

# SHUHARIKAN NEWSLETTER

## Yoshinkan Aikido

AUGUST 1999

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### WEB SITE AND YELLOW PAGES

The Shuharikan Dojo has a new Internet web site. The address is:  
[www.geocities.com/colosseum/gy/m/1029/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/colosseum/gy/m/1029/index.html)

We are also listed in the Yellow Pages of the St. Paul telephone directory. Look under *Martial Arts*. Our corporate telephone number is **651-222-7337**.

Please copy the net address and the phone number and give them to people who have questions about Aikido or the dojo.

### UPCOMING AIKIDO EVENTS FALL 1999

**Denver, Colorado** - September 10-12  
Morihiro Saito Shihan, 9th Dan  
Iwama Dojo, Japan  
Hosted by: Aikido Nippon Kan -  
Gaku Homan Sensei

#### **Huntington Beach, California**

September 16 - 20  
Jacques Payet Sensei, 5th Dan  
Reunion Island  
Hosted by: Shindokan Dojo -  
Geordan Reynolds Sensei

#### **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

September 30 - October 3  
Yukio Utada Sensei's 25th Aikido  
Anniversary  
Instructors:  
\* Kyoichi Inoue -9th Dan - Honbu



Dojo, Tokyo, Japan  
\* Takeshi Kimdeda- 8th Dan -  
Toronto  
\* Amos Parker - 8th Dan - Houston  
\* Yukio Utada - 7th Dan -  
Philadelphia  
\* Robert Mustard - 6th Dan  
\* Jacques Payet - 5th Dan - Reunion  
Island  
Hosted by: Doshinkan Dojo

#### **Huntington Beach, California**

November 12 - 15  
Ando Sensei - Japan  
Jacques Payet Sensei - Reunion  
Island  
Hosted by: Shindokan Dojo and  
Geordan Reynolds Sensei

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## BROWN BELT TRAINING AND AWARDS

From February through April, 1999, the Shuharikan Dojo offered a special brown belt training course to students 5th kyu and above. Sessions were held after the regular Aikido classes three evenings a week and on Saturdays.

The course was intended to provide serious, committed students with opportunities to refine their study of traditional Yoshinkan Aikido, with particular emphasis on kihon dosa.

All brown belt test techniques as prescribed the Honbu Dojo were covered and the format included substantial hajime training.

Two students were eligible by time in rank for 3rd kyu grading. **Pat Gerkey** and **Bob Fisher** tested on May 20, 1999. The tests were excellent, revealing Pat and Bob's commitment to serious Aikido training. Both passed and were awarded their first brown belt rank. Additional brown belt grading will likely be done this coming fall.

## INDIANA VENTURE

Yoshinkan Aikido's newest dojo, Shindokan, TigerLily T'ai Chi & Aikido, held its grand opening seminar during the weekend of June 11 - 13. The dojo is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. The instructors are Leslie Mills, 3rd Dan, and Teddie Linder, 2nd Dan.

The special guest instructor was Fred Haynes Sensei, Rokudan (6th Dan) from Georgetown, Ontario, Canada. Also visiting were individuals from New York, Lexington, Kentucky, Nova Scotia, and the greater Indianapolis area. The Shuharikan contingent included Glen Giacomletto and Jon Sharratt.

The clinics were held on Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday morning, with emphasis placed upon Kihon Dosa. After the classes on Saturday, a small contingent refreshed in the pool prior to a wonderful catered

lasagna meal accompanied by champagne to toast the grand opening.

The highlight of the clinic was the karaoke on Saturday evening.

A big thank you for the wonderful weekend. Best wishes and congratulations to Leslie and Teddie and the entire TigerLily group!

## FROM THE MAT TO THE STREET LESSON IN MAAI

By the Unknown Aikidoka

I was driving home after Aikido training. Ordinarily, the freeway is not busy at that hour, but this time it was crowded. And the traffic pattern was weird. For a mile or so, we were able to travel at normal freeway speeds (70 - 80 mph!). Then the traffic would slow to a crawl for another mile or so. This frustrated drivers and made them impatient. They vented by frequent lane changing and extreme tailgating.

During the slow periods, I thought back to our Aikido training that evening. We worked on developing a sense of *maai*, with bokken and empty hand. Sensei explained that *maai* is sometimes defined as "optimal combat distance." But, he said, that definition is too narrow. More broadly, *maai* is the harmony of distance and timing necessary for the correct performance of an action or the full benefit of an experience. He said that *maai* functions as a space-time idea, and that it is a primary skill for elevating Aikido from a mere mechanical level to the higher level of "soft, non-technique." He quoted O'Sensei: "*Ultimately you must forget about technique. The further you progress, the fewer techniques there are.*"

We experimented with front strikes, first exploring distance, and then investigating timing. After some practice, we tried to harmonize distance and timing into the space-time ideal called *maai*. We found that if we got too close to uke, we had to use some degree of force or tension to deal with the strike. If we were too far away, we had to stretch and reach, and we compromised our balance. Too

early and we became aggressors; too late, we got hit. From time to time, we found that precise moment and that perfect position that allowed us to receive the strike without force, to maintain a solid balance, and to take uke's balance.

After class, sensei invited us to think about the many daily opportunities for developing a sense of *maai*—not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. For every activity, situation, confrontation, and relationship there is a physical, an emotional, and a mental *maai*. So we have many chances to practice the skill of *maai* off the mat. To do that, we first have to bring our awareness to the components of space and time in a particular experience. Then we can explore ways of working with distance and timing until we achieve *maai* for that experience.

As I drove the final three miles of my trip, I tried to watch the traffic with a space-time awareness. A bright-red Corvette in front of me changed lanes, and instantly a twelve-passenger van tried to squeeze into the vacant space. I had to brake sharply to give it room. Poor feel for distance. The van had to use force to gain its position. No Aikido there. Then I watched a rusty pickup truck cross three lanes from left to right in front of traffic to make it to an exit ramp. Cars swerved or braked to avoid hitting the truck. Bad sense of timing. No Aikido there either.

I wanted to pull everyone over and talk about *maai*, about space-time harmony, about this "street Aikido." But they all seemed to be accelerating toward that next tiny gap or that next nearly missed exit. I decided to give them room.

## KAVA KAVA a muscle relaxant

By the Aikidoc

After the second session of our four-day clinic with Sensei Reynolds in Huntington Beach, my old neck pain returned with renewed intensity. I had already discovered that my usual first

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aid kit of ibuprofen, Aleve, and muscle relaxants had been left in St. Paul, and the week's workouts would be vigorous. What to do?

The obvious easy answer from my partners was "drink more beer"! Unfortunately, the pain continued through the following day, and it appeared that the clinic would be a short one for me.

Then, an alternative occurred. I've enjoyed the writings of Andrew Weil, M.D., including his medical newsletter. (I think it's called *Dr. Weil's Newsletter*.) In '98 he wrote a brief column on kava kava, in which he noted the muscle relaxant and sedative qualities conferred by the cold drink made from a water infusion of ground kava roots (rhizome). The short of it is this: I took two tablets (60-75 mg. kavalactones equivalent each), and my pain went away. Interesting!

Kava is native to the islands of the South Pacific, is used ritually there, and had been researched and used clinically in Europe for many years. In America, because of our history of Pure Food & Drug Laws, we tend to be slow to bring new medicines and potential poisons to the public. Since the 1994 Dietary Supplements Act, however, this has changed.

Kava kava is available over the counter in a variety of forms. The potency/bioavailability is variable from one preparation to another, so you do have to research (take) these to determine which is useful and which is not. I have done this myself, and am not able to suggest any specific brand as there seems to be batch-to-batch variability. Presumably this is the result of natural and thermal breakdown of the active ingredients.

The muscle relaxation takes about an hour to develop, and seems to last overnight. There is a mild sedative effect that accompanies the muscle effect, and I would recommend against taking kava with other medications or alcohol. I have no information on driving with kava, but in the usual dose suspect no impairment.

Even so, the mechanism of action of the kavalactones appears to be similar to that of benzo-diazepines (like Valium) in the brain and tissues.

Side effects of kava include potential oculomotor disorientation — not useful in the study of aikido! — and skin rash in chronic users. Addiction with persistent use, and, presumably, an amotivational syndrome similar to that seen in addicts on "downers" would seem a likely potential. Additionally, it may act (like aspirin) as a minor blood thinner, potentially causing easy bruising. It is contraindicated in pregnancy.

I really was pleased with my initial use of kava for muscle relaxation. However, further investigation has left me with doubt as to whether there is a role for it in mild muscle injuries. Lack of knowledge of its pharmacology, potential for sedation, and variability of response are concerns. For those who have an interest, there is extensive commercial information available on the web, and a developing, mostly German and English European, medical database more difficult to access.

## LEAVING THINGS OUT

### The Art of Aikido

By Gordon Shumaker

Depending on who you ask, Aikido has 1,000, 3,000, or 10,000 techniques. Probably most newcomers see Aikido as a long process of acquiring as many of those techniques as they can. However, as we grow in our study of Aikido, we begin to see that the *art* emerges through eliminating certain things rather than merely continually acquiring more techniques. In *Zen in the Art of Writing*, Ray Bradbury explores the idea of art as elimination. He tells us that all artists — writers, painters, surgeons, and athletes — follow the same process in achieving artistry. The process has three essential parts.

First, the artist must build quantity, for "eventually quantity will make for quality. Quantity gives experience. From experience alone can quality come." For Aikido, this means training as often as possible in as many different circumstances and with as many other students and

instructors as we can. Each training session presents new variables and adds to our experience base. Bradbury notes as examples the surgeon who does thousands of dissections before becoming skillful enough to perform a proper operation, and an athlete who "may run ten thousand miles in order to prepare for one hundred yards."

Quantity provides the foundation on which we can build artistry. The artistry comes principally from the next part of the process — elimination. "All arts, big and small, are the elimination of waste motion in favor of the concise declaration. The artist learns what to leave out." As we mature in our Aikido training, we begin to focus on eliminating tension and force; making our kamae stable; channeling our energy so that it all may be applied in one direction; learning to relax; and getting rid of having to think our movements through. Although thinking movements through might be all right and even necessary in the early stages of our training, it eventually becomes just another form of waste motion. And it causes mind and body to work separately rather than as a unified whole. Bradbury speaks of the athlete who eliminates physical and mental waste motion and "whose body is at last educated and becomes, of itself, a mind."

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**(Leaving Things Out** - continued from page 3)

The final part of the process of achieving artistry we might call perseverance, or hanging in there. Bradbury again:

*To fail is to give up. But you are in the midst of a moving process. Nothing fails then. All goes on. Work is done. If good, you learn from it. If bad, you learn even more. Work done and behind you is a lesson to be studied. There is no failure unless one stops.*

Art, then, is release. "What we are trying to do is find a way to release the truth that lies in all of us."

There is an Aikido truth within all of us, a truth of harmony. Continual training, without giving up and with focus on eliminating physical and

mental waste motion, produces the *art* of Aikido. "Suddenly, a natural rhythm is achieved. The body thinks for itself."

## BUDO BOOK REVIEW

By Glen Giacometto

Title: *Angry White Pajamas: An Oxford Poet Trains with the Tokyo Riot Police*

Author: Robert Twigger

Publisher: Indigo, Cassell Group,  
Wellington House,  
London, 1997

*"I lived in Japan for two years prior to the course....I felt I was mentally prepared for the course. In retrospect what a misconception. NOTHING prepares you for the course. NOTHING can place the same physical and psychological pressures on you that you would experience in the course."*

Patrick Kovacs, American, recent Senshusei course graduate.

As dedicated practitioners of the Yoshinkan-style of aikido, it is every aikidoka's dream to someday visit and train, at least for a short while, at the Yoshinkan hombu dojo in Tokyo. But would (or could) any of us — let's be honest with ourselves — *really* spend eleven grueling months - five hours a day, five days a week, and in almost constant pain - to complete the ultimate in Yoshinkan budo training: the Japanese Riot Police/international instructors' (Senshusei) course?

This book details the author's account of his journey into the martial arts. At the start of the book, Mr. Twigger is an Oxford-trained, globetrotting, British bookworm/poet who, at 30 years of age and by his own admission, is a cowardly, out-of-shape English teacher at a girls' prep school in Tokyo. While living in a fleabag Fuji Heights apartment with his two roommates, Chris and Fat Frank, the trio decide to remedy their physical decay by embarking on a regime of martial arts training. After researching the subject, Chris, the trio's de facto leader and intellectual, declares that Yoshinkan aikido is "the best." Soon

they begin training under their first teacher, Robert Mustard Sensei. After only a few months of training, Twigger decides to join the next senshusei course while Chris and Fat Frank remain in the regular classes.

The bulk of the book is then devoted to Twigger's experiences as a senshusei (specialist). The first impression one gets is that the course is an eleven-month "boot" camp designed to train the next generation of Yoshinkan instructors. All of the students are pushed to their physical and mental limits. During the course of the book we meet his fellow trainees, both foreign students and Japanese police (Kidotai): the Canadian aikidoka Nic Mills ("Mad Dog"), Adam — a former pro-skateboarder, R'em — a former Israeli paratrooper, and a host of others. We hear about many of the teachers we ourselves have personally met, trained with/under, or read about: Robert Mustard, Darren Friend, Mike Kameda, Mike Stuempel, Stephan Otto, John Coffey, Jacques Payet, and Inoue, Chida, Nakano, Shioda (Kancho's son), Takeno, Chino, Ando, and Oyamada Senseis. There is even mention of former Minneapolis aikidoka, Tim Joyce, who had completed the course the previous year. Among other graduates, not mentioned, with whom we have trained are Fred Haynes, Alister Thomson, and Geordan Reynolds Senseis.

We have all been guilty of sometimes "deifying" high-ranking Yoshinkan instructors. Twigger writes about those he encounters in a very human manner, describing their strengths, as well as their all too human frailties. Even Kancho was not immune from Twigger's commentary: "Everyone accepted that Kancho was an alcoholic. It was all part of the myth that he used to smoke one hundred cigarettes a day and could still perform amazing feats of physical endurance." We come to realize that these individuals are not really much different from ourselves; what they have done is chosen to follow the more rigorous path of total commitment to the mastery of aikido.

During the course of his study,

Twigger was also in the very unique position of being a senshusei student in 1994 when Kancho died at the age of 78. A short but intriguing portion of the book deals with Kancho's funeral, the only personal account that I have ever read concerning this event. Among some of the amusing anecdotes are a love-sick female student pursuing her Spanish instructor even at the funeral and a post-funeral bar fight involving the visiting foreign instructors.

Reviews of the book have been written by several aikidoka, including Twigger's classmate, Nic Mills. Some loved the book, some didn't. Some reviewers felt that Twigger was just trying to survive the course rather than really learning true aikido from it. My impression, too, is that Twigger perseveres through the course more as an exercise in self-discipline rather than for any love of aikido. Since reading the book I have not heard, nor apparently have other Yoshinkan aikidoka, if the author is still actively practicing the art. Conversely, in the author's defense, my understanding is that a great many students quit the course before graduating; at least he made it.

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(**Budo Book Review** - continued from page 4)

Additionally, if the course's purpose is to train future instructors, to my knowledge only a relative handful of the foreign senshusei graduates has ever established dojos. But, I digress; this is a book review. Pro or con, the book provides interesting insights into this harsh course of study as well as daily life as a gaijin (foreigner) trying to make ends meet in one of the world's most expensive cities, — holding a job, adapting to the Japanese diet, coping with visa problems, having a social life outside of work and training, finding a girlfriend, etc.

Twigger is actually a fine writer. The 316-page paperback flows in a light, quick-paced, easy-reading style; it can be easily read in one day. In all honesty, it was easy to empathize with Twigger and all his aches and pains earned from his struggles learning to "flip" (do jump breakfalls) properly,

raw knees and ankles from long periods of seiza or practicing suwari-waza, in addition to sore wrists and elbows from constant repetition of nikkajo and hijishime with over-eager partners. There have been many times in my own training when I have wished that golf or fly-fishing was my preferred path to self-development. Still, we continue to train because of aikido's appeal and its mysterious hold on our psyche.

I highly recommend this book for any aikidoka interested in one man's perspective on the human side of rigorous martial arts training.

## SEAGAL IN ST. PAUL

### A Two-Part Report

By Bob Fisher

Seagal's face lit up when he smiled at the audience of wanna-be Aikido masters and martial art stars gathered to meet, train, and just be in close proximity to the baddest action star going. "Wow, it looks like Star Wars," was his first comment after looking at all of the finely attired students. Black, red, black and red, black with red stripes was the order for the day. Everyone seemed to have a black belt on, but me.

"Thank you all for coming. I'm here to please you," Seagal said in a soft, strange voice. "What would you like to do?" A young punching-kicking style student jumped up and shouted, "Train." Then reconsidered his voice by adding "sir." After having been led through fifteen minutes of warm-ups by Larry Reynosa, Seagal's senior student, 80% of the wanna-bes were sweating and reconsidering the virtues of Aikido. After another fifteen minutes of basic movements, the same 80% were embarrassed by their utter confusion. So far, I still remained in the 20%. Larry was a tough drill instructor; stern, harsh and quick-paced. "How many of you here have black belts?" asked Larry. Many hands raised. "Would you all please stand up. Now, would everyone without a black belt please go out and

buy one so we can get over this ego thing and train," instructed Mr. Reynosa. I liked him.

We were motioned to seiza and we waited while Seagal finished another glass of water with some additives sprinkled in by his religious student (the gorgeous one). Sensei stood up and bowed on the mat. He clearly was bigger than we all expected. Six foot five inches and, reportedly, 250 pounds. Seagal walked to the center of the mat and the students parted like the Red Sea. After all, we have all seen his movies.

"What's the one thing that you cannot be stronger than?"

"What's the one thing that you cannot be faster than?"

"What's the one thing you cannot beat?"

Sensei asked. All of us remained silent.

"Shune-yo."

"Nothingness." "And that's our first lesson," Seagal whispered.

(Please think about this until the next part of this report).

## MILLENIUM FESTIVAL IN LONDON

The Meidokan Dojo of London, England, hosted the 1999 Millenium Yoshinkai Aikido Festival June 23 through 28. Maggie Murphy, Jim Nolan and Gordie Shumaker participated in portions of the festival instructional clinics.

Takeo Sensei, 8th dan, was the special guest instructor. He taught with generous humor, a nice complement to the rigorous training he conducted. He focused on just a few techniques but much repetition. This included a day of tanto training, beginning with etiquette and progressing to tanto tsuki techniques. He continued with partnered tanto sotai dosa and followed with individual iriminage and kotegaeshi techniques. On Friday, he taught the bokken maai exercise that Gordie demonstrated when he returned. Gordie had the privilege of performing that technique with takeo sensei personally. Takeo also taught variations on choke maneuvers from

ushiro, similar to those Amos Parker Sensei taught in Chicago.

Students and instructors from Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the USA attended. Numbers varied for each clinic but the average was about 60 students.

On Saturday night everyone gathered in a 16th century Tudor church hall for a banquet. Gordie and Marianne Shumaker and Maggie and John Murphy attended. They all met Takeo Sensei at the dinner, and said hello to Darren Friend, who accompanied Takeo from Japan. They also met Alain-Jean Bernard, a student of Jacques Mugurusa Sensei in Paris. Mugurusa is a friend of Jacques Payet Sensei. Alain is relatively new to Aikido after practicing Judo for 22 years. It was delightful to hear his insights into Aikido. We will maintain correspondence with him.

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(Millenium Festival in London - continued from page 5)

The individual hosts of the festival were senseis David Rubens, Paul Stephens, and Eva Stauffer. We extend our gratitude for a job well done and much, much hard work.

## AIKIDO'S GROWING POPULARITY

Stephen Seagal created some interest in Aikido through his movies. The number of Aikido books in bookstores suggests that the interest is growing. In addition to technical manuals, there are books on Aikido philosophy and biographies of O'Sensei.

Occasionally there appears a book about business or social interrelationships that is based on Aikido principles. Thomas Crumb's *The Magic of Conflict* and Terry Dobson's *Giving in to Get Your Way* are such books. The latest of this genre is *Leadership Aikido* by John O'Neill. In the book and in a videotape presentation, O'Neill tells us

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that the "command and control" leader is outmoded and that the Aikido-style leader is his replacement. The new leader uses Aikido principles to maintain inner calm when attacked and to blend energy with competitors to move forward.

The value of books such as O'Neill's is that they show that Aikido is not just a physical art but is a universal strategy for achieving harmony in relationships. That's the point Urshiba intended us to get.