

## The Seidokan Communicator - Aikido for a modern way of life

### Pushing and Polling

**For this issue, we asked the question: 'what activity have you done that made you immediately relate it to the aikido principles?'**

*Jason Taff:*

I teach teenagers. It's a private school, and most of them are truly great kids. But at that age, it's unavoidable that sometimes they feel like it's them against the adults in their lives. They are thriving on that conflict.

But, as in aikido, I simply refuse to acknowledge that we're in conflict in any way (at least, when I'm at my best). We're on a team whose goal is to help that kid learn math. And when they realize that their attempts to make it into a conflict simply won't work, they have no other plan...all the "conflict wind" comes out of their sails, and their only remaining option is to cooperate. I wish I could say that I'm patient enough to make this work every time, but the longer I teach, the more I'm able to "blend with the attack" and turn it into something that doesn't look like an attack anymore.

*Robert Wyatt:*

Falling down always reminds me of aikido. Also, deciding whether and how to respond to a verbal confrontation can be considered from an aiki perspective.

*Bruce Fox:*

Recently I have been welding sheet steel, a practice that I had not done in many years. The new machines are nice and better than the techniques of yesteryear, but require some new motor skills.

There has been much Masa Katzu as I get control of not only the body and the machine, but the mind as well. Every time I get the thought that "oh this is going very nice, looking good, Fox", I get another blow through requiring much patching effort. So careful management of the mental state, especially when it seems to be going well is a self victory and a constant vigilance.

I need to keep my center as I experience setbacks, and I need to keep my center as I lift the heavy welder and the sheets of steel. Let the ki flow helps the process of moving the weld along the joint. Shodo o seisu rules in the careful preparation of each part that fits within the growing sculpture. A minute trimming and bending just so for a good fit prevents five minutes of patching and grinding. Controlled relaxation is discovered during grinding because if the grinder is gripped too tightly, pretty soon the old hand cramps up. Constantly checking the grip as the grinder is moved or position changed.

And, oh boy, is chu do a big feature. Not enough voltage and the weld won't penetrate, too much and it blows a hole in the joint, not enough

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shielding gas and the weld is pitted, too much gas and you blow through an expensive tank of argon mix. Work the torch too far from the work and the weld is weak, too close and you are making gaps again. Chu do rules. It has been enough of a struggle to put this sculpture together, without aikido principles it might never have gotten started

*Janean Crapo:*

I've recently started learning to play the ukulele. One of the books I use for lessons is: The No-Brainer Approach to Playing the Ukulele. From the Intro:

Here are some important things anyone learning to play music should keep in mind:

\* It is better to practice a little a lot than to practice a lot a little.

JC: Just like Aikido..... practicing on a regular schedule not only keeps you in the habit of attending class but, also lets you build your foundation with more repetition and consistency. It also makes it easier to learn, remember and understand the movements and concepts if you are immersed in it rather than haphazardly attending to your study.

\* The quickest way to play fast is to take the slowest route.

JC: We don't start out doing techniques at full speed. We must first learn and understand the principles, the basic moves as well as seeing how our uke's body responds to our movement before we can successfully and consistently perform techniques at full speed.

\* Practice with a metronome. ... (to) teach you to play with accurate rhythm.

JC: While I admittedly don't practice with a metronome at home, I belong to a group that practices together monthly at a Senior Living Center. I must learn to blend with the rest of the group and keep my tempo with theirs in order to make the experience enjoyable to the rest of the group as well as for those that stop by to listen. I do not have time to slow down to try to "find" the right frets. If I don't know a chord, then, just like Aikido, I must still fit in with the timing of the technique until I can blend into what can possibly happen next.

*Steve Morris:*

It's not one activity but many. Every conflict I have, every work situation, argument with my wife, or awkward moment with friends challenges me to use the principles of Aikido, to look for resolution rather than victory, to let go of ego and anger, to see from another perspective and lovingly protect those who see themselves as my enemy.

It isn't easy.

In fact, perhaps the thing that reminds me most clearly of Aikido is how often I fail to make it work.

*Janet Adam:*

My understanding of Range of Effectiveness

At work, my 'range of effectiveness' is global. With one click of the mouse, I can affect 60,000 computers across the globe, in just about every country.

With my .357, my 'range of effectiveness' is 50 yards.

With my 9mm, my 'range of effectiveness' is 25 yards.

On the mat, my 'range of effectiveness' is what I can connect to physically/emotionally/energetically.

## San Dan exam – Primary Thoughts / Yonatan Sagiv

Almost a year ago I took my Sandan exam. This exam is the last practical exam in Seidokan Aikido, and for me it was some kind of conclusion and self examination of my progress in the Art until that point. Therefore, I thought to share my experience and preparations for it, hoping it will be helpful to others. I decided to arrange my thoughts using quotes from two of classic strategic books: 'The Art of War' attributed to Sun Tzu (China, 6th century BCA) and 'The Book of Five Rings' by Miyamoto Musashi (Japan, 16th – 17th century).



*The general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple before the battle is fought (Sun Tzu)*

The Sandan exam is a conclusion of the knowledge expected from Aikidoka practicing Aikido, usually for more than a decade. It contains understanding the fundamentals of Aikido, ability to instruct, more than 60 Dan techniques, different aspects of using Jo and Bokken, self defense against knife and gun attacks and randori.

These varied expertise require many preparations. Two of the most significant preparations I made were: 1. to divide the exam into the units the exam is divided to, and to practice every unit as if it is the only unit I am tested for. 2. From a certain point of the preparations, I practiced the exam as a whole unit, so that my mind and body will get used to a lasting extensive effort. At the first sight they seem to contradict one another, but these observations helped me to practice the countless details of the exam and to look at it as a whole.

*There are not more than five musical notes, yet the combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard (Sun Tzu)*

There are hundreds of different techniques required for the exam and it is very difficult to memorize all of them by heart. I found it easier to remember and practice by analyzing them with the basic pins we use in Seidokan Aikido: Ikkyu, Nikyu and so forth. In addition, I focused myself on the basic fundamentals of Aikido, especially O Sensei's doka which Kobayashi Sensei used as a guiding doka of Seidokan Aikido style:

The enemy comes running in to strike  
At the instant of the attack  
Avoid his strike with one step  
And counter attack in that instant



*If you know the enemy and you know yourself,  
you need not fear of a hundred battles (Sun Tzu)*

I'm not perfect. There are many things in Aikido that I know I still have to practice. I used the exam to draw a map of my Aikido progress – fundamentals and techniques I want to work on. Some of them I improved during my routine practice and some during the preparations. In addition, it was important for me to explore what

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techniques feel like – as nage and as uke. I chose techniques that I felt comfortable with, and would be easy, clear and realistic to the ukes to follow, without causing them injuries.

### *The way is in training (Miyamoto Musashi)*

The exam went well. I felt relaxed, and with Aiki with myself, the testers, the ukes and the viewers. However, Aikido teaches a path, a way, a way of life. The exam is really a great opportunity to look at one's self progress. But this is only an exam. The most important thing is to keep on practicing, learning and polishing Aikido in the best earnest, realistic and sincere way possible.

I would like to thank my teachers and colleagues from Mt. Scopus Dojo for more than 16 years of true partnership, to Sensei Mario Fonda-Bonardi for testing me and for his priceless remarks, and to my students, for many things, especially their trust.

## **Practicing Aikido Principles in Your Everyday Life**

### **By Michiyo Kobayashi**

So, here I am in the month of August, getting ready for the new school year. Everyone has wished me “good luck” with the students, but the students are not who I’m worried about for the first time in my 10 years of teaching. (Cue dramatic music...) I’m worried about a particular parent. Short version of his story: This parent is notorious for giving teachers a difficult time with report card grades given to his child. We’re talking him taking it to the district level to challenge things. (sigh)

As I continued to set up my room, I’m asking myself, “What are you really worried about?” I’m pretty confident about my ability to grade fairly, never been challenged by parents in the past, and have great relationships with parents. “So what’s the problem?” Then it hit me, I’m new blood to this man. Being that our school is made up of only 250 or so students, I’m one of the last three teachers he has yet to work with. I’m stressing myself out before school starts. Not good.

Ok so it hits me again. “Michiyo...you need to practice your aikido principles, duh!” With the fast pace of our everyday lives, there is that tendency to forget to apply the principles. Now I’m thinking, how can I practice Shodo-o-Seisu? The only thing I can come up with right now is to stay well versed with the new state standards and get myself to “settle down.” Shodo-o-Seisu and Settle Down.” “Shodo-o-Seisu and Settle Down.” “Shodo-o-Seisu and Settle Down.” I can hear my dad chuckling and adding, “Michiyo...don’t forget to keep your one point.”

Lesson in this story so far: Apply your aikido principles in your everyday life. Yeah...this is definitely a “to be continued” story.



## Aikido and parenthood / Yael Cohen

For three years now, I've been practicing Aikido in Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus dojo. Yet my acquaintance with Aikido goes back 20 years, during which I married and became a mother of seven. Pregnancies, births and taking care of small children have made it difficult to practice Aikido on the mat for a long time, yet often I found myself exercising the principles within my family life.

I'd like to demonstrate how within some of the situations around my home how Aikido principles can be exercised within the parent-child relationship.

### *Turning Uke's energy back towards him*

The first principle that distinguishes Aikido from other arts is the idea that we should not collide with the opponent, but rather blend with their energy and redirect it to our advantage. When an attack comes, we open the door, step aside or back – the main thing is to get out of the way of the attack and not absorb its energy. Of course it must be done in the right timing, convincing the opponent that their attack would work. Step out of the line of force too soon,



and Uke would choose a different attack that might get us. With proper timing we can lead the attacker to a position that is within our range, where their plans are disrupted and their balance taken.

I found that idea also works in family life. For example:

It's 4:30pm, I just arrive from work, put down my bag, go to the kitchen to find the fridge empty. A few minutes later my 17-year-old opens the door, throws his shoes aside and declares: "I'm hungry! What's there to eat?"

My maternal instinct pushes me to recognize this as a direct attack on me, with inconsideration from his side, and so I filled with self pity and counter-attacked: "First, don't throw your shoes and bag at the entrance! This isn't a pig sty! And then, come make yourself something to eat, there are no butlers here!"

Doubtless, my response did not help resolve the situation. We both remained hungry, and worse, the situation would deteriorate into a blame game and quarrel.

Using the principle of blending with the opponent's Ki may yield much better results. For example, if my response had been:

Wow.. I'm hungry too, I just got back from work to find the kitchen empty.. What do you feel like eating?

[he] Pastas, schnitzel, stake or pizza

Whatever his response, I could blend with his energy for the mending of the situation. Such as:

OK, let's make dinner together. I'll cut the schnitzels while you fry them, you make the salad and I'll set the table. We could eat in half an hour.

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The linear energy that came with the demand to eat, here and now! Was turned back to Uke as a joint assignment he would be a part of. To do that I had to get out of the line of force, meaning giving up the victim attitude and not see his statement as an attack towards me. I also had to be attentive to the situation – distinguishing between what's important and what's not (hunger vs. thrown shoes) - and to question, to listen and lead to a mutually conductive solution where we were partners.

### *Taking care of the opponent*

In the entrance to Mt. Scopus Dojo, there is a large sign with safety regulations. Often it is impressed upon us that the goal is not to harm Uke, but to lead the situation to a peaceful conclusion. So in training and in life.



For example:

My daughter volunteered to style her little brother's Bar Mitzvah invitation. She put a lot of effort into it, drew and wrote and showed us the result many times. But after it had been printed in multiple copies we found out the date had been incorrect.

That brings about strong emotions, since it's a mistake we must correct, spending additional money and time. It would have been easy to 'lose it' and call her irresponsible, silly, having worked without paying close enough attention. But the truth is that these allegations would have been untrue, these mistakes could happen to anyone, and we want her to correct the mistake, while hurting her would accomplish nothing.

If we remember that our goal is to exit the situation safely, rather than harm the opponent, we can remember to take a deep breath and join her in mending the mistake as best we can and move on without hurt feelings.

### *Controlled Relaxation*

One of our Aikido Principles is to be in a state of 'controlled relaxation'. Meaning, maintain calmness while being alert and in control. Also, to maintain the body relaxed, though a part of it might be under control of Uke. This principle means that in order to effectively deal with different attacks coming at us we need to be relaxed, at ease, yet very alert to every nuance and activity going on around us. Safely getting out of a problematic situation might depend on spotting the opponent's first move or even their intentions, which will not happen if we are being stressed in a way that sets our mind in one specific direction.

To reach controlled relaxation we need to train our input and response systems – not easy, especially in untested circumstances.

I remember well the time after the birth of my first-born. I would lie in bed without sleep, waiting for him to wake up and not daring to fall asleep lest I miss his cries. When he did cry, I was too tired and exhausted to understand the reason or response accordingly, which of course led to more crying and sleepless hours.

At some point I decided I could not continue like that – I had to change strategies. I decided to sleep as if there is no baby sleeping beside me, out of

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faith that if he cries I would wake up and know what to do. From that moment his sleep and mine improved wonderfully. Over the years I found that being able to be sensitive and alert, yet at easy enough to sleep is critical to leading a peaceful and healthy family life.

*It needs to be comfortable, without effort*

"Try smiling as you roll," Shalomi, our Dojo head said. "It needs to be comfortable. It won't work if you're at an uncomfortable position," Oren explained over and over in dozens of techniques he taught. Indeed, as a woman in a mostly male group, I quickly reached the recognition that as long as a technique takes physical effort I am doomed to failure. A bigger and stronger man may be able to throw me to the floor with or without the Aikido principles; yet I could not do the same to him. Being able to throw stronger opponents depended on my utilizing the Aikido principles – working from the center, settle down, extending Ki, controlled relaxation, finding the correct timing and more. Yet what helps me call on these principles when I must, is working out of joy, while smiling and without any effort, deep thought or attempt to perfectly execute the mechanical movements.

And with family.. It's the same. Any action done out of joyfulness, happiness or humor, easily draws in the kids and teenagers living with us. So it's easy to get them to participate in housework, take responsibility of caring for the smaller kids, get empathy and consideration when times are hard and even enable deep, serious discussions of serious issues. On the other hand, when I approach a task with seriousness, self importance and superiority, the family wagon becomes too

heavy to carry and immovable.

*Keep one point*

During one of the seminars during my first year of Aikido training, I needed to move forward while a column of people stood behind me, each grabbing the one in front. I couldn't move, felt completely blocked. I tried to sink and lower my one point, move from the center, but could not move. Then Mark Crapo Sensei came by, looked into my eyes, smiled and said: "Forget about them, come over here, don't even think about them, just simply come over." I did, and it worked !



As a mother, there are tons of distractions and pulling in all directions. Each one of the kids has a complete life, with needs, plans, restrictions, happiness, disappointment, hardships and successes, and as parents we try to take part, support, encourage, direct and help everyone. It's easy to be swept like a leaf on the wind, aimlessly from one thing to the next and finally sink without being able to rise again. Or alternatively disregard the needs of the

kids, leaving it to the partner, and disconnect somewhat from family life.

But if you want to be a dedicated parent who is meaningful to the kids but also has a life of his own, you should embrace this Aikido principle: keep one point, be stable, relaxed, attentive, and go forward in your direction, almost not remembering there are those trying to derail you. They will end up following you.

When you remember your principles and values and act according to them, you end up being a role model for your kids, who will follow you. Countless remarks, directions, arguments and punishments can be made unnecessary by one act that's true to your own way.

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### Zan Shin – keeping contact with Uke

Finally, we learn that even after Uke has fallen and is out of our range of effectiveness, we need to keep contact with him, even eye contact, and not to disengage completely from the situation, lest it surprises us.

As parents to teenagers the most important task is to keep in a continuous, quality touch with each of them. Never have the illusion that taking care of a problem, even successfully, fully seals the item which can be disregarded. Reality tends to summon past challenges again, beside new ones.

The agreement about TV watching times I had with the kids opened and reopened for discussion, and every time I had to stand beside the principles and agreements we had reached before, with insistence. Explanations about how to fold laundry, how to do the dishes or make the bed needed to be repeated again and again. I had to often remind my daughters to do homework and get ready for exams.

Generally speaking, bad things happen when you are distracted, so Zan Shin should be practiced at home as well as in the Dojo.



### Seidokan Confusion

Just a quick note here to hopefully clear up a bit of confusion. Our international organization and the style we practice is: Seidokan Aikido. AIA (Aikido Institute of America) **is not** our organization; it's a dojo. (A jewel in the Seidokan crown, to be sure, but one dojo, not the name of our organization.) We occasionally receive membership and other checks made out to: AIA. We have to return those and have new ones sent, made out to: Seidokan Aikido, as the two are not synonymous.

The confusion is certainly understandable though. Kobayashi Sensei was the founder of both the Aikido Institute of America and years later; Seidokan Aikido. His home dojo and thus the Headquarters for Seidokan was AIA. However, that is no longer the case. The Kobayashi family has recently transferred AIA to a group of students. (Hopefully we can get an article from one or some of them about their new structure and leadership.)

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## **Gogo-no-Shugyo / Clyde Morgan**

*(training after realization)*

We just finished participating in the Gogo-no-Shugyo seminar taught by Seidokan Kancho Dr. Mark Crapo at Seiwa dojo in Battle Creek, MI.

The seminar was originally taught by Kobayashi Sensei in 1993. The purpose of the seminar is to look at foundational principles derived from the Aiki-Taiso and consider new or refined ways to add practicability to essentially any portion of an Aiki-Taiso.

We began the seminar with Aiki-Taiso led by none other than Kobayashi Sensei (via video). I believe that participating in Aiki-Taiso as Kobayashi lead prepared our minds to gain a deeper understanding of what we were going to be taught.

The seminar focused on koho tento undo, and although it is a backward roll, we focused on the forward end of exercise, where you should settle forward and down. The Ki testing proved that if you were not focusing forward, your motion could easily be stopped.

Sensei explained that our Ki would always go in the direction we were focusing on, thus the importance of thinking forward.

The seminar continued with munetsuki attacks. As students, we had to insure that we had forward intent during and after the attack, and that we were still settled forward and down (think shomenuchi ikkyo).

By the end of the seminar, I believe we were all given a better understanding of what Kobayashi Sensei would have wanted to see within the organization, and how he would have wanted each new generation of practitioners to view their practice.

### **An Excerpt from Kobayashi Sensei:**

#### **Shugyo-No-Gyo For 1990 Rod Kobayashi (Winter 1990)**

The Japanese “shugyo” is often used when one trains to develop skills or searches for enlightenment. The first part of the Kanji, “shu” or “osameru,” means to learn or to study.

There are two ways of writing “gyo:” one means to practice asceticism or go through all sorts of hardships to attain enlightenment or understanding: the other, which could be pronounced “waza” means physical performance such as work, art, skill, and technique. Often people use these words interchangeably for vigorous training to develop oneself.

When I visited Japan in 1975 to train at the Ki-No-Kenyukai, the Ki Society International headquarters, (Koichi) Tohei Sensei asked instructors who came to practice at the instructors' class every Friday, a very important question:

“What is 'shugyo' to you?”

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Every Japanese instructor answered, "To train and polish myself vigorously to better understanding of life."

Tohei Sensei looked at me and asked, "Kobayashi-san, what is 'shugyo' to you?"

I answered without hesitation, "it is to train myself hard until the fundamentals become part of myself so that I can use them to help others."

"That is exactly right!" Tohei Sensei exclaimed and continued. "Merely training yourself for yourself is not a true 'shugyo'. Being able to help other people with what you have learned is the true 'shugyo'."

It has always been my commitment to continue studying and spreading the teachings of Aikido even if I am the last one around to do so.

My belief is that "shugyo-no-gyo" (*Editors note: the first gyo is in the character of referring to "waza" and the second is the one referring to the enlightenment as discussed in the first paragraph*). If we want to learn the inner truth of Aikido, we must first maintain the right attitude of training. With the proper attitude, one will naturally learn proper conduct, the (enlightenment) "gyo." Merely practicing the techniques to develop yourself for your own benefit will limit your "shugyo", the development of skill. By sharing your knowledge with others, you will naturally gain a deeper understanding of what you are pursuing and enjoy the progress you make with everyone else. Through "Shugyo-no-gyo," you will learn to change your knowledge for wisdom.

Knowledge is understanding, awareness, enlightenment or knowing the methods. You can be knowledgeable in many fields, even considered to be enlightened. However, if you can not develop yourself further in order to help others with your knowledge, you will not be a person with wisdom. You can change knowledge into wisdom only by making it a part of yourself and constantly polishing, kneading and developing the fundamentals.

In Aikido, merely training yourself to exceed in the "waza" or talking about the principles is not the true path of Aiki. Study the principles and "waza" earnestly, practice them realistically and share them with sincerity. The knowledge you gain in Aikido should then naturally change into wisdom. In Aikido, we must strive to develop ourselves beyond enlightenment, to the realm of wisdom.

"Shugyo-no-gyo" takes us one step beyond "shugyo." Even though one receives a high rank in Aikido for his/her performance in "waza", it does not indicate that he/she has reached the ultimate goal of Aikido training.

Let us always remind ourselves of the objectives of Seidokan Aikido:

1. Study the philosophy and the arts of Aikido and further develop them to best suit the modern way of life.
2. Study Aikido as a whole. Train your mind, body and Ki at the same time so that you can find the way to harmonize with the universe.
3. Old traditions are carefully analyzed, but only the good traditions are kept and further developed so that they can be used in our daily lives.

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4. Through earnest, realistic and sincere training, students of Seidokan Aikido learn the true meaning of Aikido.

As the Japanese copy many traditions and products from the western world and further develop them to surpass the originals, so too at Seidokan Aikido should our objectives be to further develop the original Japanese ideas to better suit the next century. Let us work together and strive to go forward and share the teachings of Aikido.

### Running with one-point / Chaim Noy

Occasionally I take time to jog. I'm not a 'pro' jogger, but I like to run at my leisure, sometimes right before class, to get my body warmer, and sometimes just for the pleasure of running and having time for myself to think. While jogging, I can feel and work on my one-point, or, putting it in another way, I can experiment with tensions and relaxations or easings in different parts of my (moving) body. I admit that it has been many years since I've started training in aikido, and the sense of one-point has been always very illusive for me, a challenge for my body and spirituality. At the same time, a number of my senseis explained the idea of 'the correct distribution of tension and relaxation' in the body – which is, itself, a refinement of the basic mind-body principle of 'controlled relaxation' – by tying it to the sense of one-point. Now I was really at a loss: how can I feel my one-point? Do I have a one-point (is it something you have/possess - like a noun? Like: I have a car) and how can I know it? Can I 'keep' my one-point? How do the psychosomatic dialectics between tension and relaxation effect my one-point?



Some of the answers to these questions emerge during training, on the mat that is, but other answers emerge as I jog. While I jog I sometimes feel tired and my body, and specifically my legs, feel heavy. I'm sure you are familiar with this feeling. When this happens, I try to focus on changing the location of tension and relaxation in the body: I realize that the feeling of tiredness and heaviness that my legs embody is something that I can control (to some degree of course), and that it is in fact extra-tension and that is

located there. When I get that, I relax my legs while jogging. I make my legs feel more empty and lighter. The 'rope' metaphor is sometime used in aikido to demonstrate the flexibility, lack-of-tension and swiftness that can and should be associated with the movement of our limb. And I too try to think of my moving/running legs as ropes, devoid of tension as much as possible. My legs then feel that some stress has been evacuated from them, and they are lighter and more easy-moving than they were a minute ago. This I attain dialectically by centering more tension and more 'heaviness' or centeredness at my Seika-no-Itten (one-point). The point is that this process has to be dialectal because I need an outlet for the extra-stress that my legs harbored.

So, in this way, I get to 'feel' my one-point, relax me legs, and to jog with joy and ki.

## Hapkido and Aikido

### Janet Adams, Wes Cuatt - Seiwa Dojo

During a weekend get-away, we stumbled across the 2014 Global Hapkido championship and ended up spending several hours there, watching, comparing, and appreciating Aikido more. Some quick notes and thoughts on what we observed...

First; like you'd hope, there was a great sense of camaraderie, even in the midst of competition. Respect for founders, rank, and history was obvious.

The students/practitioners as a whole, were definitely much younger than most of us in Aikido. (At least at our dojo.) Definitely it was a 'harder' form of martial arts.



We talked about whether a person could pass a Ki test during some of the moves and kata. Most could but there were a few forms there's no way they could and I think they were doing it right; but their "one point" could have been easily taken.

You know how many times our Senseis mention small moves for efficiency? Hapkido seems to like BIG movements. Watching the weapons work, they bring the sword completely behind their head, with the blade almost touching their back/butt, then strike. Watching it and thinking "Ki test".....it was pretty easy to understand why our teachings differ on that. A big thing we noticed when Uke was attacking with a weapon; when Nage neutralized Uke, normally the weapon was left with Uke, instead of Nage taking control of the weapon, as we do.

Something we notice when visiting other dojo; some students or dojo show a lot of zanshin and some don't. Some just don't have any follow through or retained balance, no sense of "one point". Seeing it in a different art, in a different place, was a good reminder, it does matter.

One of the HUGE advantages we have in Aikido..... you know the saying, "You do what you practice." In Hapkido, they pull every punch, every strike, every blow. That would not be good if they pulled a punch or strike when they were off the mat and protecting their life. Our training does not require pulling anything, which makes our art more realistic... we practice what we would do; the muscle memory doesn't change, no difference if on the street or on the mat. (Ok, maybe the extra ribs shots on the mat. That didn't cross my mind until this weekend and that's a big thing.)

Blendy stuff.....of course blending isn't in their training. From the blending perspective though, you could see where they STOP or just block the attack, then force Uke into a position they want, then apply or force the technique they wanted to do. I'm guessing they don't hear the words in their training like we do, "Take whatever attack uke gives you, go with what presents itself."

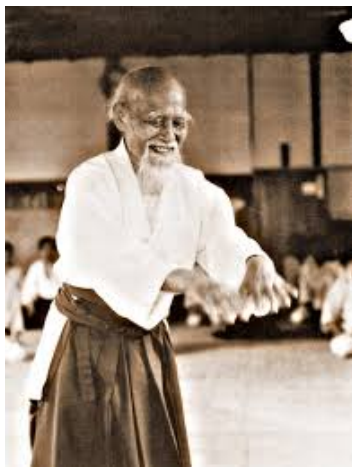
Thank you, Sensei Mark Crapo and Sensei Janean Crapo for sharing Aikido, and teaching at the level of our abilities.



## Seidokan Aikido: Aikido For A Modern Way Of Life / Mark Crapo

Kobayashi Sensei created our style of Aikido as something of a bridge between the original Aiki-kai Aikido founded by O Sensei and the Aikido of Koichi Tohei Sensei; the Ki No Kenkyu-kai and Shinshin Toitsu Aikido (That name actually coming from Minoru Kobayashi.) Ours was to be an efficient system based on the essence or deeper meaning found in O Sensei's doka and using that insight to modify waza found in the above mentioned systems into something more suitable for life in today's world.

Something easily taken for granted in Seidokan is our Aiki-Taiso; our warm-up exercises. Having practiced at the Aiki-kai Hombu Dojo in Shinjuku and dojo in Chiba, Koyoto as well as their dojo in Guam, Saipan, the Philippines and various locations in the USA and Canada I cannot overstate the importance of these seemingly "simple" exercises.



Some classes at the Aiki-kai would have warm-ups, some didn't. The classes that did, didn't all have the same set; it was completely up to the individual instructors what, if anything, they did to prepare you for the class. In a sense, our aiki-taiso is a glue that helps bind us all together. A Seidokan dojo in Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Austin or Tokyo all start with the same basic set of exercises.

A problem sometimes seen is students hurrying through the "warm-ups" so they can get on to Aikido. We mistake our aiki-taiso for mere warm-ups. We mindlessly go through these exercises so we can do what we came to the dojo for: Aikido.

Somehow students forget that our aiki-taiso are the very foundation of our Aikido – or at least, they should be, they were intended to be.

There is a saying in Karate, a practice mantra, if you will; one punch, one kill. My experience in Shotokan, Goju-ryu and Tang So Do all taught me this was not really so much about killing someone with one punch as it's about a mindset, a focus. It teaches you that each movement, each punch should be carried out as if it were in real combat. Your mind needs to be focused on the power and execution of each technique. It's easy to let your body just go through the motions... all the more true after many, many repetitions of the same movement or after an hour or so of hard practice when your body has just about reached the end of its endurance. This is exactly when you need to have the 'one punch, one kill' mindset to make your body move with purpose; not letting your arms and body move mindlessly through space. You can have the outer form, the movements basically correct, but they are empty, a shell as they have no real power. We would say there is no Ki flowing and certainly no Zanshin.



We need to have some of this same focus when we practice our aiki-taiso. Our movements need to have purpose and they need to flow from our One Point. Too often there is no connection to our Center – hands and arms move only from the shoulders; we are not centered, not focused, not thinking of the purpose of the exercise.

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It's important to remember that our aiki-taiso are not mere warm-ups to get through so we can "do" Aikido – they are Aikido, they are the foundation of Seidokan Aikido. Learning to do these fundamental movements is the essence of our art. Each exercise has movements that can be applied to many different waza and it's important to remember that Kobayashi Sensei said that our advanced techniques are really simplified basics; basics that you have made a part of yourself.

Try to keep in mind our Principles to Unify Mind and Body as you go through the aiki-taiso, make sure you are within your Range of Effectiveness and become one with yourself even as you try to harmonize and blend with those around you; matching movements and sending out your Ki to support everyone in the dojo.

In Oneness,  
Dr. Mark Crapo  
Seidokan Kancho

## Yudansha Fees

I remember a test I was once given, actually it was given to me twice; once in high school and once in college. I'm sure most of you have either taken the test or at least heard of it:

You come into your classroom where there is a test on each desk, face down. You are told to sit down but do not turn the test over; you will all do that at the same time. Your teacher/prof tells you that everyone will turn their tests over, read the 4 or 5 page test from start to finish and follow the instructions. The written instructions say the same thing; read from start to finish and follow all the directions.

Most students glance through the pages quickly and get started on the exam. However, those that actually follow the directions fully, read from start to finish and see that the last page instructs them to write their name on the top of the first page, answer no questions, turn the test over and leave the classroom. The test is really a test of how well you follow instructions. My experience has been that about 2/3 of the students didn't follow directions and "took" the test.

With that in mind, don't get too "excited" about anything you read below, at least not until you finish what I've written.

This past week I had a conversation with Mrs. Kobayashi and Michiyo about our dan or black belt test fees or promotion fees; we are going to raise them. The price increase is \$200, across the board. Here is the **current** fee structure:

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Shodan       | \$125.00 |
| Nidan        | \$150.00 |
| Sandan       | \$200.00 |
| Yondan       | \$350.00 |
| Godan        | \$650.00 |
| Rokudan & Up | Donation |



This means the current fee for Shodan is \$125, but the

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new fee will be, \$325. (Don't get "excited".)

With the new fee increase, we will also be offering discounts. If you have been a Seidokan member (personal dues paid) for the previous 3 years; you will get a \$100 credit or discount. If you have any level of current Instructor Certification; you get a \$50 credit. If your home dojo is current in its registration; you get a \$50 credit. Being dyslexic, I'm not great with math or numbers but I'm pretty sure that brings us right back to our current fee level.

So... why go through the change? Sadly, it's not uncommon for someone to be put up for promotion that we haven't heard from in some years. In some cases they've been off the mat for whatever reason, in some cases they just haven't kept up with their membership. Obviously to be promoted, to hold any rank in a "system" or style of Budo, you need to be part of that system and should be practicing regularly. We hope this will help remind people to stay current.



Talking money, dues and fees can be somewhat distasteful, but as Kancho that task does fall to me. With that in mind, I should also make a reminder about payment of promotion fees. When testing for Shodan, Nidan or Sandan there actually is a test. After the test, the appropriate fee is sent to me, along with the paperwork for the promotion to be issued. Promotion to ranks of Yondan and above are a little different – there is no actual test and the recipient is usually not aware they are going to be promoted until they hear

their name being called. It's important to remember that even though you didn't take a test and you have your promotion in hand, you do need to send the promotion fee to pay for the new rank.

We do recognize that since you weren't preparing for a promotion exam, you might not be prepared to write a check the day you get your new rank. If that's the case, please drop me a note; let me know when you might be able to send payment in or if you might need to send in 2 or 3 payments.

And finally, along those same lines... my wife, Janean (Seidokan Rokudan/Shihan), does most of the grunt work, she goes through the paperwork and records all the dues and fees and she issues you the membership cards; I send out the dojo certificates go over the Dan promotion paperwork. After all that is done, Janean sends the checks to California, to Mrs. Kobayashi. Neither of us has any access to the Seidokan account/money and we do not receive any pay.

### Recent Dan Promotions !!

|              |                |               |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Chaim Noy    | Mt. Scopus     | <b>Godan</b>  |
| Keith Larman | AIA            | <b>Yondan</b> |
| Jeremy Cumbo | UT Aikido Club | <b>Nidan</b>  |
| Adam Preble  | UT Aikido Club | <b>Nidan</b>  |

Congratulations to the promoted Aikidoka! Get ready to assume the responsibility :)

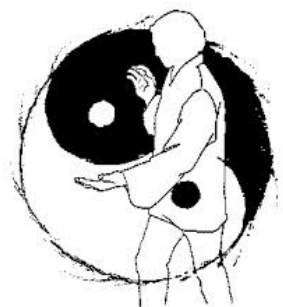
## Tai Chi - Aikido / Sue Deese

Have you ever watched anyone doing tai chi? You may have seen a group in the background of some movie that you were watching, or in a TV commercial. Usually it is a group of people moving in slow, smooth moves. Stepping to one side or the other, their arms making graceful flowing motions. It looks like a gentle ballet. They may balance on one foot while slowly 'kicking' out with the other, then just as slowly putting the foot back in place. All of the movements are gentle, contained and well within each person's range of effectiveness. Each person looks almost as if they are rooted to the ground, yet they are able to move evenly from one foot to the other. At no time do they look rushed. Tai chi is a wonderful way to relax, relieve stress and exercise all at the same time as well as practice all of the principles of Aikido.

I have practiced and taught the 24 form of tai chi for 14 years. I love it. And I have been accused of using it as a secret weapon in my Aikido practice. When doing tai chi, one of the main things you improve is your balance, or keeping your center. You learn how to move from one foot to the other in each of your steps without over stepping or moving outside of your range of effectiveness. You find that you must remain relaxed or your movements look and feel harsh. If you are tense when you do the kicks, you can easily tip/totter over as your center is too high. And, if while doing the form you start to think about anything, either what comes next or something that you have to do later or that happened at work that day, you will lose your 'place'. Does any of this sound familiar?

When we practice Aikido, either as a white belt, a black belt or any color in between, we are told, "Drop your shoulders" "Relax" "Slow down" "Don't reach out so far". Sometimes these are things we tell ourselves. When Sensei is demonstrating something for us to work on, he is never in a hurry, nor rigid. He seems to have all the time in the world. His movements are fluid and graceful. And he never seems on the edge of falling over. This is what we all hope to be able to do.

If you want to see a beautiful example of both tai chi and the principles of Aikido, go to YouTube and type 'Tai Chi 24-form' in the search box. One of the results will show a young lady in pink. Click on that one and then watch. See if you can pick out the principles we try to practice in Aikido. Her movements may seem big and sweeping, but they are never outside her range. And she is centered, and in control of herself.



Is tai chi a secret weapon in Aikido practice? No, but it does help me. And I enjoy it. It is like Aikido; there is always something new I learn each time I teach a new class. My students teach me as much as I do them. Sometimes it is in how a person moves, or what to do that will help correct some 'problem' movement, either in Aikido or Tai Chi. Maybe it is an easier way to get to a step. Or a better way to guide my students or myself in a movement. Tai Chi and Aikido are both long journeys that I am taking, with the hope of learning and having fun along the way.

Sue Deese  
Shodan  
Seiwa Dojo  
Battle Creek, MI



## Alternative Approach to Test Prep

By Zach Jacobs, Rob Suslarski and Janean Crapo

This last round of tests at our dojo consisted of only two students: Zach, a Yonkyu rank student testing for Nikyu and Dr. Rob, a white belt student testing for Rokyū (who did so well he was awarded the rank of Gokyu.) Since it was only the two of them, I told them some of my theories and asked if they would be interested in trying them as test prep. They both kindly allowed me to test my theories and I believe the results were very good. (I asked them both to write up a small description of their thoughts on the process and will add them unedited below.)

My first theory was that people move certain ways or do certain things as a learned situational behavior (Being on the mat as a student). Knowing Dr. Rob had previous experience in a kicking art, I was always telling him to get off his back leg (as though he was ready to kick). I noted that he did NOT do this stance in off the mat situations. So, the first experiment I did was to have students practice in street clothes instead of a gi (if they didn't want to get their street clothes sweaty, they were allowed to wear a gi but no belt.) I also did not stand in front of the class or at Shomen as I explained and demonstrated the techniques we were working on. And, we approached class as a very informal gathering of practitioners. I was absolutely amazed that many of the problem movements people did out of habit were drastically reduced and in some instances completely eliminated when they were not in a formal class setting.

Stances were more natural. Movements were smaller. Balance was better. Students that have a tendency to bob (pop up before moving) didn't bob, students that tended to "hollow out" (bend at the waist) when a strike was coming didn't hollow out, those that had a habit of rocking back on the heels stayed forward on their foot more and, the best part was the students that retreat into their heads when they are learning a new technique, didn't do that if they were not put in a spot of being a student learning what the teacher was teaching.



Because of the significance of the changes and realizations that came out of the above practice, the next thing we tried was to have the student (as nage) do the technique both left and right sided, without a partner. As we watched this, we were able to see other learned behaviors/movements that created some pretty big differences from side to side. We would watch carefully to see what those differences were and then attach an uke to them and have them do the exact same movements they'd just demonstrated. With a neutral uke, they were able to see how the differences in their movements from side to side changed the movement of the uke. Sometimes things would work either of the ways but, most times, the students (everyone in class, not just the test candidates) noticed that one way would absolutely work much easier than the other. This practice very quickly allowed the student to be self-correcting even when they would do the techniques without an attached uke. We stressed that even if the differences of movement from side to side

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were both equally effective, it was desirable to recognize the differences.

As is often the case, the second exercise naturally made way to an third exercise. We worked in a large group with one person in the middle. That person would do a technique without a partner and the rest would name the attack and technique they saw. It was fun to see how many different techniques look exactly the same as others. For each technique and attack the student saw, we attached an uke and had them follow through to show that technique. This allowed the higher ranked students to think outside the box and allowed the lower ranked students to test their understanding of the movements and techniques as well as really understand that when we say "it's all the same thing"...well...it really is all the same thing.

Zach and Rob did really good tests. They got to manage their test prep and there were many "aha!" moments for even the high ranking students. It is probably the most fun I've had helping with test prep and all ideas I will offer to candidates in the future as well.

As promised above, here are the thoughts about the way we did the test prep from the candidates themselves.

*Rob Suslarski:*

#### **Taking a mental look at Aikido**

It has been documented in the literature that mental visualization can enhance your ability to perform different task, in a wide variety of sports. So why should Aikido be any different? As a kid taking Tae Kwon Do before and after every class we would spend 2 or 3 minutes meditating. Mentally visualizing what we were going to do, or what we just did. And of course wanting to be Bruce Lee every technique was a perfect spine shattering one. With Aikido you have to REALLY think about uke's position, almost like a dance. So taking that other person into consideration (mentally) it forces you to slow down and really think about what you are doing and how uke is reacting. Making the process of self-correction easier to apply and comb through.

*Zach Jacobs*

The preparation for this test was a little different then with my last test. One thing that was new to test prep was the introduction of practicing the techniques without the use of an attacker. This was very interesting because we are all so use to having someone on the other end that we sometimes forget what our own bodies are doing during the techniques. Doing this allows for you and people that are observing you to see the mechanics of what you are doing, what you're aware of and not aware of. Practicing this way was good because there is nowhere to hide. It is just you and habits that you have been practicing come out. I found out a few things about myself that I did not know that I was doing and I have practiced it that way for a long time. I also feel that it made me not worry about so much about the attack, but rather on what the technique was.

Another thing that was different in preparation was that we practiced in our street clothes. I feel like this broke down the barrier of formality. It made me think more of everyday life than just of the dojo. The practice when we did this was informal and I feel gave a little more freedom to what we were doing. It also changes your attitude from when you go from your street clothes to your Gi. Overall I feel like this test preparation was very helpful in understanding everything. It broke down barriers and habits that were long in place. I highly enjoyed the addition to the normal test preparation.

## Aikido Seminar in Canada

Invited to lead a special Summer Seminar, Wadahara Sensei and Crotty Sensei travelled together from Los Angeles, California, to the home of Lillooet Seidokan Aikido, a small town 4.5 hours drive north of Vancouver B.C. Canada. Despite an intense heat wave, Mariko Kage's students gathered for 7 outdoor training sessions during July 10 -13th, 2014 at the beautiful grounds of the Miyazaki Heritage House. Following Mariko's extensive warm ups and emphasis on Aikitaïso as mind and body misogi, Ki-Development was a key foundation each day and skills were applied into the lesson in an unique way. An interactive public demonstration for the community was well received by eager participants and won a pleasant review for the Lillooet's local newspaper.



Off the mat, the Senseis were treated to painting adventures in the garden; traditional native fishing grounds tour ending with a salmon feast; relaxing time by the Lake, nightly dinner socials, and a local evening music concert. On the last day, we drove out of town to practice weapons training and a special Misogi practice where we all took refreshing dips into the Yalakom River, where three of LSA club's regular students live off the grid and do extensive organic farming. Special memories were shared by all, friendships were renewed and kindled, during a celebration and exploration of Ki, our energy medicine! Special thank you to all LSA students who helped in many different ways to make the seminar happen.

Rod Webb generously provided his beautiful town suite for the two Sensei's for 6 days. His recent and sudden passing leaves us all deeply at a loss. He shall be fondly remembered and respected by all, as a dear friend, musician, a farmer, a community activist who lead the peace and ecology movement, who took great joy and a keen interest in the arts and the principals of Aikido at LSA over the last year. His heart was always with the land and with the people, his ways were always sincere, gentle and steady. Thank you Rod, for leading by example, demonstrating to us how to truly embody and live the Spirit of Aiki.



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Students who participated in LSA seminar with Wadahara Sensei and Crotty Sensei included:

Daniel Kerslake (assistant instructor of LSA dojo, studying for Ikkyu), Toby Mueller (gokyu), Rod Webb, Daniel James, Joe Priske, Chris Hurst, Susannah Tedesco (gokyu), Marianne Gagnon, Ale Waterhouse-Heyward, Gillian Smith, Yoko Haga, Ina Weber, John Brett, Carol Simonovic.



***Wadahara Sensei, Crotty Sensei, Domo Arigato gozaimashita!***

In Aiki,  
Mariko Kage,  
Nidan,  
Shido-in of Lillooet Seidokan Aikido, B.C. Canada

