



Aiki Budo Centre Newsletter

(August 2002)

Class Times Aiki Budo North (CHOCC)

	Kids	Adults
Tuesday	6:15-6:55pm	7:00-7:50 p.m. Beginners
		7:55-9:00 p.m. Intermediate
		9:00-10:00 p.m. Advanced
Thursday		7:00-7:50pm Beginners
		7:55-9:00 p.m. Intermediate
		9:00-10:00 p.m. Advanced
Saturday	9:15-10am	10:00-11am Open Class
		11:00-12noon Weapons Class

Instructors

Jaime Sheppard	3rd Dan
Steven Chau	2nd Dan
Greg Gruninger	2nd Dan
Paul Lepine	1st Dan
Christine Earl	1st Dan
Candice Lawrence	1st Dan
Jon Oaker	1st Dan
Therese Pickersgill	1st Dan

*Class Cancellations, Photo's,
Upcoming Clinics and more...
Check out on the Web!
www.aikido.on.ca*

合氣道養神館

Shodan Test – June 2002



EDITOR'S NOTE

(by Jon Oaker)

Loads of contributions this issue everything from How an Aikidoka Falls Off a Bicycle (by Phil Lantz), to an interesting article on the concept of Senior and Juniors in Aikido submitted by Chris Wilson. Thanks also go to Therese Pickersgill who was the inspiration behind the article on the Ancient Art of Tatami Arranging. Thanks awfully.

Special thanks to Phil, Jacquie, Jon & Cindy Clifflen, Ted, and all the assorted helpers who put on an awesome picnic! We ate (some of us more than others), blew bubbles , painted faces, and had a general good ol' time. Thanks to everyone who came out and enjoyed an afternoon of fun and relaxation.

Upcoming Events

We are fortunate that once again Parker Sensei, is coming to London....details may be found filling up my piece of leftover space on page 3.

Another great training opportunity is coming up with a women's aikido seminar, tentatively planned for early October. For details talk to Candice Lawrence.

Seniors and Juniors

(author: Dave Lowry)

Sempai and *kohai* are Japanese terms frequently used by non-Japanese martial artists. They translate approximately as “senior” and “junior.” The operative word in that sentence is “approximately” because *sempai* and *kohai* do not have completely adequate counterparts in English. That’s probably because in the West, we do not have social situations like those that created the whole *sempai-kohai* relationship. Martial artists who use the terms need to know about their social context so they can give some thought to perhaps not using them at all.

Sempai and *kohai* have come primarily from the educational system in Japan, especially its universities. Surely they have been used elsewhere - they are heard not infrequently in the business world - but in common parlance they refer to one’s upper and lower classmates at school. If I entered a Japanese university a year after you, I would



always be your *kohai* and you would always be my *sempai*. We both might graduate and eventually I might be the CEO of a huge conglomerate, and you might be far

below me in the company’s hierarchy. No matter, you would still be my *sempai*.

In modern dojo, particularly in Japan, these titles are applied the same way. (This is no coincidence. Modern budo’s strongest organizations, particularly before World War II, were at universities, so it’s natural that the terminology would find its way into kendo, karate, etc.) If I joined the dojo June 6 of this year and you joined on June 7, I would be your *sempai*. Always. If I quit practicing the next year and you stayed with it for the next half-century, even though I am inactive, I would technically still be your *sempai*. These terms denote a seniority; they do not imply anything about skill level or title. On the surface it’s that simple.

When the budo are transported outside Japan however, it isn’t simple at all. When students in Kansas or New Jersey start using the terms, all kinds of misunderstandings can arise:

- They may assume *sempai* and *kohai* are ancient terms used by the samurai. They aren’t

People who implement them to give an authentic or traditional ring to their school are in error.

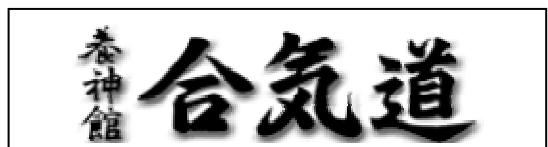
- They may assume these are formal terms of address. With few exceptions, they are not. Bob might be your *sempai* at the dojo, but you would not normally address him as “*sempai*” the way you would use the title of *sensei*. For example, if I asked you who is standing over there, you might say “That’s my biology teacher.” But if we then approached her, you wouldn’t say, “Teacher, I’d like you to meet my friend.”

- They might believe the *sempai-kohai* relationship is analogous to that of a fraternal organization and thus bullying, hazing or making life miserable for juniors is a time-honored tradition. Unfortunately, even some Japanese have made this mistake. Juniors in university budo clubs have been severely hazed, even beaten. In some extreme situations, there have been deaths. Budoka who engage in this sort of brutality are not following an ancient code of the samurai. For the samurai, the group was only as strong as its weakest link. It was a consideration for every man to have trust and faith in his comrade. Lives were on the line. The [budoka] that indulges in this sort of sadism is actually following the traditions of the modern Japanese university, where machismo and other adolescent silliness is a sad part of life.

- They may believe that the *sempai* is necessarily senior in technical skill or ability. Not so. Nearly every large dojo in Japan has one or more *sempai* - guys who stopped serious training years before but who still come out now and then. Often they think they have the right to tell juniors what to do, and Japanese society often tolerates this. I know just such a fellow who comes to the Aikikai Hombu in Tokyo, a big talker who hasn’t taken a serious fall or worked up a good sweat in a decade. It’s embarrassing and irritating for the juniors - any of whom could kick the senior’s behind into the middle of next week - but they smile and endure it. You should, too.

If the *sempai-kohai* relationship is important at your dojo, fine. But remember it’s not as simple as it seems and that no matter what your title, everyone is supposed to be learning.

About the author: Dave Lowry is a free-lance writer who has trained extensively in the Japanese and Okinawan arts. He has been writing about the martial arts since 1986.



The Ancient Art of Tatami

Arranging or

Grab An End!

By: Jon Oaker

Ever wondered how the Mats (Tatami), appear neatly laid out when you arrive for class? Well, believe it or not, the Dojo is not home to a tatami fairy who waves a wand or two, and "poof" the mats appear, (apparently they're native to Japan and Canada Customs won't let us import any). What actually happens is a couple of people madly rush to get to class early and struggle to get the mats laid out by themselves before the class starts. This is especially a problem for Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings.

Sadly, this is not only hard on the people who are showing up for this task, it also takes a toll on our beloved mats.

We teach respect for each other on the mat, but seem to forget that this respect should also extend to getting the mats laid out (and other sundry maintenance-type duties). Personally, I tend to resent anything that has the brass to get between my training time and myself... I really don't want to run into the situation where I have to waste some of that valuable time laying out the tatamis.

So, how do we solve this problem? (smuggling and child labor are not options). It's a given that all of us have family and job responsibilities/commitments, and that not everyone can get the Dojo early enough to help with the mats. But, if you can, please consider doing so, even if its only once a month. Like so many things in life, if we all make a contribution, no matter how small, the problem becomes little more than an irritant (if that) which is easily resolved. Here are more suggestions on how to contribute.

- ☉ Drop into the Dojo on your way home from work on Tuesday's nights and help lay out the mats.

- ☉ Take a look in the Dojo first to see if the mats are put out before you go to change. A cheery wave to the poor sucker trying to haul a mat across the room by her/himself as you breeze by to go get changed tends to add a touch of insult to injury! Come in and help; then go get changed.
- ☉ Some of the senior students in the kid's class can and should be helping to set things up on Tuesdays and Saturdays. They've earned those belts and our respect, now they can start to take some measure of responsibility for their training.
- ☉ Make a commitment to yourself to show up early once a month to help out with the mats.
- ☉ Don't have kids in the Saturday morning kids class? How about getting up early, putting out the mats, and going to Tim's for a coffee? Heck, bring a few friends along and have a traditional nutritious Canadian breakfast (Apple---Fritter...it has fruit it must be good for you!)
- ☉ If you aren't up to heaving the mats about, the dojo now has its very own Swiffer thingie in the mat room. Just follow along as the mats are being laid out and we will have nicely Swifferized mats!

As things stand... the mat issue is little more than an irritant. But if our poor long-suffering, small, but dedicated crew of helpers, (insert a mental image of Joe as a very grumpy mat fairy with a rag-tag group of assistants here! OOOOH...Scary!!!), ever decide to be ill or just busy we will have a problem! So, let's just quietly get it done and get on with aikidoizing. Thanks.

Parker Sensei Seminar

**Parker Sensei will be in London
September 19th – 29th, 2002**

Scheduled Events:

- ☞ Sat Sept 21st Teaching at Aiki Budo North
- ☞ Tues Sept 24th Teaching at Aiki Budo South
- ☞ Thurs Sept 26th Black Belt Testing at Aiki Budo South
- ☞ Sat Sept 28th Group Training Session at Aiki Budo South
- ☉ **Sat Sept 28th Embukai demonstration at Aiki Budo Centre South.**

**Further details and costs to be announced.
Check website, & Bulletin Board for up to
date details closer to the date of the
seminar.**

Zenpo Kaiten Ukemi and Self Preservation

by Phil Lantz

Quite often in Aikido we see 'Breakfalls' (Ukemi) as means to help ourselves and our partners to be better practitioners of Aikido. As we teach our bodies to move in ways not normally associated with our everyday life and to be relaxed at the same time; we sometimes fail to realize that nearly every movement we learn in Aikido has its own uses and practical applications for potential Self Defense situations.



I heard Sensei Jamie tell our class the other night that when you start to have fun with your training it becomes second nature. Well I can say that this is true.

When I first started Aikido, I was so enthralled with forward and backward breakfalls, because I hadn't done anything like this since I was a kid. I would be out in my front yard rolling back and forth, (which my kids think is great, no matter what my neighbours think). I love Breakfalls. I really like the stars I still occasionally get some Saturday Mornings. But there is a more useful and serious side to Ukemi.

Two things: 1-An observation & 2-A story.
1) For the speediest means to cover a short distance (ie.6-15 ft), forward continuous

rolls (about 2 to 4) will get you there faster than taking off from a standing position. Don't believe me? Get one of your fast friends (no pun intended), and draw off the distance that needs to be covered. You do continuous forward rolls, and your friend starts running from standing, (you can start from standing if you want), and you see who gets there first. I've done this with many people and get to the end first or tied once with one of my friends. The use of this exercise?? Things do fall on us in life and at that moment it becomes a Self-Preservation Situation. If Ukemi can save you from something large and heavy falling and harming you, then by all means use it. Remember, people are not the only danger we might face.

2) A Story: On a Saturday Afternoon after Aikido I was riding my bike down Wortley Rd. to Victoria Park where I was volunteering as Tent Security for a multi church celebration. I was approaching the overpass at Horton St. when a Black Truck pinned myself and my bike to the lower part of the safety curb. Now anyone who has ridden there will know that the city has been a little remiss in their upkeep of the curb and it is full of potholes. This was the reason I really didn't get a good look at this person's license plates. I was concentrating on keeping my bike on the road. I guess the driver was proud of themselves as they took off but I was more concerned with getting my bike under control. As you've already guessed, I didn't. The bike hit a pothole and I was thrown headfirst over the handlebars into the road. Next thing I knew, my head tucked in as if I was looking at my belt and low and behold I was standing in the middle of the road. It happened so fast. Well let me tell you I grabbed my bike and dragged it over to the grassy embankment. Then the Shock of what had just happened kicked in, but it was too late to worry about it cause it was over and I was alive. I got first aid at Victoria Park and here I am today. If it wasn't for Ukemi, I am sure, I would have been hurt really badly or possibly dead. Since then I've wondered if one could do Ukemi and live if their parachute didn't open?? But then we all get strange thoughts.

Enjoy and have fun with Ukemi-for it may sometime become a Self-Preservation Necessity.

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Contact Us !!

Questions, comments or submissions for the newsletter should be sent to Jon Oaker via:

cat.halloaker@sympatico.ca

**Check out the newsletter on-line at our
Aiki Budo Club website**

www.aikido.on.ca