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# SHUHARIKAN NEWSLETTER

## YOSHINKAN AIKIDO

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#### NEW BLACK BELTS

Since the last edition of this newsletter, the Shuharikan has added two black belts to its roster.

Jeff Hansen and Thephong Le were graded for the rank of shodan (1st degree black belt) on April 28, 2006. Each had an excellent examination, and we are proud to have them as members of the dojo.

The rank of shodan signifies both the end of the long road of hard training through the kyu ranks and the beginning of a much longer road of deepening, refining, and expanding Aikido knowledge and skill. It has been said that the rank of shodan indicates that the student is now a "serious beginner." That's not intended to demean all the hard work it takes to get to that rank, but rather to suggest that the shodan has shown a serious commitment to Aikido and a willingness to study the art in depth.

So, congratulations to Jeff and Le and good luck in your future training.

#### **Shuharikan Dojo**

Instruction in Yoshinkan Aikido

265 West 7th Street  
St. Paul, MN 55102

(651)-222-7337

[www.geocities.com/shuharikan](http://www.geocities.com/shuharikan)

## HAYNES SENSEI TO VISIT IN 2007

Our longtime friend and mentor Fred Haynes, 6th dan and chief instructor at Island Aikido Dojo in Victoria, British Columbia, will visit the Shuharikan Dojo in the spring of 2007, and will present instructional clinics to Shuharikan students.

Formerly of Hamilton, Ontario, Haynes Sensei has for many years guided and overseen the development of the Shuharikan's principal teachers. He also was one of the founders of the International Yoshinkan Aikido Federation (IYAF) and has been a leading international Aikido instructor.

Haynes Sensei has a deep understanding of Aikido and always has something new to present at clinics. Additionally, he is a lot of fun.

We will give firm dates later.

## BUDO FRIENDSHIP SEMINAR

On August 26, 2006, the Shuharikan Dojo hosted the second of an anticipated continuing series of Budo Friendship Seminars.

The seminar was conceived by Mike Ellefson, 4th dan, chief instructor at the MCFM Aikido Bukou Dojos, as a fund-raising event for an aikidoka who was ill and did not have adequate medical insurance. The first seminar was held at Mike's dojo in Hudson, Wisconsin.

The current seminar, at the Shuharikan, was held to raise funds to purchase mats for an Aikido club in Kingston, Jamaica.

The seminar brought together several Aikido styles and a couple of extra styles. Thom Peterson, 6th dan, of the Bujinkan Yanagawa Dojo, presented ninjitsu techniques. Patrick Tarry, 3rd dan, from the Minnesota Ki Society, took us through ki balance-taking exercises. Dan Pederson, 2nd dan, of Aikido of Minnesota, demonstrated aikikai techniques. Mike Ellefson guided us through U.S.A. Aikido techniques. Gordie Shumaker, 3rd dan, of the Shuharikan, demonstrated elbow lock and 3rd control. Kevin Martin, 4th dan, from Kobayashi Shorin-ryu Karate, had us perform joint-locking techniques. And, finally, Rob Frankovich, Master Instructor of Twin Cities Gumbo, demonstrated a rather spectacular set of Korean sword techniques.

All students were able to experience all of the demonstrated arts and to compare them with their own approaches to the martial arts.

The outstanding feature of the seminar was the clear and wonderful budo spirit that it generated. Like attending a good Aikido clinic out of town, this seminar produced an uplifting sense of community and friendship that surely carried over into the students' home dojos and training.

Watch for the next Budo Friendship Seminar.

## NEW WEB PAGE IN THE WORKS

Spearheaded by Shuharikan member Ana Duran, the dojo will have a new web page soon. The graphics will be upgraded and the content expanded.

Of particular note, the web page will appear in English, Spanish, and Japanese.

Our thanks to Ana and all the other students who are working on this project.

## CONNECTIONS

Aikido is an art of connections. Physically, we connect with our partners (our attackers, too) to find a harmonious way to resolve a conflict.

But the Aikido connections extend beyond the physical. O-Sensei is reputed to have said that Aikido is easy to do on the mat but is much more difficult to do outside the dojo.

He could not have been referring only to throws and pins, which certainly would be harder on streets and sidewalks. Rather, his statement suggests that O-Sensei intended his art to be practiced not only physically in the dojo but in the real world and in daily life as well. Taking our cue from O-Sensei, the more carefully we look, the more likely we are to see Aikido being reflected in many daily activities.

For example, an Aikido student was describing his delight at a recent performance of the musical *Ain't Misbehavin'*. He commented, "There was not one wasted moment, all of them working together." Bingo! That's precisely Aikido, at least in its ideal. Every moment is purposeful and efficient. No position, space, angle, direction, or energy is wasted. All parts—body, emotions, mind, spirit—are working together. Sh'te and uke are working together in a harmonious connection.

It is likely that O-Sensei believed that Aikido permeates our lives. We only have to look with awareness to see the many connections.

## MY LIFE BEFORE AND AFTER AIKIDO

By Ana Duran

When I was in 10th grade, my high school made us choose electives and I chose basketball. I thought it would be fun to learn how to play and be a part of a team. Well, not everything went like I thought. For one, the coach would always call me Brenda. She was one of my friends who was also in basketball, and whenever she was not in class he would always ask me about her. I got really irritated because I never felt a part of any team and he never called me by my name! I started to not show up for class, and one of my reasons was that I was never invited to any of the games outside the school. You would think there were games in my school but there weren't any, so I never got to play with the team except for class. The basketball court was not indoors, so imagine having to "practice" under the sun, with no water, with hunger, and with a coach that treated you like you didn't exist.

As you may figure, I failed my class, so I had to take it again, which I kind of did. I had to be there two times a week, so I figured I would just go once a week and that would give me a passing grade, which it did. I hated basketball!

Having this happening to me, I thought I could never be good at any sport. I knew how to bounce the ball and throw, but that is just it. Sad, you probably think.

After I graduated from high school, my parents decided to move to Minnesota so that their children would learn English. After two years, I started working and making money. I didn't know on what to spend it so I just saved it, until I saw a poster of a snowboarder and I decided I wanted to do that, also because I

found winter to be kind of depressing and I wanted to find something to do so that I could enjoy it. I bought all the equipment necessary, but all of my acquaintances told me I should not buy anything because I might not like it since I didn't have any experience skiing or skating. But I didn't care. It was my first time trying a sport so cool, especially on snow. Anyway, I convinced myself that I would like it and, as in any sport, I would probably get hurt learning. So far I haven't. I took some beginners' classes and I have loved it since because when I was sliding down I thought of air and it gave me the thought of freedom. But I found that my knees would hurt after practicing as well as my back. No big deal, I thought.

After a year, my little brother Daniel wanted to learn martial arts, and we found the Shuharikan Dojo was very close to our house. So he enrolled, and I would go with him and watch the class. After a few months, I thought to myself that it would be neat to start doing it, too. Since I had in my head that I was not good at any sport, I decided to break that belief. My goal was to be good at two sports. Aikido would be my second one. My first day in class was very interesting. Jon was teaching, and we were working on iriminage. You see, I had troubles getting really close to uke to do iriminage. You might think I'm crazy, but when I was working with elbow power #1, for some reason I felt or thought about a sea wave. From then on I knew Aikido was my new sport. I started in the kids' class for a few months and then I moved on to the adult classes during the week. My first day was a Tuesday and I saw all the guys. It was very intimidating to see them do rolls, jump breakfalls, and actually knowing the techniques. Plus, they were all so tall! I started to come more often to the adult class, and the class on Saturday morning, as well as the kids' class.

I started to go twice a week, and so I developed my sense of closeness to do techniques. I have improved a lot since my first day, but I still have more things to work on.

The teachers in the dojo are pretty cool, and I noticed that they would not make anyone feel stupid. They will remember their names and treat each student with respect. I liked that the different teachers all knew my name, which, as you may recall, I had a bad experience. I started liking that I got a lot of support from my teachers and that they would make me feel comfortable in class as well as with my transition from kids' class to adult class. My classmates never made me feel like I didn't belong with them. They all were very supportive, and I found it very impressive that they would help me with my techniques and not get upset when I did it wrong. I didn't feel like I had to hurry and learn at once.

Last year I went snowboarding again after being in Aikido for a year or so. I noticed a big improvement. My balance was stronger and I didn't fall as often. I felt more in control when turning; and the most amazing thing ever, my knees didn't hurt anymore! I snowboarded longer than before and I was not as sore as I used to be. I see now that even though they are two separate sports, they are interrelated in so many ways, but the major one in both is balance, staying in kamae at all times. Toe or heel side turns are easier this way and less stressful on the back, and the knees don't twist and in weird angles (spaghetti legs like a teacher says, actually he says arms).

I find it very liberating to be able to work on my Aikido to become a better sh'te and uke and at the same time my snowboarding improves as well. Recently I found myself more rooted, like we say in Aikido, and all thanks to when I fractured my 5th metatarsal bone. But that is another story.

## THE HAPPY, RELUCTANT AIKIDO PARTNER

By John Murphy

You look at TV ads for sports cars. They dodge through a myriad of obstacles, smoke off the tires, and an essence of danger. On the bottom of the ad is always, "*These are professional drivers. Do not do this at home.*"

Okay. Fast-forward to my living room. "Say, John, can I borrow you for a moment?"

Now typically, when your mate is asking this, it is: "*Hold the string.*" "*Help me measure something.*" "*Open the jar.*" You know, easy stuff. When Maggie calls me like this I know what she wants. Full attention. We square off. Yes, that is right. A person who has no Aikido experience and a 2nd dan black belt. Right kamae right NOW! "Seikin. Front strike," she states calmly.

I execute the command "flawlessly." I mean, I have been doing this for years. Maggie then contorts me into some bizarre position. I tap out. "*You don't feel that!*," she informs me. What an interesting statement, I thought that I felt it. (I go back to the TV ad.) "*She is a 2nd dan black belt. Do not do this at home.*"

I implore her that I did feel it. To satisfy her, I stand in right kamae and am ready to do it again. All right, the second time it felt differently. The pain was much more intense. "*Wow, you are right. I sure did feel that one!!!*"

Being a good uke, I get back up and go to left kamae. She is always a little surprised, but deep down she expects it. After all, one-sided Aikido is . . . well, one-sided. It is like the world filled with right-sided kamae people. I have found the left side very effective in many other areas in my life . . . so why not Aikido? (Perhaps sick, but I do have my convictions.)

Now, I can't complain too much. I remember one technique she was doing to me. It was actually in Afton State Park down by the river. I turned to her and suggested she may want to take my advice. After all, I do have a master's degree. Not sure what it is in . . . but damn it, I earned one! She actually listens. So what academic discipline do I go to? Culinary Arts. That's right, cooking. I explain what I do to disjoint a chicken so it is easier to cut up. I figure a wing and an arm, what's the difference!? If you can find the joint in a chicken's thigh, why not put the same pressure on some poor uke. Of course, when I was giving her this outstanding advice, it never dawned on me that she would listen. And if she did listen, I never thought that she would try it right there. I was wrong. I came back to the ad and I thought I would add: "*or in a park!*" She really excelled at "taking aikido off the mat" that day!

So why do it? Why not just join, hang out, and do Aikido? Because I hate falling; I hate pain. However, I see the joy on Maggie's face. I see the camaraderie at test times around a smoked-fish spread, Cheetos, and a beer. I see egos that are really trying to be left at the door. I see community. Now, I am a chump when it comes to community. I think when you see it working in a respectful manner, it is all of our jobs to support it, even if it does go against the warning: "*These are professional practitioners of a martial art. Do not attempt this at home . . . or in a park.*"

## ELBOW POWER—WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT?

By the Unknown Aikidoka

In class after class, throughout several years, I heard my teachers refer to "elbow power," or, in

Japanese, *hiriki no yosei*. Early on, I gave the term no thought; I did what I was told. But, after a while, I started to wonder what on earth my teachers really meant when they spoke of elbow power.

My curiosity began because, as far as I could tell, the elbow doesn't really seem to have much power. I guess we can use our elbows to strike an opponent, but I did not feel that elbow power has *atemi* in its meaning. The elbow is a joint. Joints are not as strong as bones and muscles, and even weight training does not seem to help much. Joints are also more vulnerable to injury than bones and muscles. So how can we possibly get "power" out of the elbow joint?

Then, like so much else in the wonderful, ever-deepening art of Aikido, after much repetition and trying to pay attention, I discovered two possible meanings of elbow power; at least I *think* these are possible meanings. I think the first refers to a particular configuration and position of the arm.

In Aikido, and in other restraining arts, there are four critical configurations and positions into which the arm can be placed naturally. The first is what Yoshinkan Aikido calls "elbow power." The arm is brought out in front of the body; the elbow is bent vertically about 30-degrees; and the arm angles very slightly toward the centerline of the body. Perhaps this is hard to visualize, but all aikidoka have some degree of understanding of this positioning. The second has the arm forward, but it is turned horizontally, palm down, across the body, similar to part of the *ikkajo* technique. In the third, the arm is turned out with the palm up to the side of the body, as in *hijiate*. And the fourth has the arm folded with the elbow pointing up, as in *shihonage*.

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## Elbow Power— What on Earth is that? (Continued from page 4)

The only configuration of these four that is strong and a potential source of power is the first one, the one we call elbow power. The other three are positions *sh'te* might strive to bring *uke's* arm into. In the second, the arm is weak; the shoulder joint is engaged; and the body can easily be turned, moved, or twisted. Novices tend to block front strikes with this arm configuration. Not only is that not a sound position for a block, but *uke* virtually gives a weak arm to *sh'te* for whatever technique *sh'te* might wish to execute.

The third configuration greatly exposes the elbow joint and allows *sh'te* to lock the elbow joint out. This prevents *uke* from using his arm at all and gives *sh'te* tremendous leverage.

And, of course, the fourth configuration places *uke* in a position of substantial restraint. If properly applied, *uke* cannot stand up; he is tied up and his balance is tenuous.

So, now I think I get it. If we practice the elbow power configuration, we are training and reinforcing our muscles and nerves to maintain and use the strongest arm configuration possible. When we engage the arm from that strong configuration in the execution of a suitable technique, we experience power. Hence, elbow power. It makes sense to me.

But there is yet another possible meaning to elbow power, I believe. We can achieve "power" by applying a technique to *uke's* elbow. By controlling the elbow with a simple grasp, we can move *uke's* shoulder. As we continue to move the shoulder, we begin to alter *uke's* spinal alignment. When we continue our movement to conclusion, we cause *uke* to lose his balance altogether. This, then, is another way of thinking of elbow power, a power directed to the attacker's elbow.

Whether this all makes sense to anyone else will depend on actually experiencing these possible explanations. Because Aikido is an art of experience, we must do to understand.

### PEACETREK AND AIKIDO

By Jon Sharratt

The attention-grabbing headline by Lauren Fryer read: "Egypt: Jewish, Muslim, Christian 'Ambassadors For Peace' Together Cross Sahara Desert." Intrigued, I read that the "Peacetrekk" was a group of ten people, including an ex-Israeli fighter pilot, a former body-double for Saddam Hussein's son, Uday; a Palestinian accounting student; and a New York City firefighter who survived the September 11 attacks. Together they left Jerusalem on March 7, traveling by camel, foot, and in two 1960s-era German trucks, with hopes of reaching the Libyan capital of Tripoli.

They were part of an expedition carrying an olive tree from Jerusalem as a gesture of peace. The travelers hoped to plant it in Tripoli at the end of their more than 3,400-mile journey.

The group was sponsored by *Breaking the Ice*, a Berlin-based nonprofit conflict-resolution group that wants participants to confront diverse religious and political issues in a setting where they depend on each other for survival.

Unfortunately, they were not able to fully complete their journey, as the Israelis were denied access to Libya on Friday, March 24.

Colonel Raymond Benson, U.S. Army (ret.), noted: "Is this going to change the world? No, but there are a lot of people doing nothing. We're doing something," he said. "When you remove politics and religion, we can get along out in the desert alone."

Neda Sarmast, an Iranian-American, added, "If we can cross this terrain together we become ambassadors of peace, showing other people that if we can do this, anybody else can, too."

I came across the "Peacetrekk" story shortly after reading interviews by Queen Noor of Jordan. She wrote in her book, "Leap of Faith," that King Hussein's lifelong search for peace was underscored by two themes, one being that "Peace resides ultimately not in the hands of governments, but in the hands of people," and that "Real victories are those that protect human life, not those that result from its destruction or emerge from its ashes."

She added, "I have long thought of myself as a builder of bridges between cultures. But when I look back on the connections I have been trying to make all my life, I find that may not be the best metaphor after all. A bridge connects only two things, with a gulf between them. As travel and technology erase the physical distances between us, we need to connect so much more. We need to weave a tapestry of our individual human experiences, each with its own strengths, contributes to the strength and the beauty of the whole."

Her writings echoed an inquiry made by Bill Stumpf, author of *The Ice Palace That Melted Away: Restoring Civility and Other Lost Virtues to Everyday Life*, "I wonder if we are living in civilized times. Some cultures may believe they are more civilized than others. Throughout history some places have grown, and some that were once considered to be civilized have deteriorated. Today we see major ebbs and flows of civil behavior in developed and underdeveloped countries. We have witnessed and continue to witness the wrath of racism, violence, hatred, and everyday

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## Peacetrekk and Aikido

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meanness in our country — in government, corporations, churches, law enforcement, schools, hospitals, neighborhoods and roadways, and sadly even in the design of kids' toys kids play with. In an ever-shrinking yet culturally diverse world, we need civility to survive." Encouraging though, he added, "I [do] believe the paths of civility are enduring and sustainable."

These thoughts got me thinking of our training in Aikido. Noted Aikidoka, George Leonard, wrote insightfully in his book, *The Way of Aikido: Life lessons from an American Sensei*, "When you step on the mat, say to yourself, 'This is my mat.' Be expansive, generous. Look around at the other people on the mat. Be glad they're here. Welcome them. Welcome them to your mat."

He continued by asking, "Are you willing to take responsibility for this mat, to own it? That doesn't mean it isn't everybody else's mat, too. If you're big enough to own the mat as yours, you're big enough to let it be theirs, too."

What an idea, being confident enough in oneself to live, hold, and train with your beliefs and ideals, while at the same time having the capacity, openness, and respect to appreciate, share, and learn from others.

Kancho sensei (Shioda sensei) wrote: "These days, the differences of ideology, the confrontation of races and conflict between nations, lead to numerous problems from the destruction of the environment to economic friction. All opposition or antagonism leads to greater conflict. A premise of Aikido is the avoidance of rivalry or any form of opposition. If the people of the world would make an effort to learn how to avoid dissension through the practice of Aikido, I am sure that mankind could realize genuine unification."

I believe those who participated in the "Peacetrekk" took that first Aikido step of offering themselves as "ukes of peace." If we could all do this on a regular basis, growing, sharing, and trusting with others, our world would be a stronger, more vibrant an understanding place.

In closing, I would like to share two of Queen Noor's writings that resonate so wonderfully as true examples of "Aikido."

The first, "For some species of pine, for example, only the heat of the intense fire can break the strong resin that seals the seeds in the cone. The fire rages through the forest, the pinecones open, and the seeds of renewal are released."

"The pinecone's resin is a metaphor for the ignorance, prejudice, and intolerance that imprisons man's common goodness and love. Each of you has felt the fire of hatred that scars the human landscape in so many parts of the world. It is my hope that this heat will in fact serve to separate you from the bonds of hatred and intolerance. That you, as Seeds of Peace, may grow to be trees of life, offering shelter, hope and peace in your communities."

The second notes: "Recently, my brother in law Prince Hassan shared a particularly eloquent reflection of Islam's true attitude towards those of other faiths as captured by a Muslim poet who lived in Spain 800 years ago:

*"My heart is open to all the winds:  
It is a pasture for gazelles  
And a home for Christian monks,  
A temple of idols,  
The Black Stone of the Mecca  
Pilgrim,  
The table of the Torah,  
And the book of the Koran.  
Mine is the religion of love.  
Wherever God's caravans turn,  
The religion of love  
Shall be my religion  
And my faith."*

Yours in Peace and Aiki!

## AIKIDO AND FIGHTING

By Dan Shumaker

The Flaming Lips have a song called "Fight Test" that begins as follows:

*"I thought I was smart.  
I thought I was right.  
I thought it better not to fight.  
I thought there was a virtue in  
always being cool.  
So when it came time to fight,  
I thought I'll just step aside,  
and time would prove  
you wrong and that  
you would be the fool.  
To fight is to defend.  
If it's not now,  
then tell me when.  
For to lose I could accept,  
but to surrender  
I just wept and regretted  
this moment."*

To fight or not to fight—that is the question. We train in Aikido for many reasons—for physical health, to have fun, to build confidence, to be prepared for difficult circumstances—but we do not train to fight or to be bullies. A student should not hope to earn a black belt so that he can try to beat people up. Not only is there no guarantee that he will be able to do that, he will only end up defeating his own malicious self.

A friend of mine lived in a rough neighborhood in Minneapolis. Late one summer night, as he and a friend walked to his apartment, three thugs ran toward them aggressively from across the street. My friend and his companion looked at each other and instinctively knew what to do. They ran, and luckily the thugs did not pursue them. Smart—"When it came time to fight, I thought I'll just step aside."

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## Aikido and Fighting

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After an *asa geiko* session in Huntington Beach, California, Geordan Reynolds Sensei told of his experience in a bar in Los Angeles where he was waiting for a friend. Five big guys approached him and asked why he was there. Things heated up, and one guy came at him with a pool cue. Geordan described this "think-fast" situation as "one line/tightrope Aikido." He visualized a straight line of Aikido evasions from beginning to end and defended himself against fists and swinging bar stools by continually moving out of the way. Being missed by fractions of inches, he moved and moved and ultimately escaped. "To fight is to defend." Reynolds Sensei defended, but without fighting.

Ando Shihan, after a California clinic, told of a time that he and one of his *ukes* were accosted while returning to their motel. Two men jumped them. They had no escape route and were compelled to deal physically with the men. Ando and his *uke* were able to quickly pin the men and hold them until the police were called by an onlooker. When the police arrived, they thought Ando and his *uke* were the assailants because they were applying techniques. When they learned the facts, they arrested the real assailants. So, Ando Shihan and his *uke* had to resort to a physical response, but not to a fight.

From another martial style, Keith Vargo Sensei speaks in the November 2005 issue of *Black Belt Magazine* of "real humility." It comes from life's experiences, maybe from having been in fights and having experienced superior power and maybe even having been injured. It even comes from knowing that you can actually hurt people. But, says Vargo, people with real humility are not people who can win fights by injuring others or who boast because they

have high belt ranks, but they are people who "have put it all together and who represent something bigger and better" than being mere fighters. "They represent something you know you can become."

So, serious Aikido training does prepare us to fight, if we wish to do that. But more than that, it prepares us to defend ourselves without fighting, and it trains us to become something bigger, something better. When faced with a bully, we have options that Aikido encourages, and that my friend in the bad neighborhood, Geordan Reynolds Sensei, and Ando Shihan all used. Had they instead resorted to fighting, "*time would prove the wrong and [they] would be the fool[s].*"

### BEING UKE

By Gordon Shumaker

Several years ago, there was a 5th *dan* test given in Canada by a Japanese *shihan*. The *aikidoka* to be graded was already known to be quite proficient at *Yoshinkan Aikido*. His testing partner, also a 4th *dan*, was reputed to be quite good as well. But he would serve as *uke* only for this grading. The *aikidoka* was confident in his techniques but remained humble.

The grading began with *kihon dosa* with partner. The *aikidoka* began as *sh'te*, and he and his partner alternated roles as is the usual procedure in *Yoshinkan* grading. Then came time for the techniques.

As the two men faced each other, the *shihan* called out the first technique, but he stated that the *aikidoka* would begin as *uke*. This was unusual because typically the person grading performs as *sh'te* first. But who was he to question the *shihan*?

The *aikidoka*'s partner performed the technique on both

sides as *sh'te*, and, as the *aikidoka* prepared to switch roles, the *shihan* called for the next technique, indicating that, once again, the *aikidoka* would begin as *uke*. Very strange. Now the *aikidoka* began to wonder if the *shihan* felt that he could not do the techniques well enough to pass the examination.

The pattern continued through ten techniques; the *aikidoka* was always in the role of *uke*.

Then came *jiyu-waza*, in three forms of attack, all with multiple attackers. The *aikidoka* knew that his *jiyu-waza* was smooth and strong and he was sure that the *shihan* would be pleased. But what a surprise when the *shihan* announced that the *aikidoka* would have the role only of *uke* for all the *jiyu-waza*.

At the conclusion of the examination, the *aikidoka* assumed the worst. He had not gotten to show that he could perform the techniques on the test. He was disappointed but tried to prepare himself to graciously accept the outcome.

After a ten-minute break, the *shihan* returned to the mat and called the *aikidoka* to the front. He then announced that the *aikidoka* was being awarded the rank of 5th *dan*. Uncharacteristically, the ordinarily expressionless *shihan* smiled and said, "*Uke* most important."

*Aikido* is said to be an art of nonresistance in the sense that we do not use force or excessive strength to accomplish techniques or to defend against attacks. Rather, maintaining our balance, we "go with the attacker's energy" and use it to imbalance the attacker. This is easy to say, and is not very hard to imagine. But the doing is the challenge. How do we learn to "go with the attacker's energy"? A likely answer is illustrated by the example of the 5th *dan* grading.

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## Being Uke

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A proficient *sh'te* must know how to go with the attacker's energy. By learning to be *uke*, we learn how to feel our own energy and how *sh'te* responds to it. *Sh'te* might allow the energy of *uke's* attack to continue along its intended path or *sh'te* might redirect the path of that energy. Either way, *uke* is in a perfect position to feel the energy and what is happening to it. In a real sense, if we understand *uke* we can more fully understand and appreciate *sh'te*.

So, the study of *Aikido's* energy is primarily the study of *uke's* role. *Uke* is not merely a prop on which *sh'te* can practice and refine techniques. Rather, *uke's* proper function is as an investigator of the energy of techniques so as to understand nonresistance and the ability to capture energy. As the *shihan* said, "*Uke*" most important."

## LEARNING TECHNIQUES

By Robert Wozniak

This past summer, I and other Shuharikan members and instructors attended an instructional clinic in Chicago. The teacher was Chida Shihan, and he provided for me a new perspective on my learning of techniques.

Before the clinic, my approach was to treat techniques as a sequential process of block-redirect-control/throw or pin. This sequential process is still muddy for me but it is gradually becoming clearer.

What Chida Shihan asked was, "From any of the attacks (shomen, yokomen, tsuki, katate, ryote, etc.), how would you enter into any of the four foundational response techniques (ikkajo, nikajo, sankajo, yonkajo)?" So, that

question changed my focus by providing a broader perspective. Although techniques are illustrated and taught in the step-by-step, sequential method, it is very useful to see the process more generally as attack/response. I now understand that attacks are countered in a way to lead to the application of just about any of the "kajos." I also have come to realize that, although the determination of these applications depends on a number of factors (force, direction, position, etc.), the block/redirect sequence leading to application is for the most part similar, given the type of attack.

make a conscious determination to relax and to stabilize both.

## IDEAS TO ACTION

There are many ideas that inform the art of *Aikido*. The challenge for the sincere *aikidoka* is to translate those ideas into action.

In Japanese, *ochitsuki* means "calmness." In *Aikido* training, we constantly seek to learn to relax, to become calm.

H.E. Davey Sensei, an *aiki-jujutsu* instructor, comments on the idea of *ochitsuki* this way:

*Since the body reflects the mind, a stable body reveals a stable mind, and by the same token, a physical loss of balance indicates a mind that is not calm . . . . A mind that is calm induces the body to relax, allowing every body part to settle downward and into its proper and natural place.*

Take the idea of *ochitsuki* beyond something just to think about or to talk about and try to apply it to your *Aikido* training. Translate it into action—from a concept to a practice. Notice how mind and body relate to each other and how disturbance in one is disturbance in the other. Then