

SHUHARIKAN NEWSLETTER

Yoshinkan Aikido

May 2000

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AIKIDO EVENTS

The following are various Aikido events that have been scheduled as of this date:

1. **June 10** - Shuharikan clinic (see notice below).
2. **June 16** - Shuharikan Kyu Exams - 7:00 p.m.
3. **July 17 - 26** - Shindokan 10-day summer training - Huntington Beach, California.
4. **July 20 - 23** - Shindokan clinic with Matsuo Shihan (Terada Sensei's student) - Huntington Beach, California.
5. **October 13 - 15** - Seidokan clinic with Inoue Sensei, Georgetown, Ontario.
6. **November 10 - 20**, Shindokan clinic with Chida Sensei - Huntington Beach, California.

SHUHARIKAN INSTRUCTIONAL CLINIC

The Shuharikan Dojo will present two 2-hour instructional clinics on Saturday, June 10, 2000, from 10:00 a.m. until noon and 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m.

The guest instructor will be Jim Stewart Sensei, 6th dan, from the Seidokan Dojo in Ontario. Jim is an excellent teacher with a wealth of Aikido experience and knowledge.

The cost is \$40 for both clinics or \$25 for one clinic. Students may register at the dojo prior to June 2.



COPS AT THE SHUHARIKAN

On May 3, 2000, Shuharikan instructors Jon Sharratt, Gordon Shumaker, Glen Giacoletto, and Jim Nolan presented a two-hour participatory training program for the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department. Each of the deputies who participated was a self-defense instructor for the sheriff's department. Some deputies had extensive martial arts experience, including dan rankings in Judo and Karate. None was familiar with Aikido, however.

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

Aikido Events

Shuharikan Instructional Clinic

Terada Sensei in Canada
By Maggie Murphy

**The Vicarious Aikido Kid
Shoshin State of Mind**
By John Murphy

**What Does the Future Hold
for Aikido**
By Jon Sharratt

Encountering Seagal
By Bob Fisher

Taking Ukemi
By Jim Nolan

Women and ACL Injuries
By Aikidoc

**The Idea and Practice of
Aikido**
By Gordon Shumaker

In Other Dojos
By the Unknown Aikidoka

Cops at the Shuharikan

(continued from page 1)

The program began with an overview of the history of Aikido and a brief discussion of the theories of the art. The instructors then explained and demonstrated principles of control and “target removals” - pivots, evasions and stepbacks. Each deputy practiced with a partner.

The balance of the program consisted of the application of modified Aikido techniques that can be used quickly and effectively in law-enforcement circumstances.

The deputies were fun to work with and were very quick learners. They also complimented the instructors for presenting an enjoyable, highly useful program. One deputy, a former Karate competitor and sparring partner for a professional Karate fighter, said this:

“This art is much more useful to me in my job than the other arts I know. I can’t punch, kick, and choke people without getting reprimanded or sued. Besides, I really don’t want to hurt anyone. I can use Aikido to control but not injure. Thanks.”

A wonderful endorsement of Aikido as a law-enforcement tool.

TERADA SENSEI IN CANADA

By Maggie Murphy

Our trip had a less than auspicious beginning. Bob and I arrived at the airport an hour before the scheduled boarding of a flight to Detroit, Michigan. (London, Ontario is just a few short hours away and the site of an Aikido clinic featuring Terada Sensei). We waited, got on the plane, waited, waited, and waited. Finally, the captain

announced that they discovered a mechanical problem and would have to get a new part to fix it. It was to be another hour before takeoff. This was not a confidence-builder in my mind and I began to fidget. Bob, being the good dad that he is, handed me his cell phone to play a game called “Snakes.” Suffice it to say that I was a failure as a reptile. We then called Geordan Reynolds to say hello and Geordan gave us tips for surviving the weekend.

Finally, the plane took off. I hoped that there weren’t any mechanical problems that had yet to be discovered. Luckily, my worrying was for naught and we landed safely in Detroit. We rented a car for the last leg of the trip. The delay at the airport had put us behind schedule; my navigational expertise put us even further behind. We arrived in London at about eleven o’clock their time. Too late for the dan tests that had been scheduled that evening, we went out for a late supper of good fellowship, good wine and bad pasta.

The day had been an exercise in staying calm, centered, focused. Our spirits were high, but we were hoping for more physical training in the remainder of the weekend.

At breakfast the next morning, Fred Haynes Sensei and Bob amused the wait staff by taking off and exchanging their tee-shirts in the dining room. We wondered why Fred wanted to do this until we were at lunch and met Terada Sensei. Terada Sensei saw the shirt Bob was wearing and got an impish grin on his face that went from ear to ear. I think that Bob was lucky that Sensei doesn’t speak English and maybe that sensei is in his late seventies because the shirt said “fearless” in Japanese.

The training began at six o’clock that evening. There were 150 of us. Seventy-five pairs of flying legs at one moment. A challenging exercise in creating space. To add to the excitement, 20 or so senior instructors were circulating throughout the room giving corrections and demonstrating proper technique. It was wonderful to work with so many very talented people and see how each one

perceived the technique just a little differently. When the class ended at around nine-thirty that evening I was both exhausted and elated.

The next two days followed the same format. Usually there would be two main teachers who would demonstrate a technique (not the same technique) for half the group. Each half would have ten or so instructors going through the pairs of students making comments and corrections. Occasionally the group would be rejoined for further instruction. The techniques ranged from a simple entering throw to some fairly complex reverse hand throws. Everyone had access to the teachers and each of us got a significant amount of individual instruction. Because the teachers were mostly sixth dan and above, you could often partner with someone third, fourth, or fifth dan. It was also a thrill to have so many other women on the mat, many of whom were in the higher ranks. Ms. Matsoa, one of the instructors from Japan, was very helpful in correcting my technique and often used me as her uke.

Terada Sensei’s techniques are quite hard. Sensei’s knees are stiff but his mind is nimble and his pins are hard. He is able to apply his weight to an exact location to pin a much larger, younger uke. We learned several choke holds, and some painful pins. Bob had the opportunity to work directly with Sensei on two techniques. One of the techniques involved putting Bob’s big knee on Sensei’s little shoulder and applying weight. (No doubt a little uncomfortable for both of them.)

By mid-day Sunday Bob and I were beat up, exhausted, and thrilled to have taken part in such a great clinic.

(Continued on page 3)

Terada Sensei in Canada

(Continued from Page 2)

As we drove back to Detroit Bob and I were both pretty high from the experience. There was a lull in the conversation when Bob said, “I really have fun at these events but they are

a little hard to share with co-workers." "What do you mean," says I. "This was great!" "Maggie," said Bob, "we spent the weekend letting people shove our faces in the mat and telling them how they can do it better." "Oh, yeah, there would be that." Who cares, we had a really good time.

THE VICARIOUS AIKIDO KID Shoshin State of Mind

By John Murphy

My job entails training managers on what are known as "soft skills." A recent session was to be on Team Building. Now there is a ton of materials on team building. Our national organization has done several booklets on the topic. Almost all of the managers I was going to see either read them or attended seminars, done outside reading, or feel they have "a strong sense" of the tenets of team building. This was not going to be an easy sell.

There is a difference between having an insight and living an insight.

Sensei, Wendy Palmer.

I went back to what I learned in a Deep Aikido class about Shoshin. Over-simplified, it means "beginner's mind." They believe that, to achieve any degree of self-discovery, one must study with this "mind." I used this concept of beginner's mind, as well as other materials from the class, in my training.

There they were - mid-managers reading: "Don't lose your eagerness to improve and learn; don't lose your beginner's humility and openness to instruct. On a deeper level, it (Shoshin) means don't lose touch with the basics in any area of life: for example, love, friendship, and the appreciation of nature and simple things."

I then stated examples I have seen in Aikido that impressed me.

Like a person studying for his black belt, being "uke only" in a fellow student's 8th kyu test. Or like every test I have seen, where the first part is the evaluation of Kamae as it relates to your rank. I told them I remembered when a number of black belts spent one-half hour talking about their and other senior students' Kamae and how each has its strengths. This study of Aikido is full of stories of a "back-to-basics," with the understanding that all relates to them.

After this section, I paused to let the materials sink in. Then my summary statement before moving on was: "Shoshin. (Pause) Interesting materials. (Pause) Let's move into the concepts of "team building."

They really did well. They seemed to have "original mind." There was this "calm anticipation" of the next steps in the materials presented. They never second-guessed anyone and listened intently to what was being said. The discussion was open and clear. I really felt that problem-solving was going on. They shared that at times bringing a team together is balancing the concepts of doing everything at the same time and doing nothing at all. But that going back to the basics helps identify what you need to give the group when they need it.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR AIKIDO?

By Jon Sharratt

An interesting question for sure . . .

I would like to share with you a couple of recent insights I've had

regarding aikido and a possible scenario for its future.

The first was when I came across the June 1999 issue of *Utne Reader*. It lists Aikido as one thing "we think [is] worth taking into the 21st century."

Utne's observation of Aikido is, "Devoid of offensive moves, devoted to cooperation rather than competition, and dedicated to peaceful cultivation of the spirit, Aikido was the fruit of a mid-life mystical experience. Morihei Ueshiba, a Japanese martial artist since his youth, had finished a sword dual in 1925 when he suddenly saw the world golden and heard the words, 'I am the universe.' Ueshiba infused the peace and joy of the experience into an amalgam of jujitsu and sword techniques that became the most life-affirming (and fastest growing) of all martial arts."

The second occurrence was when I saw a rebroadcast episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* series, where the Enterprise's Chief of Security, Tasha Yar, played by Denise Crosby, gives a short demonstration on the holodeck with an interactive training partner. The demonstration was of the ancient Earth's martial art called aikido, this in the 24th century.

These two instances of Aikido have raised a number of questions in my mind as we move into the 21st century - one of which asks: "Is aikido only a physical art? Is there something beyond what I do on a physical level?" I hope so. Don't get me wrong, I truly enjoy nothing more than a high-energy Jiyu-waza

(Continued on page 4)

What Does The Future Hold For Aikido?

(Continued from page 3)

class, but as I grow older I hope there is something "more." The something "more" is what I will try to address in a small way.

Upon reflection and reviewing some writings of Kancho-sensei (Gozo Shioda), I am reminded of all the aikido individuals I've come in contact with in the last ten years. Some of these individuals had the

great privilege to have trained personally with Kancho-sensei; and others, myself included, have benefited from those that had that opportunity.

If Aikido were *only* a physical art, then I'm sure that it would have only a small following. As it is, aikido, and Yoshinkai Aikido in particular, has blossomed during the last decade. I feel a large part of this can be directly attributed to Kancho-sensei and his forward-thinking vision.

First, if we step back and briefly define what Yoshinkan is, for those uninitiated with aikido, and to help identify what some of the underlying ideals of this branch or style are.

According to the book *Total Aikido*, "Yoshinkan . . . means 'to cultivate mind and spirit.' This name reflects his [Gozo Shida's] desire that through aikido, and the mental and spiritual training that goes with it, people will be better able to play a useful role in society." Additionally, ". . . aikido is more than simply a physical skill . . . it is necessary that the mind as well as the body be pliant . . . the mind must be alert and flexible . . ." Also, noted in *Dynamic Aikido*, "It is a form of timing in which the "aikidoka learns to harmonize with nature through the practice of natural techniques."

These three short descriptions reaffirm my belief that the art is multi-faceted and can offer each individual a multitude of avenues to study and explore.

At the core, this style is defined by its unique basic stance, Kamae. From this Kamae stance, the foundation is expanded to six physical movements (Kihon Dosa). Built on top of these movements are the Kihon Waza or basic techniques; and, finally, the numerous techniques that number in the thousands or tens of thousands.

Kancho-sensei further developed three basic ideals that can be studied within the context of physical movements but can also be extrapolated into one's mental and spiritual studies as well.

The three principles are:

Chushin-Ryoku, or power

developed through the study of the centerline. This ideal or principle is first studied through the basic stance of Kamae. *Total Aikido* notes, "A grounded Kamae can be transferred from a physical stance to one's mental and spiritual constitution."

This is a perfect method to study the ideal of conducting one's life in an honorable manner or fashion. The ideal of a "mental and spiritual constitution" as a foundation or reference point is becoming more relevant in today's society. Each individual is confronted by their own unique issues and problems. Aikido can be a guiding thread of stability from which the individual draws strength to conduct themselves in a respectful manner. The training one undergoes by studying both sides of a technique allows the individual to view situations from a multitude of vantage points, thus giving the individual the platform to grow and respect others, even if they hold contrary beliefs, ideas or viewpoints. I cite this as aikido has grown and developed in a number of disparate countries, independent of race, religion, gender, or income status.

Shuchu-Ryoku, or the study of Focused Power. This is a study of bringing together the power of the whole body into one spot or location.

This can also be likened to one's attention. To do justice to our jobs or relationships, we need to be 100% fully present in the moment. To not conduct oneself in such a manner is to cheat yourself of the opportunity to truly understand what is being communicated or experienced. This can be cited as a valuable lesson in the world of work, no matter the field of your endeavor. By not being fully "present," we waste our valuable time and energy as well as the individual or individuals we are dealing with. A result being miscommunication, wasted re-work time, or strained relationships.

Kokyu-Ryoku, or Breath Power, is the study of timing brought into a focused power. According to *Total Aikido*, "You can utilize different

tempos and rhythms . . . choosing the one that is appropriate to the situation."

I think of this as applying the proper energy to the situation at hand. Often times we must let events run their course. An example of this is how we help our children grow and develop as individuals. When a child makes a decision, do we always rush in to protect them, or let them try, make a decision, and possibly fail? With each decision there is an inherent risk, but also the potential for growth and a gain in confidence and knowledge. We can and should be available to help support and counsel our children in their lives, and in some instances to intercede. By allowing our children to make choices, we help them to become stronger individuals and healthy, contributing members of society.

For me, Kancho-sensei's vision and the direction he took in creating these precepts or ideals were utterly brilliant. Aikido can be used as a "vehicle" from which one can derive innumerable benefits. A physical activity, a method of self-defense, a way to study interactions at work and in one's personal life, and as a

(Continued on page 5)

What Does The Future Hold For Aikido?

(Continued from page 4)

method or path in which we "try" to live life with meaning and honor.

This is a brief statement of why I feel Aikido has a bright future and should be something we should be proud to participate in and to act as ambassadors to carry into the future, be it the 21st or 24th century.

Remember, life is what we make of it, and we should strive to follow Kancho-sensei's ideals and to live "to cultivate mind and spirit" in all that we do.

ENCOUNTERING SEAGAL

By Bob Fisher

"Who's the strongest person here?", Seagal demanded.

The call was quickly answered by a stout, twenty-something karate devotee. Seagal motioned for him to come to the mat for the test and offered both wrists as in ryote-mochi to the now visibly nervous partner. The prey took the bait. The two bulls locked up, pushing and shoving, back and forth, rather equally, while all of us waited for something dramatic and painful to happen. Seagal stopped and commanded the student to return to his place on the mat as he looked into the crowd surrounding him like ants around Terro, and announced, "Now, let's try again." Someone six-foot five-inches truly looks impressive when you are in seiza.

Sensei moved over to the other side of the ant colony and invited the person in front of me to stand up, and as he did Seagal motioned for him to sit down. "No," he said, "you with the glasses." I looked around and saw that I was the only ant with glasses. Oh, sh--. I jumped up and approached before the fear had a chance to enter. Seagal offered both wrists. I accepted and pushed him back and gained the advantage by collapsing his wrist to his chest by pushing from below with my hips. "Now that's better," Seagal said with his movie-actor smile and voice.

"You're an Aikido student, aren't you?", asked Seagal.

Yes, Sensei.

"Do you do high falls?"

Yes, Sensei.

"Good."

It now occurred to me, did "high falls" mean jump break falls or something that only stunt actors do in movies? Oh, sh--. Sensei's demeanor now changed from a seductive smile to cold as he offered his wrists. It was now too late for me

to change course. My best focus came over me as I grabbed firmly and pushed as before. I looked into his eyes and they seemed calm but empty. We pushed around briefly, and then somehow I felt that I no longer had him in my grip. I dropped my eyes to see what magic he had performed, only to see that his wrists were still in my hands. I had been duped. I returned my eyes to Seagal's eyes and they were met with a twinkle. With renewed confidence, I again pushed. He was not there, and as he pivoted I fell forward and thought that I was falling to the mat. Without thought I held onto his hand and ran in a circle to regain my balance. I could feel my balance shift from my hand, to my elbow, and finally more to my center, while my arm was moving across my body. Then my feet, my feet were in front of huge lights of the St. Thomas College gym. But why? I felt the sensation of being airborne and knew that I was rotating and hurriedly slapped my arm to the mat.

To my surprise, the landing was painless, and I quickly jumped to my feet and approached in kamae. Seagal's face was filled with a smile as he motioned with his hands that the technique was over.

To have him, and I mean firmly, in my grip, to feel his strength, and to have it disappear. To push him and again find no resistance. To be thrown without the feeling of strength or power. And to wonder how this all happened. That afternoon and evening I was a mini-celebrity.

Many other memorable moments, none as dramatic as this, transpired during the three-day clinic with Steven Seagal, and some of us had the opportunity to dine with and speak to Seagal for periods of time.

What was he like?

Complex, evolving as a person, not what he seems to be, and yet when you watch his movies I believe you see still what he is.

The role of shite is conceptually straightforward - to leave no openings in controlling uke without injuring them. The role of uke appears to be various, depending on who you listen to or read. One sensei says ukemi follows naturally from receiving proper shitewaza, and requires no special treatment. Another says the study of ukemi is the faster way to learn Aikido. A third says uke is to be transparent, without resistance in the technique; another calls this "cheating!" Is it any wonder that students ruminate on uke's proper role!

The easiest way to resolve the tension of taking ukemi properly is simply to follow the teaching of your teacher. But, before long the internal tensions within yoshinkai, and aikido in the larger sphere, become irresistible. Kancho Shioda

(Continued on page 6)

Taking Ukemi

(Continued from page 5)

said to "think more!" into the nature of our techniques. I submit that this refers to the role of uke as well as shite. After all, we study Right and Left equally; why not shite and uke?

Where many martial artists practice by performing katas alone, the role of uke is essential to the study of yoshinkan aikido. Uke is the one who receives the force of the technique; he is not necessarily the "defender" nor the "attacked," as there is no ill will intended in the proper study. Not only does shite need someone to "throw," but uke acts in several additional capacities. In the first place, uke creates the conditions that make a particular technique appropriate. If, for example, uke strikes and continues to vigorously move in, shite might entertain uke with taisabaki and a #2 technique. In this way uke allows the appropriate actions from shite. Then, without repetition, varying the distance, timing, speed, and concentration of power, uke helps refine shite's development of

TAKING UKEMI

technique.

Uke is indispensable in developing the philosophic side of this study of balance. Whether uke is seen in the mind's eye as oneself, my friend, the eternal other, or the world of reality with its physical and psychological laws, it is necessary to be in harmony with uke. O-sensei made clear the notion that "true budo is practiced not only to destroy the enemy, but it must also make him, of his own will, gladly lose his spirit to oppose you." Kancho described yoshinkan as a vehicle of world peace.

Even so, Kancho apparently agrees with the translation of ukemi as "falling." (I can't find much to suggest that he thought uke's role as sublime as Saotome-sensei, who described the time spent as uke to be "equal to or greater than" the time spent as shite in progressing in the study.) He would agree, I think, with Gaku Homma-sensei's difference between falling with intention and just falling. At base, however, most teachers seem to agree that taking ukemi has some very tangible benefits, such as learning to avoid injury. Terry Dobson-sensei said it colorfully, "When you're heading toward the mat at 16 feet per second, you better do something if you want to come out of it all right, and that something is inevitably to relax." Development of intuition and action without reflection leads to the development of spontaneity in jiyuwaza. Response without anticipation succeeds from falling with intention and action without intention. Finally, becoming alert to shite's openings and weaknesses, allowing uke to enter and assume shite's role when the opportunity presents itself, is essential to the study. Lisa Tomoleoni, an aikido instructor in Toyko, uses the phrase "Always engaged, always connected" to describe uke's role.

In finishing, we go back to the beginning with O-sensei's recommendations for being uke:

"Do not anticipate."

"Observe and catch [shite's] intention."

"Extend ukemi training into life."

"Avoid injury."

"Employ an open and supple mind, a flexible body, modesty and sincerity."

WOMEN AND ACL INJURIES

By Aikidoc

One of the most disabling injuries of the knee, the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) sprain, is occurring much more frequently in the past decade, particularly in women working in vigorous sporting activities. Estimates of up to 100,000 sprains per year in men and women have been entertained, with some general recognition of two to four times as many sprains in women as in men. It appears that the more vigorous the activity the greater the proportion of injuries to women.

The anatomy of the knee suggests that God is an optimist. That is, it strikes me as more than a little ludicrous to expect an end-to-end joint to stand up without deformity of shape or translation of the elements for any substantial period of time. The ACL prevents the lower leg from "pulling away" in a forward direction with a low impact from behind (as in clipping in football), or when the thigh translates backward (as in end of the day "sitting on the back of the skis" in downhill skiing). It is buttressed by multiple strong muscles, tendons, and ligaments. But the potential for injury with the rotation and planted feet of aikido movements is obvious.

Recently, epidemiologic observations have been made correlating the relative vigor of activity, the likelihood of injury, and sex of the participants. A study at the Naval Academy showed that comparable activity leads to ACL injury in women 2.4 times that of men. Even more interesting was the observation that at low activity levels, the risk ratio was nearly equal, but that it increased quite dramatically,

up to almost 10 times, for highly vigorous basic military training activities.

Boynton et al, in Vermont, have confirmed an increased risk of 2 to 4 times in downhill skiing, and have further identified ovulation as a significant correlation. The surge of estrogen causing ovulation may be the particular culprit, weakening ligaments directly. Animal models tend to confirm this idea. Other mechanical differences, such as thigh length and the shape of the center of the knee, may also play a role in injuries in women.

The importance of this information to the practice of aikido is evident. We know that since Title IX and access to good sports

(Continued on page 7)

Women and ACL Injuries

(Continued from page 6)

facilities, many girls and young women have developed some minor but chronic knee injuries, such as partial ACL sprains. Making evident history of previous injury is important in evaluating new students. Counseling in knee-strengthening exercises is sound advice for men and women. Consultation with a trainer, physical therapist, or physician should be considered where a history is suspect or training is particularly heavy. The developing body of data with regard to ovulation and biomechanics of the femur should

be brought to the attention of women practicing aikido. It is our hope that, as aikido is the study of balance, vigorous training will lead not to more but fewer knee injuries.

THE IDEA AND PRACTICE OF AIKIDO

By Gordon Shumaker

"If you want to garden, you have to bend down and touch the soil. Gardening is a practice, not an

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“idea.”

Zen Master Thich Nat Hanh

I've spoken with many people who say they like the idea of Aikido; they like its philosophy of harmony and peaceful resolution of conflict.

Aikido is filled with many valuable and useful ideas and insights. Most of them translate effectively to daily life. But, fundamentally, Aikido — like gardening, like Zen — is a practice, an activity. Merely thinking about Aikido or talking or reading about it is not doing Aikido.

Like the gardener who must touch the soil to understand gardening, the Aikido student must do the physical training that is part of the essence of the art to truly understand Aikido. The student might know something about balance in Aikido, but cannot fully appreciate her knowledge until her partner has taken her balance and has caused her to fly through the air.

The student might have a concept of restraint, but won't fully realize the significance of that concept until shite has firmly pinned him to the mat with a first-control technique.

Reading, thinking, and talking about Aikido are good things to do. But actual training is the key to true understanding. That training may be designed to accommodate physical limitations and conditions. So, the student whose knees preclude *suwari-waza* should find the particular training he can do safely. The student whose back condition prohibits *ukemi* should also search for training that takes his problem into account.

There are very few people who can't learn to do some type of Aikido training. For them and for those who have no physical problems, make actual training the core of your art — then think, read, and talk about it all you want.

IN OTHER DOJOS

The Unknown Aikidoka

I attended an Aikido clinic with students from many other dojos and styles of Aikido. I was amazed to see the differences, not only in technique but in etiquette as well.

For example, in the host dojo it was customary that only the instructor wore a *hakama*. All of his students, no matter what their ranks, wore only *dogis*. I noticed, however, that a few of the visiting students, of lower rank than the instructor, wore *hakamas* because that is their custom in their dojos. That seemed disrespectful to the clinic instructor.

I also noticed that some of the visitors bowed differently. Instead of sliding both hands down the thighs and onto the mat to form a triangle, they placed one hand down first and then followed with the other. I'm not sure if this is a big deal or not, but it seemed strange that the visitors would not follow the practices of the host dojo.

Most disturbing of all was the desire of some visiting students to show me how they do the technique in their style. Instead of doing the technique as the instructor explained it, they would show a “better” way. I felt that this not only was disrespectful to the instructor but it also deprived me, and others, from learning what this instructor taught.

For me, one value of going to other dojos is to experience the differences. Although my belt rank is not high, I have come to learn that there is no one absolutely correct way in Aikido, whether it be *seiza* posture, *kamae*, the bow, or the execution of technique. I like the style I have been taught, but I always grow when I observe and try different ways of approaching an Aikido principle. I think that also gives me both a broader understanding and a deeper appreciation of Aikido.

The old adage, “*When in Rome, do as the Romans do*,” is a wise one. If we follow it when we visit other dojos, we will learn and grow and, above all, we will show respect.