of this as I train. There comes a point with each new technique where everything falls into place; each step works like it should, everything feels strong and comfortable, and the movements begin to feel familiar. Then, uke attacks from a committed motion rather than a simple, static movement, and everything falls apart again. Once that hurdle is cleared, the machine breaks down a third time in an attempt to immediately deal with a second uke afterwards. Often, for me, there isn't necessarily a specific situation or conscious escalation in the intensity of the attack that will uncover the next need for improvement; a technique that has felt effortless for months will suddenly just stop working one night.

Each of these situations allows me to return to the mousetrap once again, studying the first component where things went awry. That extra intensity or second uke can help uncover a flaw that was previously hidden. And as I always remind myself, techniques that stop working should be cause for celebration rather than frustration, because they mean that I have trained and improved enough to finally notice that they never worked quite right, and can now discover and improve the problem component.

Regardless of whether the tinkering is done by a beginner attempting his or her first technique or a yudansha adjusting angles by inches to improve the effectiveness of a throw, the act of

refining a single step of the mousetrap leads to limitless discoveries and possibilities for adjusting and improving the rest. As I grow in Aikido, I am becoming increasingly aware of the fact that the techniques are just a tool, rather than the end result. Just as I can refine my techniques by slowly improving and simplifying the different pieces, I can also refine my Aikido by slowly improving and simplifying the different techniques; in the end, no matter how many strings, cages, pulleys, and levers I am cobbling together, my focus is always on the mouse.

Eventually, I'm sure someone will look at the work I continue to put into my Goldbergian contraption and ask me:

"Can't you just trap the mouse by just dropping a box on it, and be done with it?"

As confusing an answer as it might seem, I will probably respond:

"Well, yes, eventually. As soon as I'm finished building the box."

## **Aikido: Moving Zen?**

**by Marion Donehower**

The story goes like this: When Suzuki Roshi saw Aikido he said: "That is moving Zen." What did Suzuki Roshi see? To the superficial observer, there doesn't seem to be a connection. In Zen practice you sit still and in Aikido you move and throw each other down, and quite vigorously so. Aikido is a martial art, and Zen is an inner spiritual practice. Zen seems to be connected with the mind, Aikido with the body. But we know also, as the Buddhists say, that body is mind and mind is body. Zen and Aikido are both connected with body and mind.

The foundation for Osensei's life and his Aikido is Shinto and the sword. The sword is also

connected to the Japanese samurai tradition and Zen. Although Osensei wasn't fond of Zen because he thought the Japanese belief system is Shinto, Zen and Shinto became quite interwoven during the course of the centuries in Japanese culture.

In Shinto we have the basic belief that everything around us is spirit, kami, and is expressed in a universal energy, ki. Aikido was for Osensei a way to experience and express the life force of ki. In Aikido we see the universal energy always moving, unfolding in circles and spirals in never ending variations. In Zen we share the basic insight: everything is changing, nothing is constant. You cannot hold on to anything, not even yourself, because everything is flowing. To understand this, not just intellectually as a concept, but to have the complete experience is both the goal of Aikido and Zen. Osensei called Aikido the "dance of the gods." It certainly looks more similar to Sufi dancing than to other martial arts. I believe Suzuki Roshi saw exactly that essential movement: the movement that makes the invisible visible, which unfolds from the personal to the impersonal.

What are the tools one needs to develop, either in Aikido or Zen? I came up with the following:

- Concentration
- Focusing
- Relaxation
- Hara Breathing
- Inner Stillness
- Practice, practice, practice

When I look at the points I think that the most important one is the breath. We need to breathe in a conscious way in order to develop all the other skills. We cannot relax the body without proper breathing. In Aikido as well as Zen the relaxed deep hara breathing is the main focus. In breath you experience the contraction and expansion cycle of yin and yang in its most basic life principle. Without breathing we would not be alive. In breathing we connect the outer with

the inner. We can go deeper and can be calmer on the inside and expand our breath on the outside and imaginatively we can expand the breath endlessly. Breath, ki, and mind belong closely together. With the breath you can harness and structure your ki and bring Aikido to life. Osensei says: "Establishing orderliness in your breath, bring your ki under control and plant your feet firmly on the path of self-realization. With this foundation, practice the techniques of takemusu aiki and bring the actual universe into your breath."

Researchers found out that long term meditators have relaxed back muscles like a person has in deep sleep. They also found out that long time meditators breathe four to five times a minute instead of the average fifteen times per minute. As a consequence the body functions much more economically as it needs much less oxygen. Having a relaxed body is also a pleasurable experience for the body and the mind, and one wants to repeat that experience of relaxation. In my experience I see that it is relatively easy to learn the techniques of Aikido in a couple of years, but to relax the body and bring technique and relaxation together takes a long time. It is difficult to connect strength and relaxation, but if we look at the Taoist belief that water is stronger than stone and that ki will more easily flow through water we can understand Aikido in a deeper way. We can observe when our life force doesn't flow or is hampered or weak that we are out of balance in our health and emotions.

As Sensei said the other day: "the technique becomes a vessel." The vessel can be filled with harmony, joy, peace so that one is able to experience and express the force of the universe. I believe that is what Suzuki Roshi saw when he looked at Aikido.

## Seiza: The Invisible Technique

by Bruce Donehower

One of the most common things we do in the dojo is sit. Typically, we sit on our knees in a posture known as seiza. Sometimes we sit cross-legged if we have a knee injury or are new to Aikido, but more often we adapt ourselves to the situation and sit in seiza.

Seiza sitting actually takes up quite a bit of practice time. If we count the minutes, I dare say we spend more time overall sitting in seiza than we do practicing any other single technique – especially if we have been doing Aikido for many years. Think about it: Each class begins in seiza and ends in seiza. Throughout the class, whenever something is demonstrated the students watch the demonstration in seiza. That's a lot of seiza, in the long run.

But how often do we stop to consider what seiza means?

I know that when I first started Aikido seiza felt like torture. My ankles were stiff; my knees were often sore. I thought: "seiza is something I have to endure to get to what I really want to do: Aikido!" And I marveled that instructors with many years of experience could sit in seiza for extended lengths of time without dying of excruciating pain.

Little did I know...

Gradually I began to see that there is much more to seiza than I first appreciated. And as time went along I began to pay more attention to this "invisible technique."

I call seiza the "invisible technique" because we almost never talk about it and usually take it for granted – but in fact seiza is foundational. Like breathing, you can't do without it: it occurs at the beginning and at the end of our Aikido practice; it occurs throughout the class; and (like breathing) we often perform the practice of seiza in an unaware state of mind, our attention elsewhere.

The purpose of this short essay is to call attention to the invisible technique and to encourage you to explore it. After all, it is something you can explore handily outside or inside class, if you're of a mind to be adventuresome.

How do you sit in seiza? Can you perform the technique? Do you resent it? Are you slumping? Is your breathing shallow? Is your mind distracted, anxious, or busy with plotting the next best technique? In class, do you sit in ambitious expectation for the new new thing? Are you worried about your kidneys? Will the person sitting next to you do nikyo in that awful way? Are you "doing what's expected?" Does Aikido work on the street?

Where's your seiza in the midst of all that jazz?

Think about it. When we sit in seiza, we align ourselves to the earth in a triangular way: our two knees and base of our spine (which rests on our ankles) should form a stable triad. Well, that's the idea. Moreover, when we put strength into our hara – that is to say: when we straighten our posture and breathe from the lower abdomen (tan tien breathing, if you do tai chi) – when we do these things we stabilize our mind and promote the circulation of ki. Such a posture allows us to be alert and relaxed simultaneously. The back should not slump, and the breath should flow evenly and smoothly. We should maintain this posture in an attitude of alert sensitivity and equanimity. We should let things be.

Sitting in seiza at the beginning and end of class and returning to seiza repeatedly throughout the class practice allows us to re-center. Aikido might be interpreted as a re-centering practice in just such a way: finding our seat, losing our seat, re-finding our seat. Over and over again, continually and dynamically.

An enthusiastic beginner student once asked me at the end of a class how he could practice Aikido at home. Were there any techniques or katas that he could do outside the dojo? Or on the road? At lunchtime or in the park?

My first impulse was to say: suburi! But then I realized that the student was a real beginner and didn't even know how to hold a boken or jo. He might knock himself out or bust a window. Or kill a dachshund. Hmmm. My next thought was: tenkan! But then something whispered in my ear: SEIZA. So I told the student he should sit. Maybe not what he wanted to hear, I reflected (actually, he looked like he was hoping I would tell him to do forward rolls down the stairs or hard falls on a gym floor) – but seiza is more beneficial, I believe.

In traditional arts, much time and effort is spent on the basic, basic things. And these basic, basic things quite simply have to do with posture and breathing and relaxation. That's really it. Seiza fits the category; it's the "invisible technique." Of course, those who are familiar with meditation, tai chi, yoga, or chi kung will recognize at once how essential a sitting practice is to the Way.

In this regard, I recently found an old book on my library shelf. The book is called *Hara: The Vital Centre of Man* by Karlfried Dürckheim (Allen & Unwin, 1962), and it has some good things to say.

At the end of this book, the author mentions Okada Torajiro, who was an exponent of seiza practice in the early twentieth century in Japan. Master Okada's words concerning seiza resonate harmoniously with many other wisdom texts that teach the value of silent, centered sitting. These teachings give us much to ponder, and I'll close the essay with a quotation that highlights my theme.

*Tanden* [a region about two inches below the navel – the vital center of our being] is the shrine of the Divine. If its stronghold is finely built so that the Divine in us can grow, then a real human being is achieved. If one divides people into ranks, the lowest is he who values his head. ...Next comes those of middle rank. For them the chest is most important. People with self-control, given to abstinence and asceticism, belong to this type. These are the

*men with outward courage but no real strength. ...But those who regard the belly as the most important part and so have built the stronghold where the Divine can grow – these are the people of the highest rank. ...Seiza makes use of the posture most certain to produce people of the third category. The sorrows of humanity are caused by loss of balance. To preserve it one has to have an upright body and an upright heart. These can be achieved only 'on the way.' To reach the way means 'sitting'! If you sit for two or three years, you will understand.*

## Trust as Substance by Christine Golden

Something Remarkable happened in Tai Chi the other morning.

As a regular part of the class, we exercise the lower half of our body by practicing what is called a "kua walk." The "kua" or "kwa" is the groin or the depression between the leg and the abdomen. Practicing this walk is really about moving chi through the tantien (pronounced dan dee-en) which is a major energy gate in the lower abdomen.

To do this walk, one must place all one's weight on one leg while slowly raising and lowering the other, in a particular way, by opening and closing the kuas. Performing this well is not so much about perfect form as it is about how one uses one's energy or chi - although I will be glad when the day comes that I have more grace than wobble.

Learning Tai Chi, as does much of human learning, requires the use of metaphors to understand the principles. Over the course of my time at the dojo, Sensei has given us many different metaphors to work with. You may have

heard, for example, of the instruction to 'grow roots' into the ground for stability.

That particular metaphor hasn't been doing a lot for me, probably because I have been working in the construction industry for two decades. I can see too well the concrete slab, some visqueen and rebar and maybe an air space between us and the real earth.

On this occasion though, Sensei had been talking about trust; trusting the alignment of the body to balance on one leg. This was an intriguing metaphor and as I tried it, an unusual sensation began to develop in my body.

I'm not really too keen on the usual concepts of trust. I've never been able to figure out who or what to trust with what. The body is transient and I don't have persistent proof of a soul. God as a father figure, guardian angels, nurturing Goddesses or other deities with personalities just don't make sense to my scientific nature. I've often been told I have 'trust issues,' although I suspect it's really 'authority' issues that are being discussed.

So, on this particular Saturday morning, as I considered the application of trust to my kua walk practice, I let myself believe that *something* other than my will would hold me up. By doing so, I experienced trust in a whole new way. It was as if a substance, a material of some sort, filled my standing leg and body. Without strain, I just 'existed' or 'blended' with the floor and the movement. It happened during every step and it was a remarkable experience!

Could trust actually be some sort of highly refined substance capable of real impacts on the body, the nervous system? If so, it would mean that one could *have* trust even when no one else was around. We wouldn't have to muster up some false emotion to give out to people or groups who act strong or promise to take care of us. What if trust and safety was something all around us like the atmosphere we breathe? One

could learn how to open oneself up to it and experience a kind of security that isn't a reaction to fear.

A few weeks later I was climbing down from the top of the levee in our back yard. The levee is not tall, but is kind of steep. The grass was high and tangled and I knew it hid bumps and holes that could send me toppling. After a few moments imagining my fall and a broken arm, I came to a complete stop. I was trying to figure out how to crawl forward down the bank when I remembered the kua walk exercise. Standing up, I imagined trust, or maybe it's really chi, flowing through the open and aligned central channel of my body. Comfortably balanced on one foot I reached out with the other. With unhurried attention to what my foot was sensing, I felt confident that I was sending chi down into the right place with my every step. I was off the levee in no time.

Since then, I have not been able to repeat such strong experiences at will. I believe that's because my attention is too scattered most of the time. Still, even as I write this I feel a little less restless imagining that I am breathing 'trust.'

## **Anatomy of a Dojo**

### **by Kathleen Holder**

The relocation of Aikido Institute Davis last September revealed to me a side of the dojo that I had never seen before—its inside. When I arrived at the old dojo site at 2121 Second St. on Labor Day weekend, the mats had already been peeled off and carefully stacked to one side, uncovering a latticework of boards beneath. That wooden framework—being noisily dismantled with the banging of hammers—looked like bones of a large and certainly very flat animal, and the mats like skin.

Once that skeleton was dissected, the best of the boards were loaded onto a truck and driven to the new location at 638 Cantrill Drive. Then the floor was reassembled, albeit in a smaller size, and the mats tamped back into place—a successful transplant.

With the shomen, scrolls and photos of O Sensei and Saito Sensei hung on the front wall and the mirrors on the back wall, it began to look like our dojo again—familiar, yet new at the same time.

I've thought of that move many times since—the memory of the underbelly laid bare, the clanging echo of wood falling on concrete and the cavernous emptiness of the old location after the moving van and most of the many movers had left for the new site. I look at the new dojo in a new light, now knowing a bit more about its underlying structure. And by that, I mean not just its physical structure but also its heart.

It took a lot of hard work on the part of many dedicated people to move the school. Witnessing that made me appreciate the work that must have gone into establishing and later expanding Aikido Institute Davis at the old location. Certainly, from the time I first started classes there, I appreciated what a beautiful, big training hall it was. But it was its remaking in a new place that gave me a new perspective on what the dojo is. I began to see how in some ways—while still a physical structure with walls, ceiling, windows and floor—the dojo is like a living organism or ecosystem that changes and grows as the people inside it do.

Around the same time the move was being planned and completed, four dans who had put so much of themselves into the school moved away to start new jobs and graduate programs. The departure of these sempai—first Sean, then Terrance, followed by Rebecca and Aniel—made our new dojo seem even smaller than its physical size. They had been a part of my training since the time I first signed up for an

introductory course and I had learned so much from them. I still miss practicing with them, as well as many other Aikido Institute Davis students who have moved on to other things in their lives.

But in the following months, the dojo seemed to take on new life under Newens Sensei's unwavering attention—with an influx of new students, a series of introductory classes, the resumption of a children's program, Toby Sempai's induction as uchi-deshi and Rob Sempai's promotion to nidan. The change in the dojo itself was so gradual at first that I'm not sure when I noticed it. But recently, while I waited in line for class to begin, it suddenly seemed to me that the spring breeze blowing through the open doors was the dojo's own respiration—as if the room was gently breathing in and out. I did not think it was so much the wind giving the space energy—the same breeze moving through an abandoned building might seem ghostly. But rather it is the people who teach and train inside who bring the place alive, and that the dojo's ability to grow and thrive is deeply intertwined with our own development in Aikido.



**Rob in Action During His Nidan Promotion**

## Aikido Techniques

by Guy Michelier

*“Techniques employ four qualities that reflect the nature of our world. Depending on the circumstance, you should be: hard as a diamond, flexible as a willow, smooth-flowing like water, or as empty as space”. -- Osensei*

Aikido is a Budo (martial art) created by our O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba. After the Founder's passing in 1969, his son Kisshomaru Ueshiba was inaugurated as Aikido Doshu. At present, Moriteru Ueshiba, grandson of the Founder, has succeeded his father as Aikido Doshu. The Aikikai Foundation, officially recognized by the Japanese government in 1940, was founded in order to preserve and promote the ideals of the true Aikido created by the Founder. As the Aikido World Headquarters, it is the parent organization for the development and expansion of Aikido throughout the world.

The term ‘Aikido’ has been derived from three Japanese words: ‘AI’, which means ‘to join’; ‘KI’, which means ‘spirit’; and ‘DO’, which means ‘way’. Essentially, Aikido is a form of martial art that involves joining the mind, body, and spirit in order to find the way.

The Aikido techniques, when examined on a strictly physical level, involve some joint locks and throws that have been developed from Jujitsu as well as some other techniques and developed from Kenjutsu. The focus of Aikido is not kicking or punching the opponent, but instead uses their energy to either execute a throw or gain control. Great emphasis is placed on the dynamics of motion and movement. (*Ref. Essay by San-Dan Kent Standley – Awase Summer/Fall 2008*)

On a deeper level Aikido helps me seek a way of peace of mind, physical health, spiritual enlightenment, as well as a technique of self-defense. O Sensei, in fact, laid great emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspects of Aikido, placing a lot of importance on the process of developing peace and harmony. This holds true

of Aikido techniques even today, even though various styles may emphasize the spiritual aspects of the martial art to lesser or greater degrees.

Given below are some of the basic Aikido techniques. I hope they will help you remember their meanings behind the Japanese vocabulary.

**Grabs and Holds** (\*) Denotes basic techniques. All others are at an advanced level. Not all techniques are shown below.

- **GYAKUTE\*-DORI** = cross hand grab
- **HIJI-DORI** = elbow grab
- **KATA-DORI\*** = shoulder grab
- **KATATE-DORI\*** = single-wrist grab
- **MOROTE-DORI\*** = both hands grabbing one wrist
- **MUNADORI** = chest grab
- **RYOTE\*** = both hands
- **RYOTE-DORI\*** = both hands grabbing one wrist each
- **USHIRO-DORI** = rear "bear hug"
- **USHIRO-KATATE-DORI-KUBI-SHIME** = rear choke with one wrist held
- **USHIRO-RYO-HIJI-DORI** = both elbows grabbed from rear
- **USHIRO-RYO-KATA-DORI** = both shoulders grabbed from the rear
- **USHIRO-RYOTE-DORI\*** = both wrists grabbed from the rear

I thought English was hard when I arrived to the U.S; needless to say, the blend of Aikido techniques along with the corresponding Japanese vocabulary is challenging to say the least. However, I am grateful and honored to be part of this great Dojo under the leadership and expertise of Hoa Newens Sensei and Sempais as well as all my training partners. This weekend seminar was a great event full of great teaching

by Hans Goto Sensei, positive energy, humble and profound reflections on the anniversary of the passing of OSensei - Morihei Ueshiba to whom his teaching techniques and spirit of Aikido will always guide us toward a philosophy of universal peace and reconciliation.



**Participants at Seminar with Hans Goto, Sensei  
April 25, 2009 / Tai Sai Commemoration**

## **The Best Way**

**by Martin Dubcovsky**

"Everything worth doing is worth doing right!" is a common American saying. But what is the right way to do things? In the absence of mentors can I discover the right way and if so, how?

In "Bushido: The Soul of Japan" Nitobe Inazo makes a very similar, but much more powerful statement. "If there is anything to do, there is certainly a best way to do it, and the best way is both the most economical and the most graceful."

What is the best way to do things? By

definition, the most economical and most graceful way *is* the best way! Can I find the best way on my own? Absolutely, anyone can. Having defined a basis for evaluation (economy and grace), I can systematically eliminate less than optimal approaches. If I act deliberately, placing awareness on the evaluating qualities, I can whittle away the possibilities in pursuit of mastery.

Why does the distinction between right and best matter?

Choosing a right way is subjective; in order to legitimize such a decision, I have to adopt an external framework of beliefs. However, the very framework that validates a right way, crystallizes its form, removes the possibility for change, and forces me into the role of defending its framework. Should anyone come along with a different right way, questioning my network of subjective beliefs, my carefully constructed world is compromised; my whole self comes under attack.

The pursuit of the best way does not require any attachment to subjective beliefs; thus, there is no need to expend myself supporting such a framework. My best way is simply the latest iteration of my path towards mastery. Should anyone question it, I have nothing to defend, and so never come under attack. I can evaluate what their way has to offer (on the same qualities of economy and grace), and adopt the benefits. Suddenly, confrontations become opportunities for growth and creation.

The only possible outcomes of a confrontation between my right way, and another are the destruction of my self or theirs. And frankly, I don't like the odds. Instead, I'd rather discard attachment to any such claim, and transform attacks into gifts, attackers into teachers coming to help me grow, not destroy me. Perhaps this is a tiny step towards peace.

## **In Tough Times, Train in Aikido**

**by Dan Foorotan**

I used to train in Aikido for a couple years, and then I had to take a break because of StreamSend responsibilities. Finally, last night, I started again (and I regret taking time off because I'm so sore that I can barely type!)

The essential teaching of Aikido is focusing your Ki (aka Chi) or energy. One is instructed to concentrate energy in the right areas using correct and efficient motions. Doing so allows you to actually use your opponents momentum to your benefit, thus immobilizing an opponent in a very elegant manner.

The concept resonates to me in the business world. One of the best books I've read was the 80/20 Principle. Richard Koch discusses how Pareto's Principle applies to the business world. This sounds a whole lot like what our Sensei teaches in Aikido.

It seems to be that following this philosophy becomes very pertinent during a tough economic climate. Find out where you and your staff should be focusing your business Ki. Don't disperse your energy, but rather focus, and eliminate those areas that cause your energy to be dispersed without benefit.

This applies to the products you sell (where are most of your profits coming from? Perhaps you should concentrate more on the ones that are doing the best), your customers (who are your best customers), and your marketing tactics (does email marketing lead to more sales? cpc? find what works, and push focus your business Ki to improve results).

## **Terry Dobson**

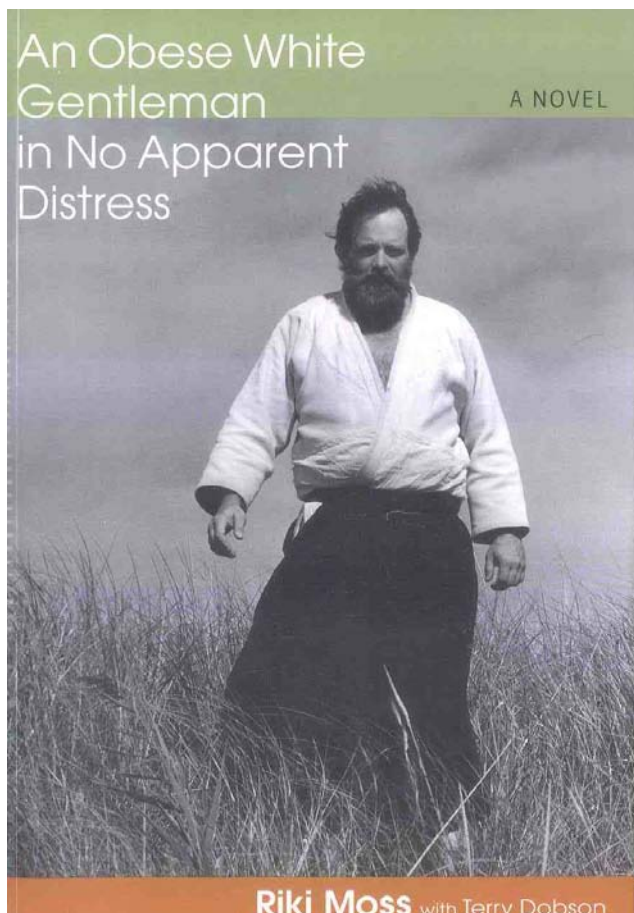
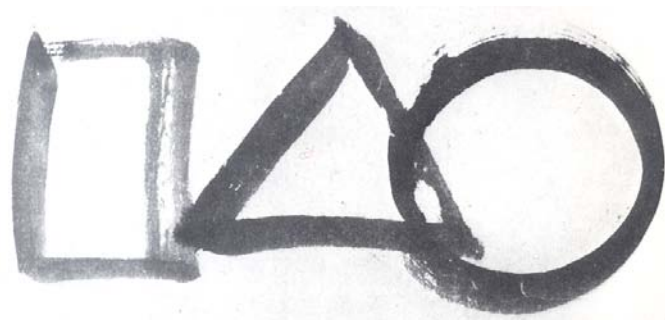
**by Elise Bauer**

One of the first stories I read about Aikido as a beginner was "A Kind Word Turneth Away" (<http://www.Aikidoki.net/SOULFOOD/tdobson.htm>) by Terry Dobson. Terry was bear of a man, full of vim and vigor, not a little cocksure of himself, who was an uchi-deshi for O-Sensei at Hombu Dojo in Tokyo in the 60s. In his story, Terry writes about how he encountered a drunk, about-to-be-violent man on a train in Tokyo. Finally in a situation that would allow him to display his martial skills Terry readies himself to take on the drunkard, only to be pre-empted by a little, frail old man who sidles up to the drunk and starts talking to him about sake, his wife, and his persimmon tree. Terry is stunned as he watches the gentle kindness of the old man melt away the aggressiveness of the drunk, who ends up in a pool of tears on the old man's lap. In an instant, Terry sees the true meaning of Aikido, to resolve conflict.

I had the great privilege to meet and train with Terry a week or so before he died in 1992. He had come out to the Bay Area from Vermont, where he had his dojo, to lead a few classes in San Jose and in San Francisco. He was, a mountain. Not moving so fast any more, he joked about how bad his health was and that his years of hard living were finally catching up with him. He knew he didn't have much longer with us and told me as much. His legs were purple, he was short of breath, he sort of hobbled on the mat, but his spirit filled the dojo.

Terry spoke one message throughout these training days, and that is that Aikido is about love, and only love. He talked about nage and uke, and how that in Aikido as soon as we are done lovingly going through the motions of a technique, we often finish the technique by casting off our uke with dismissive force. Terry encouraged us to extend our blending and compassion throughout the entire technique and beyond. Our partners should always sense our care for them. According to Terry, loving

compassion wasn't a way to trick our partners into relaxing just so we could execute a technique, and "win". Aikido isn't about getting the best of, or doing anything to our partners. It is about acknowledging that we are the same as our partners; we are them. Every moment of our presence and technique needs to reflect that compassion and care.



**Terry Dobson**

Editor's Note: At a recent Saturday morning class, I mentioned to the students that I had been reading a novel about Terry Dobson by Riki Moss. After class, Elise came up to me and mentioned that she had taken a class with Terry Dobson during the last months of his life. Synchronicity! This novel, by the way, contains many interesting and amusing anecdotes about Aikido. Sensei Dobson gave us much to ponder.

**DAN Promotions**

April 25, 2009

**Rob Kamisky**                      **2<sup>nd</sup> DAN**

**KYU Promotions**

February 21, 2009

<b>Annie Jarnagan</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Janice Palmer</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Farnoush Saiidnia</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Donny Shiu</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Brian Campbell</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Toby Hargreaves</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>

**Congratulations to all the candidates!**

## Monthly Study Group Starting:

### “The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido”

Osensei frequently lectured and gave verbal teachings that baffled many of his students. In addition to being a superb martial artist, Osensei recognized that cultivation of the intellect was important for the Way of Peace. While intellectual study can never substitute for time on the mat, it can complement, mature, and strengthen the art. To this end, Marion and I are offering to host a study group at our home in Fair Oaks (possibly changing to another location as things evolve). We will meet once a month. We have chosen to start with “The Spiritual Foundations of Aikido” by Bill Gleason, Sensei. This book is in the dojo library. Please RSVP if you plan to attend. – Bruce-sempai

**RSVP: [bdonehower@yahoo.com](mailto:bdonehower@yahoo.com)**

Date: June 28

Time: 6:30 – 8:00

## GATEWAY TO AIKIDO

**A new introductory “Beginners’ Class” starts in October. Watch for the date!**

**This eight-week special introductory class is designed for new students who want to sample what Aikido has to offer. Check dojo website for details.**



**Sensei Goto demonstrating Aikido with Elise at the recent seminar.**

*A note about the newsletter:* This AWASE newsletter is currently published twice a year: Winter/Spring, Summer/Autumn. All submissions are welcome! Very little editing is done. Authors should take care to edit, copy-edit, proofread, and make their own stylistic choices. However, formatting mistakes are generally the unfortunate goofs of your editor, who may be confused from time to time about the use of his newsletter software. Sumimasen!!

**Reminder: Please let Sensei know if and when you will miss classes for an extended period of time.**

**Dues are due at the beginning of the month and help keep the dojo running. Please pay on time or use automatic payments from your bank. Thanks!**