UKA Collection

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Articles
Reviews
Essays

Collection 2006

Welcome to the United Kingdom Aikikai Article collection 2006.

Contents and links

Page 1 •The Visit. Colin Hackett. March Newsletter

Page 3 • Hombu Dojo Grants Formal Recognition to the Hellenic Aikido Association. Gordon Jones. March Newsletter

Page 3 •Lost And Found: A Serbian Road Trip. Louise Hunt. March Scribe

Page 4 •Making Aikido History. Guy Needler. March Scribe

Page 5 •Aikido. Babis Keranis. March Scribe
•A Meeting with Old Friends. W J Smith MBE Shihan August Newsletter

Page 6 •Planes (Trains) & Automobiles (Or how NOT to get to Belgrade) Philip Smith. August Scribe

Page 7 •Course Report: Kings Heath, Birmingham, Sunday 7th May 2006 Mark Machin. August Scribe
•What is Ki? Kevin Wong. August Scribe

Page 8 •Cross Training Course, Kilburn, London. 8th July 2006. Andrew Humphreys. August Scribe

Page 9 •William Smith MBE Shihan Philip Smith. October Edition

Page 11 •Memories of Mr Smith Peter Brady. October Edition

Page 11 •William James Smith MBE Shihan Gordon Jones. October Edition

Page 12 •Letter from Mrs Smith. October Edition

Page 12 •Summer School 2006. Gordon Jones. December Newsletter

Page 13 •Thank You. December Newsletter
•Yudansh Grading Essay. Neil Mould. December Newsletter

The Visit

The visit of Gordon Jones Sensei and "The Gang" at the very first Central Coast Aikido Easter Course 2005 was the culmination of a lot of hard work by a lot of individual people with a common goal, who had put their faith and trust in me some seven years ago.

My family and I had previously moved from Sydney to the Coast some eight years earlier. The Central Coast is the mid - point between Sydney and Newcastle. A very beautiful region surrounded by a mixture of lush countryside and warm sandy beaches. A little slower and more relaxed than the City. (I paint a nice picture- don't I? But it's all-true!)

I had told my students about the United Kingdom Aikikai and of my teachers back in the U.K. - Sensei's Smitnd Jones, and it's a credit to them, my students and friends who put their faith and trust in the U.K.A. and me - along with my jokes!!



Everyone had been looking forward to the visit of "The Britz" as they were known this end, and of this quiet gentleman Gordon Jones!! The stories Darius and I, had told of this man had set their knee's a trembling" – although I don't know why!! It was a tremendous effort on behalf of Gordon and "The Gang" who literally got off the plane, changed and came directly to the course!!

I owe them a great dept of gratitude. Gordon's total commitment and support to the A.A. and me, is only equalled by his enthusiasm and total dedication to the spreading of the art of Aikido.

Lawrence (my brother in law) and his wife Bev (who had come out earlier, along with Neal and Kelly), together with the help of Senior Teachers of A.A. had looked after the Saturday class. We all eagerly waited for Sunday when we knew Gordon and 'the Gang' would be arriving. When they showed up midday it was a divining moment for me. At long last here they were looking a bit tired and worse for wear, but all with a beaming smile on their faces. (I think they were as excited to being in "Oz", as I was to see them!!)

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These may not necessarily reflect the opinions of the UKA

I had tears in my eyes when I greeted them one by one. Old friends like Karl, Paul and of course Gordon, and some I had never meet before, but one thing was for certain that before this day was over, we were all going to be the best of friends. (And we were over a Barbie and a few beers!)

Gordon's teaching was like a breath of fresh air. His technique was effortless, controlled, alive and different from how I had remembered it yet still dynamic. This dynamism was no more evident than witnessing the effect on nage from his taisabaki. It was a joy to behold and left no one in doubt, who was on the mat that they were in the presence of a master. Which only goes to show that even after Gordon's 4o years of practice, the journey never stops. Change is inevitable if we are to progress and grow as human beings just has change is inevitable if Aikido is to progress and grow which it does all the time. That's the beauty of what we practice.

That's Aikido!

I believe we are all spiritual beings, having a human experience!

For my self, my own Aikido had been in a state of hibernation.
Here was the wake up call!
Could I answer the call?
Only time will tell!



The age we live in is characterized by an unprecedented accumulation of information, yet real knowledge is very rare. Aikido is not a packet of information all ready for immediate consumption, or of instructions for some kind of mechanical execution.

We should not seek therefore to have Aikido explained to us by someone else.

We must experience it ourselves. No one can acquire the experience other than ourselves. Through hard training and constant practice we shall undoubtedly discover something of value within ourselves.

But we all need guidance, patience and love. Here was that guidance!!

During "The Visit" we reminisced. Went site seeing! Saw the Sydney Harbor Bridge and the Opera House! Explored Sydney and the Pub's! Looked at the ocean! Laughed and Joked!

One time that I remember in particular is when my wife Sylvia came running back to find her inhaler (as she suffers from asthma). She had been laughing so much at Karl's jokes that she thought she was having an asthma attack -Ha! Ha!



Time went too quick .It was over in the twinkle of an eye. But this is just the end of the beginning. A new journey begins!!

My thanks to 'The Gang" in no particular order Paul, Karl, Sean, Brian, Gaza, Neal, Sharon, Rebecca, Louise, and Kelly. Please come again?
Congratulations to Sharon obtaining Shodan and Brian obtaining Nidan at the Easter Course.

A big Thank-you to all my gang, who knew how important this visit was. Helped make things happen and go smoothly – you all know whom you are?

Congratulations to Darius and Gareth for passing Shodan and Jean Christophe for passing Nidan. And Scott and Geoff who just missed out- well done!

Lawrence and Beverly don't leave it so long next time. (Sylvia misses you)
And last but not least, my wife Sylvia who supports me in everything I do. She's my strength.

Thank you Gordon Jones Sensei in more ways than you'll ever know!!

My special thanks to the U.K.A. and in particular Sensei William Smith 6th Dan, Shihan, M.B.E. He has always been there for me. I remember stepping into the dojo for the first time at Cradley and seeing Sensei Smith executing technique on Sensei Jones and I knew I was in The "right place."

Colin Hackett Shidoin
Australasian Aikikai

Hombu Dojo Grants Formal Recognition to the Hellenic Aikido Association

On the 6 April the Hellenic Aikido Association was awarded full recognition and registration to Hombu Dojo.

I would like to offer my congratulations and those of the UKA to George Koliopulos Sensei for this considerable achievement. This recognition has been 3 years in the making, over 12 years since Mr. Smith fist visited Athens and 10 years since HAA affiliated to the UKA. Over that period Peter Brady and I have been regular guests to many of George's dojos throughout Greece and recently Phil Smith and Keith Haywood have been visiting teachers. The students that have accompanied us were shown wonderful hospitality and made firm friends with George's students. The warm welcome and the high standard of their positive training seems to typify the Greek culture.



I hope that the strong association between both teachers and students will continue to flourish in the coming years even though the HAA is now a worldwide recognised authority for the teaching and dissemination of aikido in Greece

Best wishes for the future George.

Gordon Jones - UKA Co-Principal

Lost And Found: A Serbian Road Trip

The morning began well; the Ren Shin Kan Gang were off on their travels once more. Gordon Jones and Philip Smith Senseis had been invited to teach jointly again on the annual Easter course hosted by the Serbian Aikikai (I had been lucky enough to attend their first joint Serbian course two years previously). The rest of the British contingent on this occasion included Paul Garratt, Rebecca Kelly, Sean Taylor, Mark Vanes, Lee Hubbard and Satu Vainika, Mark Machin and Neil Kennerley from UCL London. Mire Zloh Sensei, Fukushidoin from UCL, and a senior teacher in the Serbian Aikikai was already in Belgrade with his family, awaiting our arrival.



So, back to Friday morning, and all bodies and bags were all accounted for (Philip Smith Sensei had already flown out separately from Birmingham Airport; more of that later!) Luggage and 'sticks' (we never mention the w- word!) were duly checked in and we went off in pursuit of coffee, the Bureau de Change, breakfast and more – er - coffee!

After only a minor delay with the flight, we arrived that afternoon at Belgrade Airport –then a brief moment of panic, as we realized we had lost Jones Sensei's weapons bag somewhere in transit. Lost Luggage were helpful, and informed us that the bag was still in London (it could have been much worse – imagine being without a change of underwear or a toothbrush!)



The sincere, warm welcome from Sasa and his students made up for any lingering sense of unease, Then Sasa asked where Philip was. Problem. No Philip. The Serbians had been watching the arrivals carefully, but of Philip there was no sign.

Lost: one weapons bag, and now one Shidoin – Lost luggage were not going to be much help on this one! Philip turned out to be stuck in Zurich; a problem with the connecting flight would prevent him from joining us until tomorrow. History was starting to repeat itself, as the same thing had happened during the last Jones-Smith Sensei course in Serbia.

Still, the rest of us arrived at the 'Pinki' sports centre ready to train. Since it was my second visit, it was wonderful to see so many faces – old friends and new, particularly Novak**,** Ljiljana**,** Vladimir, Maria and many other good friends with whom I had trained last time. Jones Sensei taught in his usual dynamic and exciting style, focussing on various kokyunage-based movements.



After the class we went back to our hotel to get ready for the evening's meal- only to hear that the indomitable Sensei Philip had embarked on a cross-border marathon, flying to Zagreb in Croatia, before driving the 300 km to reach Belgrade! We were relieved and very glad when Philip finally appeared at the restaurant, cheerful and as lively as ever - none the worse for his long journey!

Saturday brought some exciting classes from the Senseis, both of them focussing on different aspects of contact and harmony between Uke and Tori. The Serbian students were very quick in picking up the threads of both Senseis' ideas and made them work very effectively.

That evening we ate in the old Bohemian quarter of Zemun (which adjoins the newer area of Belgrade). The food was wonderful, the entertainment even better, with live traditional music. Mr Mark Vanes was persuaded to put his best foot forward by the band's singer – both definite candidates for Strictly Come Dancing! The entire evening was fantastic, full of laughter and camaraderie – with such great hosts it was impossible not to have a brilliant time!



Gradings were held on the Sunday of the course; there were 22 candidates for Shodan and above! Needless to say, both candidates and ukemi were exhausted by the end, but it was great to see so much good, technical aikido. Congratulations to all those who took their tests, and especially to those who achieved the grades they wanted.

Looking back on the trip, I realise how lucky we are in Aikido to have such opportunities to make such strong and lasting friendships. We may not see fellow Aikidoka for several years, but that spark, based on shared experiences, laughter and training together can be so easily reignited, it is as though we are not separate. Perhaps this is part of the harmony that characterises Aikido. Anyway, I do count myself very fortunate to have made so many good friends over the years, at RSK, in Serbia and elsewhere. It is one of the things I value most in my practice.

Lousie Hunt, Ren Shin Kan

Making Aikido History

Do any of you feel like you are making Aikido history? I do. The UKA is on the cusp of greatness, we are about to be a world wide force for Aikido at its best.

This can only happen if we all work together, building upon the work that Mr Smith and the other senior members of the UKA have undertaken. When the West Midlands Aikikai Split away from the British Aikido Federation 22 years ago, forming an autonomous unit with a little over 400 signed up members, later to be called the United Kingdom Aikikai, little did we think that the organisation would have signed on nearly 6000 members as it approached its 22nd year. *[approx. 6000 people have joined the UKA the over the last 22 years. UKA "live" membership currently stands at approx. 580. Editor].* This level of growth and expansion is a phenomenal tribute to the hard work of Mr Smith. This level of growth and expansion needs to be maintained. An important counterpart of this expansion is the need to pay attention to the detail of our technique and instruction.

This attention to detail means that although we must embrace the individual evolution of Aikido within ourselves, our students and our instructors must never forget the importance of basic instruction. Each of us has a different interpretation of technique and ukemi depending upon our physical and psychological makeup. Receiving instruction from each other to understand each others reasons for a particular view on Aikido is an important part of our own evolution both physically, mentally and spiritually. However, we must ensure that our students are taught the pure basics as taught by Mr Smith, the current Doshu and the Second Doshu (Ueshiba Kisshomaru) before him, without deviation, thus giving them the robust foundations of a martial art that will, through understanding the basics completely and using these as the basis for our own evolution, ensure our technique and ukemi are reactionary rather than pre-conceived actions. Only then can Aikido within the UKA remain mainstream, being available and achievable by all who join us whilst passing on a martial art that is recognisable world wide.



Any organisation that grows has to entrust responsibility to others as the founding members cannot expand the organisation beyond there own capabilities. This is essential to ensure that growth occurs. Eventually, if everyone works together the organisation reaches another point in its growth, the point where it is so large that it either, evolves to accept its size and develops an organisational structure to manage this whilst coping with expansion, or it fragments as internal disagreements, resulting from the failure of personal expectations and ambitions, (natural expectations resulting from bestowed authority) to be realised become obvious.

This is where I see the UKA currently.

The UKA is at the cusp, this fine line where we can achieve further greatness and expansion to becoming a true world wide authority for Aikido and all that O Sensei stood for, or we split up into smaller fragments, only to disappear into mediocrity. We need to work together to ensure that the UKA as an organisation grows rather than breaks up.

If we want the UKA to become what it should be then Senior Instructors should therefore look themselves in the mirror and ask a very personal and soul searching question:

"Can I sacrifice my own personal ambitions in preference to helping the UKA expand and evolve further, therefore becoming part of a greater organisation, If not, am I content with being small and taking over 20 years to get to the same level of greatness, provided everything goes to plan!"

For me the choice is simple, I would sacrifice everything I have achieved to ensure that the organisation that Mr Smith has worked for continues to grow and evolve, I would like to think that you, dear reader, are of the same disposition.

Guy Needler - Ren Shin Kan

AIKIDO

Aikido is a traditional Japanese martial art,
whose aim is to keep people united, not apart.
It is how to harmonize one's energy,
with oneself and others in synergy.
It is not violent but peaceful,
with movements flowing and beautiful.
It can be soft or dynamic,
in quick motion or static.
It is not aggression but self-defence,
If the mind is immovable there is no offence.
Its purpose is not to eliminate,
but be one with the other and rotate,
so the attacking intention is neutralized,
with no damage to either side,
although it contains straight or circular throwing,
horizontal or perpendicular falling.
It is the way of co-existence,
with no conflict and no resistance,
just contact and control over the body,
the training is open to everybody.
The teaching is based on repetition,
and not on brutal competition,
in the welcoming and friendly atmosphere,
one must learn respect and have no fear.
Aikido techniques reveal one's true self,
expose one's humble or egotistic self,
show one's true character and personality,
'cause they are executed like in reality.
It changes one to a better person,
perhaps even from the very first lesson.
It brings victory over oneself,
happiness and sentimental wealth.
It teaches flexibility of the body and mind,
acceptance and tolerance of every kind,
a life in harmony, dignity and health,
how to live and not be afraid of death.
Aikido is the martial art of peace and love,
its sign could perfectly be a white dove.

BABIS KERANIS
4th DAN SHIDOIN AIKIKAI
Hellenic Aikido Association

A Meeting with Old Friends

Last December David and Lyn Lenton, our aikido friends of many years, arranged to pick us up one Sunday but did not tell us where they were taking us. All they would say was that they would leave us somewhere for about 4 hours, then come and pick us up again.

We soon realised as we were travelling that we were heading towards Leicester, a road we had travelled many times in the past. We thought in our own minds that we would be meeting Peter Brown, the Shidoin and instructor of Kyu Shin Kan, and another old friend, but this was not to be.

What a wonderful surprise when arriving at our destination we were greeted by Bryan and Rita Mullay, two old friends that we first met 40 years ago. Bryan was a very hard worker, who along with Mr Fred Brown was instrumental in getting Aikido known in Leicester in the early years. Chiba Sensei visited the dojo often, travelling up from London nearly every month.

Although it is nearly 20 years since I last saw Bryan, I would have known him anywhere. We shared a wonderful lunch and spent the whole afternoon talking about the old times and catching up on family news. Later on, yet another surprise: a student of Bryan's, Wendy Ayres, arrived to say hello. The day was proving to be special indeed.

At 5 O'clock David and Lyne arrived to pick us up, and as they live in Devon we thought we would be heading for home but no, they took us to Peter and Sue's house where we had tea and yet more talk about old times and, of course, about Chiba Sensei.

Peter has built up his dojos in Leicester and is very successful. Although we are very close we hardly have time to sit down and talk. I was thinking that this was a wonderful way to end our day, when Peter said to get in the car as they were taking us to a Chinese restaurant for a Christmas meal with the dojo students. The meal was enhanced and made more memorable by being in the company of so many friends. What an experience we had over the day.

Finally the day ended with David and Lyn taking us home. It had been such a long day for them and they still had to drive back to Devon. Glad and I cannot thank them enough for arranging such a special day which gave us so much pleasure. The memory will stay with us forever.

Thanks again, old friends.

W J Smith MBE Shihan
Principal UKA

Planes (Trains) & Automobiles (Or how NOT to get to Belgrade)

In the last Newsletter you may have read the article about our now annual visit to the Serbian Aikikai in Belgrade. As usual a fantastic time was had by all but getting there was a different matter.

The journey started so well, we got up as usual at home and my wife Judith ran me to Birmingham airport so that I could be in plenty of time for my Swissair flight to Zurich; connecting to Belgrade. Whilst I was sitting the departure lounge reading my newspaper over breakfast I kept one eye on the departure screen, which, ominously, wasn't giving any information about my flight! Eventually the call came for barding some 20 minutes after the scheduled departure time so I dutifully picked up my bag and took my seat.

So we taxied onto the runway and stopped. Sat there for perhaps 10 minutes before we picked up speed and were finally off into the great blue yonder. By this time we're about an hour behind schedule and the captain tells us that arrangements will be made for onward travel at Zurich.

Just before we land at Zurich he comes onto the intercom again to give us a list of gates that passengers should go to for their onward flights. A list that didn't include Belgrade! At the end of his little speech almost as an aside he said, "Everybody else go to the Swissair desk".



So a few minutes after we'd landed I'm standing at the Swissair desk waiting for information, and being diverted eventually via Munich now with Lufthansa to arrive in Belgrade at 3.55 instead of 2.55. OK so I need to phone Sasa to tell him the new plan. Switch on mobile phone – can't make calls. Only got enough change to make one payphone call so in a flash of inspiration decide to phone home so that 1) If Sasa tries to get me on the mobile but can't he might try there 2) Judith can phone my mobile company to sort out the problem.

Anyway sitting in Zurich airport is pretty boring, especially when your connecting flight (now to Munich remember) is delayed!! But there's a 40-minute gap between landing and departure times at Munich so no panic; especially as the Lufthansa guy assures me we'll make the connection.

Take-off from Zurich is about 35 minutes late but according to the crew we're still OK for our connection so I put my trust in German efficiency and believe them.

My trust is misplaced. Land at Munich run to the gate which is almost literally shut in my face; apparently I'm 30 seconds too late and the gate can absolutely positively NOT be opened for me and the Serbian guy who has been running behind me. In fact (and I quote Lufthansa customer "service") "You cannot expect us to delay a plane just because YOU are late"

After a brief but heated discussion when we tried to decide who was to blame for us being late at Munich (I personally think the delayed Lufthansa flight had something to do with it) we were offered a flight to Berlin with a connection to Belgrade. Oops no seats to Berlin so we now have two options stay in Munich overnight or fly to Zagreb and get to Belgrade by public transport or some other way. So the Serbian guy turns to me and says, "Shall we hire a car". Sounds good to me and just as I agree my phone goes (its started working again) and it's Mark Vanes phoning to see where I am. So I explain what's happening and the new plan and say we expect to arrive in Belgrade about 10.00 pm (ish).



Now it's a sprint to the Zagreb plane which turns out to be a propeller driven job, noisy bumpy and slow. So I've agreed to drive 300 kilometres with a guy I've just met and whose name I don't know (he did tell me but I didn't hear it properly over the engine noise) but there again so has he.

Zagreb airport (bit shabby but being refurbished) and I speak to Mire to fill him in on the situation. Serbian guy then tells me that his company are sending a car and driver to collect us (I'm thinking about the expense so withdraw 3,000 Croation Krone; I found out later that's only £28 worth) and he will be here in about an hour. He goes to check where his luggage is and comes back 10 minutes later to say the cars outside!

So a few minutes later I'm sitting in the back of a black car (Opel Vectra) with two men who I don't know or understand looking forward to a 3 – 4 hour journey; confidence is not increased when we stop on the outskirts of Zagreb to ask somebody where the motorway is!

When we get sorted out away we go and as we're travelling our ETA Belgrade is coming down rapidly – I didn't know Vectras were so fast; it seems like we're doing warp factor 9 with the down side that we don't appear to have any brakes: or at least the brakes only start to work within about six inches of the vehicle in front. One other complication was for about 40 kilometres of the journey the opposite carriageway was closed. Not a problem for our driver who simply pulled

into the contraflow to over take; no matter what was coming the other way!

Despite this I managed to arrive safely (if a little shaken) at Belgrade albeit about 2 hours ahead of schedule to meet Sasa and Mark Vanes. This meant I could join everyone for the evening meal and really begin what was a fantastic weekend both on and off the mat.

One other twist to that weekend's travel happened on the return journey when who should I meet at Zurich airport but Keith Hayward coming back from his trip to Athens!

All in all an eventful weekend; can't wait for the next one.

Philip Smith
Ren Shin Kan

Course Report: Kings Heath, Birmingham, Sunday 7th May 2006

Sunday 7th May was a traditional, early start for London folk attending an Aikido course but this was a course with a few slight differences; first of all it was a UKA course that was a little closer to home (by about half an hour) and secondly it was a course being taught by 2 instructors whom I perceived to be very different styles.

Cath Davies and Mire Zloh had agreed to host a course together in 2005 which was unfortunately delayed and was now back on schedule. A lot of travellers and a few locals got together at Kings Heath for practice and it was a mix of people that hadn't necessarily trained together on any other course: a good start to the day.
After adjusting our eyes to bright yellow mats the course started with some improvised training aids to lay out the theme of the day. Both instructors focussed on principals of movement and connectivity rather than specific techniques. This was quite a different experience from the traditional, technical based approach and the theme was reinforced throughout. Some people may view this as the 'softer' aspect of Aikido but after making it to the end of the course and seeing the effort everyone had put in, it really was a physically demanding session.

At the end of the day my perception of the Senseis had changed quite significantly: instead of two people with very different physical builds and styles of Aikido, I saw a pair or Sensei's who were following the same principals and teaching the same thing with possibly a bit of personality colouring how they present. It was easy to see the the differences but it took a session like this to help me recognise the commonality.

Some memorable quotes which stood out from the day included:

- "Have the confidence to wait for the right time for a technique, don't rush to throw"
- "If you try and put a technique on someone, it becomes a fight. The technique should be based on body movement."
-



It was a great day out and as already mentioned a chance to practice with some unfamiliar faces. It's always amazing to see how two different Aikidoka with very different backgrounds can come together, teach very similar principals and bring everyone together through practice and technique. Exactly what Aikido should be!

Mark Machin
Forest YMCA Aikido Club

What is Ki and how can we develop it in our Aikido techniques?

Introduction

Ki to most students of Aikido is as mysterious as the secret of fire is to King Louie of the monkey people in Walt Disney's version of The Jungle Book. Ki has been described as breath, energy, spirit, etc. Indeed the second Kanji character of Aikido means breath. Unlike other languages, oriental languages are more precise in their meanings than most. It does not have shades of meanings like other languages. If we take this

description at face value, then how do we develop breath in Aikido techniques?

In martial arts that rely on power and force to smash into the adversary, the practitioner would inhale, hold the breath giving it the strength for the kick or punch and then exhale as the blow is done. In Aikido, which isn't a punching or kicking art, we are taught that breathing is a natural process and there is nothing special about it as we breathe normally as we inhale or exhale when we execute the techniques. Indeed it would be a mistake to hold the breath and detrimental if we loose the rhythm. Given that this is the case, how would breath impact on Aikido and make it unique to the art?



The Top Down Approach to Ki

It occurs to me that we need to know what Ki is before discussing about how to develop it. As in all things, the first step in knowing something is to be able to describe it and therein lies the problem. Without a clear definition in this context, there is no accurate way of developing or measuring one's progress of Ki in the Aikido techniques. How will we be able to say that this person exhibited more Ki in the technique than others?

In search for the definition, we can apply a top down or a bottom up approach. The top down approach comes about by:

- Definition
- Consensus of opinion
- Interpretation

From the research so far, it appears that there is no clear description of Ki from the immediate students of O'Sensei and this has transcended into ambiguity and uncertainty for those that follow on from them.



Failing to obtain a clear definition, we rely on the consensus of opinion of the senior students that train with O'Sensei. In this respect there are many notable individuals. Those that train with him pre-Second World War and those that train with him in the post war period which resulted in the differences in the hard and soft style Aikido and the different paths taken to further the art.

Comparatively, the hard stylists utilise a greater reliance on strength and rigidity in the execution of their techniques while those regarded as soft style rely more on the larger circular more flowing movement and less strength in their techniques. To speak of a consensus between these two groups is almost impossible due to these differences.

Failing this then it becomes one of individual interpretation of the senseis to which one trains with. Whatever Ki is, it has always being described as something intangible. Popular translations of Ki are cosmic universal energy; internal energy; life force; nature; spirit; intent; atoms of the individual reacting together; perfect balance; there is no such thing; it is not something one finds but it finds you after many years of training; it is the unification of one's being; something that cannot be rationalised or understood or written down; etc. If a definition is attempted, you would have missed the point thus making Ki a mystical item. How does any of this help?

If we ignore the top down and apply the bottom up approach, we start from a different premise, the subject of which I will leave for my next article.

Cross Training Course, Kilburn, London. 8th July 2006.

After the UK Extensions Course earlier this year organised by Mark Walsh another course was held following its success.

Following various meets and a significant number of emails to Ian Hurst of the AKA the venue date and instructors were all agreed. On the day there were some 30 participants from both the AKA and UKA. The course was taken by Charles Harris, Ian Hurst and Paddy O'Leary of the AKA, Mire Zloh and myself.

The course started off with some round-robin style training. This is where a technique is shown by anyone of the participants and is practiced for a couple of minutes or so, then another technique is shown and so it continues. I find that this is an excellent way to start a course as you get to practice a variety of techniques with a variety of different people.

After an energetic 40 minutes or so we had a quick water break and the teaching began. I won't detail what was taught but will mention two things stood out from the course and the teachings.



The first is that regardless of style or association there are obvious similarities and objectives from training and teaching. There are slight variations. For an example, Ki Aikido teaching continually refers to the "one point". We just call it the "centre". Ki Aikido using the "one point" through the execution of their technique.



The second is that due to the different emphases of using the "one point", I find that this alters the execution of the technique and therefore the type of ukemi students develop. We therefore need at times to adjust our own techniques to meet the needs of those we are practicing with. Is this not "harmony"?

In all this was an enjoyable course where everyone regardless of association or style of training came away with something. I'd like to thank Ian for his hard work in organising the event, and to the instructors for their time and effort. It is appreciated by me and I feel by the students who attended. The proceeds from the day are going to support a childrens charity and the Peace Dojo in Ethiopia.

Andrew Humphreys
Fukushidoin – Te Shin Kai

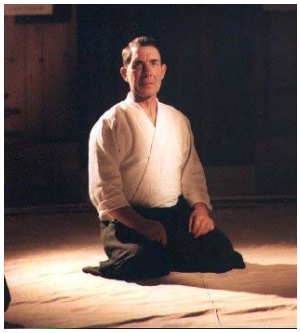


William J. Smith, MBE, Shihan

William Smith was known to many Aikido students throughout the world as a generous teacher with a sincere sense of love for both his art and his students; many of whom became close personal friends and in this short article I will attempt to outline the main points of the life of this remarkable man, always known as Bill to family and friends.

He was born on the 1st July 1929, to Ernest & Laura in a row of terraced houses which shared a communal courtyard (known as the "fish shop yard") and even communal toilets! One of seven children (one of whom died in infancy) Bill was part of a close-knit family which extended to numerous cousins many of whom kept in touch until his death.

As a boy Bill was a choirboy at St. Matthews Church until he was evacuated during the war, initially to Bromsgrove although the family was split up, which was not to Ernest's liking. At that time Ernest was working at Danks Engineering in the Black Country and one of his workmates lived on his own in Birch Coppice (on the site where Bill lived until his death) and asked Ernest if he would like to bring his family their.



The deal was struck and so the family moved in with the man thereafter known as "Grandad Sam". As the property was only a two up two down cottage on a small holding this meant building what was really a shanty on the side of the property for the boys to sleep in with the girls all sharing a room in the house.

Bill often said (in fact even on his death bed) he must have been one of the few men to like Hitler as it was his bombing of Birmingham which led to his move to the Black Country where he met his wife Gladys.

This was undoubtedly the most important thing that ever happened in his life and they remained devoted to each other throughout his life.

During this time Bill always maintained his interest in all sports but particularly boxing, football and gymnastics and at age 18 was given life membership of the Birmingham Athletics Institute where he was a PTI. As a member of the army cadet boxing team he also fought an exhibition bout in Lichfield during the

war where he met Jack Dempsey a famous heavyweight world champion in the inter-war period. At the end of the war he was also selected for a gymnastics team to visit Russia but unfortunately couldn't go because his family couldn't afford to meet their share of the cost. Ever afterwards he said that no matter what his children's ambitions he would do his best to fulfil them because of this disappointment.

By now he was settled into his career as a butcher and in 1951 he and Gladys married and started married life in rented rooms in Birch Coppice. Bill however determined to build a home for his family and so began construction of the house known to so many people in Birch Coppice, which was completed some seven years later. By this time Bill & Glad had two children, Diane & Philip and so this house was a true family home on the plot where Bill had been evacuated to as a child.

Bill still retained his links with the BAI and this led to his interest in Aikido when in around 1961 or 2 he saw a demonstration there. He was immediately hooked and began training regularly, both at the BAI and the Niko Academy of Budo in Small Heath. This led to him starting his own class in West Heath at the Community Centre in Fairfax Road, which many Aikidoka will remember with affection and continues to host a dojo until today.

In 1966 he met Kazuo Chiba who had been sent to Great Britain from Japan as head of the Aikikai of Great Britain and the two forged a deep friendship which continued until his death.



As a result of this Aikido relationship Bill became an important and influential figure in the Aikido world. In 1973 he was given the position of Head of National Coaches for the Aikikai of Great Britain (now the British Aikido Federation) a position he held until his resignation from the BAF in 1986; when he formed the United Kingdom Aikikai. This was followed by is appointment to the Superior Council of the International Aikido Federation on its formation in 1976, where he served three terms of office until 1988.

This was the year that saw the UKA gain recognition by the Hombu dojo in Japan, the first time a second Aikikai had been recognised in a member country as a result of his efforts which were fully supported by Chiba Sensei.

In the following years his reputation grew both as an Aikido teacher and as an individual, gaining students and friends in places as diverse as America, Greece, Serbia, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan.

Bill was honoured by Birmingham City Council in 2001 for his contribution to Aikido and in 2002 was awarded the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) by the British Monarch for his services to Aikido, the first person to be so honoured. This was followed by his appointment to Shihan (Master Teacher) in 2003, the pinnacle of his Aikido career.

In 1996 Bill was unfortunately diagnosed with Prostate Cancer and at that time it was estimated that he would survive around two years post-diagnosis. In typical style he was determined to both fight the disease and continue to live life to the full in the company of family and friends as well as continuing his Aikido career. In fact he continued to teach and train (continually bemoaning the fact that he couldn't take ukeme) until earlier this year and in February I was privileged to accompany him and share the teaching on his last ever seminar at the Phoenix Dojo in Coventry.

Bill died on 24th August 2006 at the home he built looking out over his beloved garden surrounded by his family. He will be sorely missed by them and by the literally thousands of people whose lives he touched. He leaves behind a wonderful legacy in the UKA, whose future we discussed just six days before he died.

Philip Smith

28 August 2006



Memories of Mr Smith

The first time I met Mr Smith was in 1971 at the Judokwai Dojo in Leicester. One of my Aikido colleagues from the Birmingham Athletic institute had told me there was a course with a Japanese Master (a certain Mr Chiba) and gave me Mr Smith's name as a contact. When I met him he was a brown belt, Gordon Jones was green Belt and I was a yellow belt. (In today's grades that would equate to 1st, 3rd and 5th Kyu respectively). Straight away he smiled at me with that full faced smile he had and welcomed me to join in the practice.

At the BAI the training was quite soft and flowing so I was not prepared for what was about to happen to me. There were many on the mat and we were in groups. I was with Mr Smith and Gordon, the technique was Kotegaeshi (tsuki I think). I remember attacking Mr Smith and hitting the mat a microsecond later with so much force that I thought I was sinking through the mat and it was coming up around my ears!! Practise was very positive in those days and I wondered whether I would survive the day. I did and loved every minute of it. The experience, at a stroke, changed my views and aspirations about Aikido. After the practice Mr Smith asked me about myself and where I was from and invited me back to a student's house for refreshments. After this he arranged for someone to take me home. All this for someone he hadn't known from Adam prior to that morning. This was my first experience of the kind of benevolence and generosity that Mr Smith was capable of.



Mr Smith was one of the sharpest, most switched on Aikidoka I have ever met, or ever likely to, but one of his most endearing characteristics was his occasional absentmindedness and terrible memory for people's names. The times I have been on the mat and he has called people out to take ukemi only to forget their names and refer to them as, '....him over there' - it even happened to Philip once!! I remember one time at the old Cradley Dojo when he had different people up in front of the class to demonstrate what he had taught to see if they had understood. Shidoin Roger Douras, one of his original students, was asked to do something, he did and Mr Smith said, after thinking about it for a little while....'that's a good girl' - clearly still thinking about the lady who had demonstrated prior to Roger. Any of you who have taken ukemi for him in the past will know his affectionate method of advising you that you had either not attacked properly, or with not enough gusto……. a dig in the ribs! Usually in the area of the floating rib and with just enough power to knock the wind out of your sails, never done with malice, he would always follow up with, 'Oh sorry!!!' and then smack you across the face – wonderful stuff and something that I will sorely miss of him.

I have so many fond memories of him that will live with me forever. He was one in a million, a natural leader and a true gentleman of Aikido.

God Bless
Peter Brady

William James Smith, MBE, Shihan

On the 23rd August I, along with about 200 other people said a final goodbye to William Smith Shihan MBE. It was a sad and emotional day, only lifted by the number of old friends from the distant past that joined us at the dojo for several hours of 'remember when.....'.

We all lost a remarkable man who, against all the predictions, had fought the ravages of cancer for nine and half years. A man from humble beginnings who built a house; a loving and close family; a successful organisation and a worldwide reputation. His achievements, like the man, where extraordinary.



His family lost a man whose goal throughout his life was to build a close knit family who could enjoy health, prosperity and happiness. Nobody could ask for a more caring and supportive husband and father.

And I lost a friend. I had been with him for 41 years and had enjoyed a relationship that was very rare outside that of father and son. He was my teacher and mentor as well as a friend. He was at my wedding; almost at the birth of my first daughter (we were on a course together); her wedding and he had met my grandson. I first met him at West Heath and for the next 20 odd years was at his side as his uchideshi, before we knew there was such a word.
The teaching in those early years was haphazard and hand to mouth with no structure and no teaching skills. But Mr Smith was in his mid 30s then, young, uncompromising, fit, tough and fast. All these attributes I was made painfully aware of on a weekly basis.

As the organisation grew, not through any intention - he just wanted a home for his students to train in, his role changed: he become the statesman of Aikido. The dynamics of our relationship also changed and we

worked together to build the UKA. We had an honest and straightforward relationship, the times we did disagree where always followed by a handshake.

His teaching skills always led the way, I watched fascinated as his aikido underwent change after change as his body grew older and he adapted his skills to compensate for this. This process must have began with O'Sensei and makes aikido unique.

He would always be there to offer help and support to anybody that needed it, always seeing the best in everybody. I saw his trust betrayed and abused on more than one occasion yet this belief in those around him was always undiminished.

In the 42 years that he was involved in aikido he was without question the pivotal and most important figure in the UK. His influence can be seen in all of the 3 major organisations in the country. Aikido will never see the like of this man again.

We will all miss him.

Gordon Jones
UKA Chairman

Letter from Mrs Smith

Dear friends and Aikidoka,

First of all I would like to say a big thank you for all the wonderful tributes you all paid to Mr Smith; I know he would have been very humbled had he been able to read them, and I was very proud to read them. Each and every one of you had a special place in his heart. He was a family man who loved us all and he thought of the UKA as an extended family, that is what he worked for and that is what he hoped he had achieved, and I am sure he had. His philosophy in life was that if you planted the right seed it would grow and flourish, and to do that you had to start with the basics to have a good foundation. He believed this in everything he did especially his Aikido life. I am sure his Aikido will not die and that his dream and his work will carry on with the UKA in the way he would have wished, working together respecting each other and building on what he started.

God bless you all.
Mrs Smith

Summer School 2006

As Christmas and the New Year approaches, usually Summer School is a distant and pleasant memory of the summer. This year, of course, was very different with the passing of Mr Smith midway through the week and the anguish and sorrow felt by us all, both those at Summer School and those that were not able to be with us.

Since then, we have had the funeral and the memorial; both unforgettable occasions in different ways, witnessing the deep and genuine sadness felt by so many at the passing of a remarkable man.

Through all the upset and sadness felt at Summer School, there was a dignity and a unity felt by all those present. In particular Sugawara Sensei, caught up in this torrent of emotion while his own father in law was gravely ill at home. I think we all owe him a massive "thank you" for the way he conducted himself and his classes in the time he was with us.

On the Friday before Summer School, Cath, Mike Smith and I were to meet Philip for dinner with Sensei at the Belfry, where Sensei was stopping overnight. Within 15 minutes I had 2 phone calls: the first from Phil that Mr. Smith had been rushed back into hospital seriously ill and the second from Keith Hayward to say the dojo was flooded and unusable. It all weighed heavily that night.

If all this was not enough, we were greeted at Newport with unexpected building work in the dining room and it was only through Sue Hayward's 'gentle persuasion' that the staff cleaned the room and brought in the mobile serving counters. We owe Sue a great "thank you" for the aggravation and anguish she endured in trying to keep the wheels turning though the whole week.

Through all this trauma and adversity, Summer School was 'enjoyable' and successful. The social nights were a time when our troubles where put aside for a while. The classes were full of determination and open minds for what Sensei was teaching. Although, in reviewing his work, it is clear that we have much to do before next year. In the coming 3 months, the Shidoin will disseminate the teaching of Sugawara Sensei in preparation for Summer School 2007.

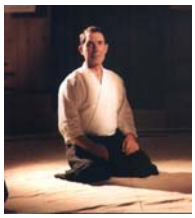
Through more persuasion, Sue has secured a 10% discount on the final Summer School bill. It would prove impossible to refund all the participants so we have decided to add this to the subsidy that the UKA

funds by making up the shortfall in Summer School takings. Therefore, for the 4th year running, Summer School 2007 will remain at the same price, even though the overheads have risen considerably. For those interested in the accounts for Summer School, these will soon be available on the members' web site.
I believe that there is a direct link between the numbers attending UKA courses, in particular Summer School, and the overall support that the rank and file members have for the organisation. So we are asking you, in 2007, to demonstrate your support of our UKA by attending as many courses as you can and endeavour to make Summer School this coming year the most successful ever

Gordon Jones

Thank You

Mrs Smith and family would like to thank everyone who attended the memorial service held at Birmingham Cathedral on October 23rd. It was frankly overwhelming to see so many people come together to celebrate Mr Smiths' life and career in Aikido.



Thanks especially go to those of you who travelled just to be with us and of course to those people who read tributes during the service. The atmosphere of love and friendship will remain with us all for the rest of our lives.

Yudansha Grading Essay: Neil Mould

I would like to start this essay with a brief description of where my life with Aikido has progressed.

Since my Nidan grading I have opened a small dojo in the area I am currently living. I started the dojo on 25th February 2004. From that date to present I have had 13 people join through me however only half have been bitten by the Aikido bug which in my eyes is not a bad amount. I have people attend from other dojos, which is great to see. I have a good bunch of people who come to the club, in both their Aikido ability and their attitude in general. Through the request of the students we are looking to start another class somewhere, in a location that will be convenient to all who already attend. I am in the process of hopefully becoming a Fukushidion under Gordon Jones Sensei. And, of course, I am applying for my Sandan grading at this year's Summer school.

My Thoughts On Instructing

I would say that instructing has its benefits and drawbacks. The benefits of instructing are:

- The improvement of technique
- Learning to control ego
- The giving of knowledge to beginners
- Seeing your students progress
- Improved confidence

The drawbacks to instructing are:

- Loss of stamina due to lack of constant training during class
- Falling in to an egotistical frame of mind
- Techniques staying static with no dynamism due to instructing on a basic level
- Non-expansion of variations of technique

As you can see, the drawbacks and benefits can simply be opposites of each other. I am not saying that if you start to instruct then these drawbacks will affect you. These are possibilities if you let them happen. Instructing can be very beneficial to your Aikido and help you improve in areas of weakness that cannot be improved by simply turning up to lessons.



I feel the main important things to remember when taking on an instructing role are:

- Self control – Not abusing your position
- Teach practical techniques and training methods to improve / strengthen the body
- Have an authority on the mat, in front of your students.
- Not to neglect your own practice
- Learn from everything

I feel the role of an instructor is an important one. I believe you should encourage your students to think about how techniques are performed, at an early stage of their development. Students have to understand why they move the way they do.

When teaching a technique an instructor should bear in mind the below principles through example:

- Ma-ai. The fighting distance between you and an attacker, giving you the maximum advantage.
- Determination through concentration. The student has to perform the technique to its fullest. This doesn't necessarily mean the student should perform the technique hard on their partner.

Timing of technique. Students should, this is the most

- train, at an early stage in their aikido development, to begin to move at the instance of contact. To minimise the thought process involved, thereby working from reaction.
- Speed and agility. Increasing the speed of technique through efficiency. Training the body to explode into action for Irimi movements.
- Power of technique. Power comes by finding correctness of body posture while performing technique. Such as, keeping the back leg straight for kokyu nage techniques, as power is generated from the floor through the back leg to the top of the head to the hands.
- Remaining calm yet with meaning and focus.

Instructing is a huge responsibility and the thought of instructing should be considered over and over again before you set up your own club. Once you have students coming to your club, you cannot stop.

My Thoughts On Aikido Theory For A Beginner

Theory work in Aikido is very important. Without theory work and constantly questioning why you do things in this way or that, you have no technique.

The first thing to do, as a beginner, is to find which style you prefer your Aikido to be like. From here you learn and copy the techniques being shown. You should then begin to think to yourself why does the instructor do it that way, what experiences have they gained? What is it they do to make the techniques work for them?



Once you have gained more understanding, think to yourself, if I were to be in a fight with a huge person who is just unleashing all their power and strength on me, would my techniques work from this instructor? This is the point where you decide to stay or move instructors. As a beginner, this is the most important stage in development and you should be looking out for your development of Aikido. Loyalty is a great quality to possess however; the quality of your Aikido is a must for you as a beginner.

As your time with Aikido increases, I feel your loyalty to Aikido becomes far greater than the loyalty to your instructor. Don't get me wrong; loyalty to your instructor is an important part of the aikido community. Supporting your instructor in as much as you can is a honourable thing to do. What I am saying is that the spread and the quality of Aikido are of huge importance and should not be neglected through feelings of guilt.

As a beginner you should try to experience variety within your Aikido training. You do not have to use any of the techniques shown or share the same views as those being explained / given. But experience is a true developer of one's ability to adapt.

What you learn from the time you are on the mat should not be forgotten about when you walk out of the dojo. You should try to incorporate what you've learnt in to daily life. Such an example is good posture and trying to keep oneself centred. You should practice positive Irimi movements by picking 2 points on the floor. Stand at one point then lunge forward with one movement to the other point. Irimi movement is a constant within every technique.

My Thoughts On Aikido Spirituality For A Beginner

A beginner trying to experience the spirituality side of Aikido can become too much involved. Unfortunately, you see people who have gone to the extremes with spirituality and have forgotten that Aikido is a martial art. Martial Art meaning an art that should be used on the battlefield.

Students have easy access to O'Sensei's poems via books etc and the poems sound very profound and mystical. I believe a lot of his sayings and poems are only beneficial at the time when he spoke them and now, when people see them in a book, they are out of context and can teach nothing. I feel his poems etc were meant more for him as a way of jogging his memory to thoughts he had regarding Aikido. These thoughts may be about the way a person should feel during an event or the way to a quick victory. When you have a lot of thoughts going through your head the best thing to do is write them down.



Now you have to think that, when O'Sensei wrote his thoughts down on paper, he did not want them getting in the wrong hands. So the best way to do this, is to write the thoughts in a way only he could understand. I'm sure through his personal teachings, his students began to take on his personality and started to think like him therefore they may have been able to grasp some of the ideas within his poems and so the theme developed that the better your Aikido became the more you **understand** O'Sensei's words – but this is not the case.

Partner work for a beginner is important for learning to gauge distance. Simple exercises to begin with, which require little foot movement such as the Kiri Kaeshi movements.

My Thoughts On Aikido Technical Training

A beginner should concentrate on "forms" such as the basic foot movements. They should develop their foot movement so that it no longer is "form" but becomes part of their natural movements.

They should concentrate on keeping their hands as close together as possible, their back as straight as possible, their centre as dropped as their legs can cope with comfortably and their focus straight ahead.

Overall Feelings

I feel the above sections would stand as a good basis for a beginner and instructor relationship. I feel this would give a beginner a good understanding and a good mental attitude to approach their Aikido study with.

As with everything, things take time however the role of the instructor is to encourage the student to progress and push them to bring out the areas they lack.

Neil Mould

Notes: