

The Seidokan Communicator - Aikido for a modern way of life

A note from the new editor



Hi all,

I'd like to thank Sensei Mark and Sensei Janean Crapo for allowing me to edit the Seidokan Communicator this year, and for their support along the way. I hope to bring out 3-4 releases during the year, so that we can share experiences and opinions more frequently. I also want to thank everyone who contributed to this issue, whether by sending in articles or by answering the poll we sent out.

When I started in Aikido, I was impressed by the openness of different teachers to cooperate and share their knowledge openly; I believe this is expressed in Seidokan Aikido and I think the communicator is an expression of the idea that we grow together as a community as we grow and improve as individuals.

I'll welcome any comments and complaints, and of course articles, short or long, via my email – orenshamir@gmail.com.

Warm regards,

Oren Shamir

In this issue:

- 1 Poll - how can our classes improve ?
- 2 Thoughts on training
- 4 2015 Japan Camp
- 5 My training has gone to the dogs
- 9 Southern lights Aikido
- 10 Posture, Feldenkrais & Aikido
- 11 Aikido and being a good witness
- 12 Media recommendation
- 13 From Aikido to real estate
- 14 Breathing exercises
- 15 Seidokan fee and promotion changes

Pushing and Polling

For this issue, we asked the question: 'if you could change anything about the way we hold classes, teach or train- what would it be?'

Bronson Diffin wrote:

More emphasis on the uke side of the equation.

Uke's role as teacher and guide. The importance of commitment as uke and the physical skills to take the falls that come from a committed attack. Tips and ideas for uke to challenge nage's skill level without frustrating progress or improvement.

Greg Ostroy:

Weapons katas are considered important enough to be testing requirements, but we don't practice them very often, and if we did, it would take time away from the more interesting and practical things we do practice.

Since weapons kata serves the same purpose as aiki taiso, I was thinking that in some practice sessions(say one a week), a weapon kata could substitute for the regular aiki taiso we do. This would allow students to become familiar enough with the katas not to have to cram before every test, without taking time away from practicing the open hand and weapons techniques.

Chaim Noy:

First, we would talk less and explain less in class. Less words. I'm not promoting silence,

Continued at the top of next page

but simply shorter and more Seidokan-ish verbal descriptions.

Second, as a long time teacher, I am trying to find a way whereby I train while I teach. I usually do it by working with each and every student in class on each and every technique that I teach (I saw Japanese teachers do so). But it's not always possible and got other pros and cons.

Third, I'd love to incorporate music into our classes and teachings.

Finally, I'd love on occasion to do class that are joint, and where teachers/senseis from different martial arts and disciplines teach together and share their knowledge.

Steve Tersigni:

At the risk of sounding cliché, that is a great question! Long ago I asked one of my great instructors, Adachi Sensei, "How can I work on stuff I think I need when the instructor controls the class." His answer had something to do with picking a fundamental aspect to work on like keeping center, that can be worked into anything the instructor picks for the class. That works but is limited. Even longer ago... the school I started in, a Yoshinkan derivative, had a time set aside once a week or twice a month, I can't remember which, that was started with warm ups, led by a student, and people paired up and decided themselves what to do. I think it was intended for individuals to polish up techniques for upcoming exams. If I "guide" a class now I start by asking "Are there any requests?". My classes were always small so it was easy to manage fulfilling everyone's requests. For whatever reason my students most of the time let me pick something for them. Since aikido requires a partner and mats most of the time, it's hard to get that all together to set and progress toward our own individual goals. I think it would be great to set aside class time or encourage students to come to periodic (monthly?) workshops where the instructor is available to answer questions and keep a lid on over exuberance but the students decide what to work on themselves. I see embedded in this response, a loop back to the original question.

Another thing I would like to incorporate is more aikido applications to conflicts off the mat. I got just a taste of this at the 1998 Long Beach camp with Wallace Sensei. He asked the class to pair up and come up with a verbal conflict, something that would be easy to imagine happening earlier in the day, and use the principles of aikido to roll play through it. Class is normally structured around roll playing a battlefield scenario conflict of attacker and defender. The scenario is scripted for both sides. Uke's side should naturally follow the lead established by nage. I would like to write some dialogs of common verbal conflicts that are resolved in ways consistent with aikido principles. Collecting and rehearsing enough of these I hope, would give us better tools to apply to real day-to day verbal interactions. It's been on my to-do list for a long time.

We talk to people every day in the normal course of life; we get our wrist grabbed less often. It's hard for me to transfer what I do at the dojo to conflicts I normally experience. This is what I think of when I hear the phrase "Aikido for a modern way of life". So this last suggestion would take much more development to implement than the first.

Thoughts on training / Larry Wadahara



I will share my thoughts on this matter, and hope it does not get too long. I think that there should be an open sharing of techniques. We all have specialties in certain areas and a lot of times egos get in the way. I really feel that Kobayashi Sensei was a moving target who changed the way he did techniques. Heck he even changed the way he taught classes at different

Continued at the top of next page

dojos. These are my observations from a person who saw him at two different dojos. We have often shared stories of what he did at certain dojos and his discussions with some of the instructors who were lucky enough to work with him. Maybe it was the question asked or the way in which we did techniques that prompted him to do things the way he did. I was lucky to see Sensei play with techniques and experiment. I was also lucky to see him demonstrate the polished techniques at AIA. I hardly ever saw Sensei play in any other classes except for maybe the children's class.

As with all the martial arts instructors, I have observed there are a couple of distinctions that I would like to point out. There are those instructors who take a certain point in their training and try to polish these techniques. They feel that this is the ultimate way to do a technique or can substantiate their teachings by use of video tapes and books. There is nothing wrong with this type of instructor. In years past you would have heard me say that they were stuck in the past and never moved from that time. We all need to see the base. Shame on those instructors who tell ukes that they are not attacking correctly, especially those who tell their students that they have to make a committed attack. I call these aikido attacks where the uke throws an off balanced attack and proceeds to wait to be thrown by the nage. Try having a student throw a balanced attack and see what happens. Usually nothing happens or the uke struggles to make the technique work. Is this really self defense. There are other examples of this. For example when a person demonstrates a technique that is obviously putting himself in a dangerous position - the principle of stepping off the line of attack should always be followed. As an instructor we should never ask a student if they can hit you, but you should be aware of it..

There are other instructors who have studied other martial arts, but because of the constraints of the style of martial arts they teach, continue to teach the techniques of that style even though they have several different ways to react to an attack, they still teach what is correct to that style. Given the opportunity to see these individuals do what they have incorporated is truly a gift. If you get to see these, remember to tell the instructor Thank you. It is pretty rare.

I think there also needs to be a distinction between teaching such things as Ki development and the use of techniques as a means of self defense. I shudder when i hear instructors say in a real self defense situation you should do this. Needless to say that I do say this, but I believe my way is a little different. It usually has to do with dealing with weapons practice. I usually say that you should expect to be cut or shot. There had to be some reason why you are in that situation in the first place; i.e, protecting Loved ones, perhaps giving them a chance to escape. Practicing the principles is very important in dealing with any situation. Keeping one point is the first thing one should do.. Run if you can, Just because you have a black belt does not mean you are faster than a speeding bullet or sharper than a knife.

We also get people who take ukemi and try every which way to not take the fall. I have warned people that if this were a real situation, i would probably punch them. In the past I have seen several of our senior instructors, some who have passed away used atemi to throw those uke's giving them a hard time. I saw Kobayashi Sensei throw a yudansha that he had called up to demonstrate a technique. He tried to give Kobayashi Sensei a hard time, trying to prove that his Sensei was better. Sensei smiled when he felt his attack and than threw him with ease. Later this person accused Sensei of hurting him. I told him it was his attitude that made it happen. If had not tried to resist the technique , he would not have hurt himself. I am guilty of this in other ways. It is sort of futile for people to

Continued at the top of next page

do things like kick when they are in a compromised position. I have warned several of my students when they are in Sankyo, Nikyo, Ikkyo and like positions to not try to escape or worse, to kick me. If you are connected with them you can do some serious damage to their joints, which I am guilty of doing in the past. Instead of hurting the joints now I usually punch them. When I do this some of my students will tell the beginners that that is not what we do in Aikido, that is just Larry. We should take Mushin to heart and try to make every attack an attack where we do not know what is going happen. This itself takes practice. Especially in some styles of Aikido where everyone is a teacher.

As students we should be aware that there are sorts of ways to do techniques. One should follow what is being taught at that moment. Do not try to show that your way is the best. Have an open mind and try your best to do the technique as demonstrated. As an uke one should give a committed attack. One should never be afraid to ask the instructor to demonstrate the technique on them. A lot of the times what we see and what we feel are completely different. Please put all this into perspective and try to truly practice the meaning of Seidokan - be Earnest, Realistic, and Sincere with everything you say and do. It may get you in trouble, but at least you can live with yourself.

2015 Japan Summer Camp

Dear instructors and students!

After some informal polling over the last couple months, we now have enough interest in a Japan camp "tour" in Tokyo for 2015! The official dates have not been set but will be sometime in mid to late June.

Camp will be held over 6 or 7 nights and we'll arrange a dojo for training. Visitors will be responsible for airfare, accommodations, food, incidentals. We recommend lodging at Sakura Hostel: <http://www.sakura-hotel.co.jp/jimbocho>

It's a foreign friendly hotel conveniently located a few subway stops from the dojo facility.

Beyond airfare we suggest visitors budget an additional \$1000 - \$1500 for hotel, camp fees, banquet, incidentals, tours, etc.

The training days and schedule have not been decided yet. Classes will either be held every morning. Or perhaps morning/afternoons, every other day in order to give visitors enough time to explore the city and make side trips.

Please contact me if you have further questions! We'll send updates as plans progress!

Regards,
Chris Koprowski

Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo
dojo@tokyoseidokan.com



My Training Has Gone to the Dogs / Janean Crapo

It has been 21 years since I've had a dog; 32 years since I had my bouvier puppy, Zeus. So, when we decided to get a new bouvier puppy, ZuZu, I thought it would be good for me (and ZuZu) to read up and refresh myself about puppies and puppy training

I thought I was reading about puppy training. What I read was great Aikido training for me as well. I've based quite a few classes on what I've learned. I'll concentrate on only one of the books I've read and reference how it struck me as Aikido. I know I can't possibly write up all my realizations but, here are a few.

From the book: My Smart Puppy, Fun, Effective, and Easy Puppy Training by Brian Kilcommons and Sarah Wilson.



Getting to good. Teach your puppy what you want, cause that behavior to happen, then reward what you caused.

I like both "getting to good" and "cause that behavior to happen". There are two ways to get where you want in a technique. The Yang (active) way is to lead the attacker to where you want them. This lead must be "blendy" and the person goes where you want them to go but doesn't always know why they are going. No argument.... Just go right along with you. The other way is more of a Yin (less active way) where you let happen what naturally is happening until you get them where you want them and the technique happens. I use this explanation to describe to our students the difference between how Sensei (Mark Crapo) does techniques and how I tend to do them. He Leads and you don't know why but, you follow. I kind of let the uke wander around how they want to wander until they are exactly where I want them.

Pups follow moving feet. If you're feet aren't moving, your puppy cannot follow. When you stop stopping, your puppy will stop stopping.

This is an incredible eye opener as a way to help teach students. Too many times nage stops moving and tries to look back to see if uke is following or tries to muscle uke or pass them across nage's midpoint until out of their range of effectiveness (think tenkan). This makes it so anything we do with our hand, whether raising it up or dropping it down, takes Uke's hand and balance back to within their range. If you want uke to keep moving, nage should keep moving.

Move your feet when you want him to move his.

As mentioned above, this is the way to get (or keep) uke moving his/her feet. However, let's also consider that it is also the way we get out of uke's way if we have caused uke to move. If you want uke to step forward, you can drop the hand, but, if you don't move your feet to create space, uke will merely bend over, elongating his reach and staying within his range of effectiveness and balance.

Continued at the top of next page

Restraint creates resistance. Pulling back on a puppy only makes the puppy pull forward more.

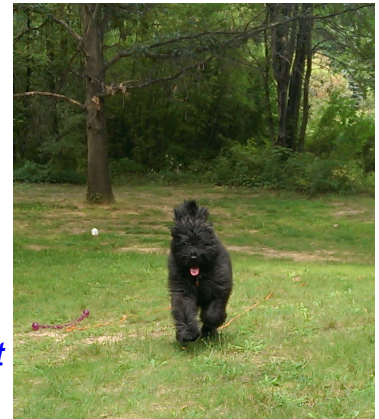
Just like with a puppy on a leash, any time you push or pull your uke, it gives your uke a chance to push or pull back. One source on line explained about dogs pulling if they are in a halter that attaches on the back because it is exactly how dogs pull when pulling sleds or carts and so encourages pulling. If you have a harness that leads from the front, then any time they pull they will pull themselves off balance sideways and will have to stop their pull to regain their balance. In Aikido we are much better off creating a situation that will unbalance uke if they should try to fight the movement.

One definition of "learning" is trial and error.

It is much easier to learn how to correct something than it is to only ever "just try to do it right". We see Sensei doing it correctly and too many times, if we fail at doing it successfully, we stop, start over and try to go back to doing what we thought we saw Sensei do. I find it much easier if I'm being unsuccessful during a technique to stop, fix myself first and then see what needs to be done to "get to good".

It's not the lead that connects but the connection that leads.

Amazing realization for students who think just going through the motions will bring about the result. Going through the motions will not create a connection for blending. It is the connection we start with that allows us to blend. The blend allows for the technique to happen.



Make things fun, have high expectations while holding the thought that you may well be the root of most of the confusion.

Kobayashi Sensei used to say "the answer is right under your foot." Most of the time if we get things right up to the end, but uke still does not fall, we are probably standing in the way! We are telling them to fall but we obstruct that fall by not moving out of the way. Also, how many times have you done a technique (or felt one done to you) where the nage is inadvertently using opposing pressure (for example, pulling up on the hand while pushing down on the elbow) which also impedes the ability to fall?

As your puppy's skills grow, you may have started expecting responses a bit prematurely, waiting to "see what he was going to do" rather than making sure he did it. This waiting causes hesitation. Since puppies respond at the point when you cause the behavior to happen, your puppy starts to hesitate right along with you.

Ever get into the habit of looking back at your uke to see if they are coming along with you? I tend to assure my students that most likely, if they have uke's hand in theirs, it is attached to a shoulder and body that will follow right along with the hand. If you are looking back to see if uke is responding, you will always be a step off. You are not leading if you are stopping to "ask" if they are going to follow you.

Continued at the top of next page

Challenges to dog training: Thinking that dog training is about the dog. Nope. If you want your puppy to change what she is doing, you must change what you are doing first.

We must follow the principles above all else. We need to be relaxed within our range with good posture, confidence and intent if we want to be able to lead our partner.

Eyes up! Look where you are going!

This is absolutely part of intent. You cannot lead someone somewhere if they don't know where you are going.

(When bumping them while walking to keep them out of your space) You simply allowed the natural result of that choice to happen.

My approach to techniques and blending is to let happen what uke wants to happen. I never try to stop an attack. I simply want to let what uke wants be a little more of an outcome than he was thinking. If I want him/her to turn and face the other direction, I don't stop their movement and reverse it. I always let them keep going forward. I just change the direction "forward" ends up being.

(Puppy wanders about). Stand still. If you shift around, your puppy may mirror you and move with you.

If you want your partner to relax, you must relax as well. Most times, if you have connected with your partner, your partner will respond the same way you do. If you become more intense, they become more intense. If you drop your energy level, it tends to drop the energy level of the situation.

Most delays are caused by owners hesitating or waiting for their puppy. As always, you lead, puppy follows.

As always, have intent in your movement. Every movement has a purpose and you must do every movement with that purpose in mind. If a movement does not affect your partner, there is no reason to do that movement; either change the movement or regain your intent.

Focus on the moment your puppy decides to turn toward you. That is the moment you need to build on, so that it becomes as close to automatic as possible. The more clearly you can mark that moment, the more clearly your puppy will understand exactly what you want.

It is always easier to keep a blend going from the start than to start one up again once you've lost it. Every movement, transition and response has to continue that same blend and lead if you want to keep the technique short and easy.

Don't hesitate!

Intent,
intent,
intent.

Step off the



line and do something immediately.

Take uke's balance and do something with it immediately. It doesn't have to be fast, it just has to be continual from the onset.

Are you standing up straight? Bending over can teach puppies to stop three or four feet in front of you.

Bending at waist in anticipation of the attack or the "next step" of the technique stops the attacker before they are fully committed to finishing their attack and gives them a chance to stay within their range. When we are playing ZuZu has amazing ma-ai and never anticipates when I might grab her toy from her. She

Continued at the top of next page

never changes her stance nor does she jump too soon or too far away if I lunge for her toy. She can always stay completely relaxed and just out of my reach. She likes me to be able to reach her toy but not grab her toy. There is no difference in her move if she's trying to keep the toy away from me or if she's just picking up her toy to take it somewhere.

Be sure of yourself in voice and in your body. Confidence is critical here.

In "real world" situations of self-defense, it isn't about what you can do but what you can convey. Give direct orders and carry yourself with confidence will do a lot to keep you from being a target. Bad guys don't want trouble. They want easy targets. Confidence is a must. Always try commands before you try swinging.

....this is not about force, this is about surprise.

A quick hara drop disrupts uke's balance and strength will be compromised. A surprise move or sound can also short circuit the thought process if things don't go as the attacker has planned.

Brian (author) often finds that a failure with a puppy is a failure in our intention. To lead well we need to be focused and confident, clear and energized. If your puppy is wandering, where are you? We're betting you wandered mentally first. Focus your intention clearly before you ever pick up the lead.

Better short statement about self-defense than I can come up with!

When talking about it being unsafe for puppy to carry stick end with stick going straight out of his mouth: He will grab what smells like you so, handle the stick from the middle so he grabs the stick in the middle.

Shodo o seisu: Controlling the first move. If you know you will be attacked, offer a target so you know (most likely) what the attack

will be...what will be grabbed...which side will be targeted.

You do not get to choose what your puppy needs. Your choice is whether or not you do what is needed. Puppy training isn't about what you want; it is about what your puppy needs.

This is blending. We don't approach an attack with a preconceived idea of what we want to have happen. Blending is an ability to recognize what is being presented and taking advantage of what is already there. Yes, in a class we do what the instructor is teaching but, even during a class, if we pay attention to where the blend can go, we likely can "get to good" without fighting with our uke to get there. It's about listening to your partner and responding (like a conversation) more than only reacting with what we want to do.

My Smart Puppy people focus on solutions, not problems.

Focusing on a problem generally leads students to ask what they need to do. Looking at solutions allows us to learn through our own self correction. When we learn from mistakes and learn how to fix them, we learn a deeper understanding of the essence of the art. It also is what allows us to apply what we learn to other instances rather than just quick fixes for each particular moment.

If something isn't working: stop. Try something else or apply the technique or tool differently.



We tend to get tunnel vision when we get stuck doing a technique. Many times we just try doing it harder or faster. We forget we can use the situation to learn to blend into something else. This would allow our skill level to increase because we have problems, not despite them.

Southern Lights Aikido Dojo / By Willis Mayeda

Southern Lights Aikido (Nankyokukou Aikido) is located in Barstow, California which lies on Interstate 15 approximately halfway between Los Angeles, California and Las Vegas, Nevada. The dojo was started in the fall of 2003 with just one student. Over the years, we have undergone a few changes, both in name and in location. Throughout the last ten years, our dojo has maintained a core of approximate five to six regular students and with our recent change in location, our enrollment has increased to almost twenty students ranging from children to retirement aged adults.

Our instruction cadre consists of our head instructor, Wade Backlund (Yondan), Willis Mayeda (Shodan), Juan Rivera (Shodan), and Aaron Jaramillo (Shodan). Since our instructor, Wade, originally began his training 23 years ago under Brad Bergeron in Duluth, Minnesota who began "Northern Lights Aikido" at the suggestion of his teacher and the head of Seidokan Aikido, Rodrick Kobayashi Sensei, we are thrilled to be associated with the organization once more.



Southern Lights Aikido is also a dojo member of 100 Pillars: International Aikido Association.

Some things that set our dojo apart are the prior martial arts experience that some of our students bring to the table and the location of our dojo inside a mixed martial arts training center. Our students bring a wonderful mixed bag of prior experiences to our dojo that we do our best to embrace in order to enrich our Aikido training. Some of our students have training in arts as diverse as Tang Soo Do, Chen Man Qing style Tai Chi, Danzen Ryu Ju-Jitsu, Judo, Shotokan Karate, Goju-Ryu Karate, Muay Thai, and military combat training. Having such a broad range of experiences that our students bring to the table allows us to use traditional Aikido techniques to address attacks and techniques that could fall outside the realm of classical Aikido training. Being located inside of a mixed martial arts training facility allows us access to a population of fellow martial artists who may never have considered practicing Aikido before. We now have several students who train in both MMA and Aikido. We have received very positive feedback about how many of the core principles of Aikido compliment their MMA techniques. We prefer to take the perspective that what we do is to offer people a "tool" to add to their kit. Though we would love everyone to embrace the practice of Aikido as our students have, we understand that Aikido may not be the answer to every situation, but it does have many wonderful insights and principles to offer, and If someone trains with us and takes away something positive, then we feel as though we have achieved our goal. Recently, we have also had some opportunities to reach a broader student base. We have done some defensive tactics training with a police department in Wolf Point, Montana and have established an Aikido club at a continuation high school in Hesperia, California. Not only are we training in the traditional techniques and principles taught by Kobayashi Sensei, we are also embracing contemporary martial arts culture and putting forth our best efforts to reach as diverse an audience as possible.



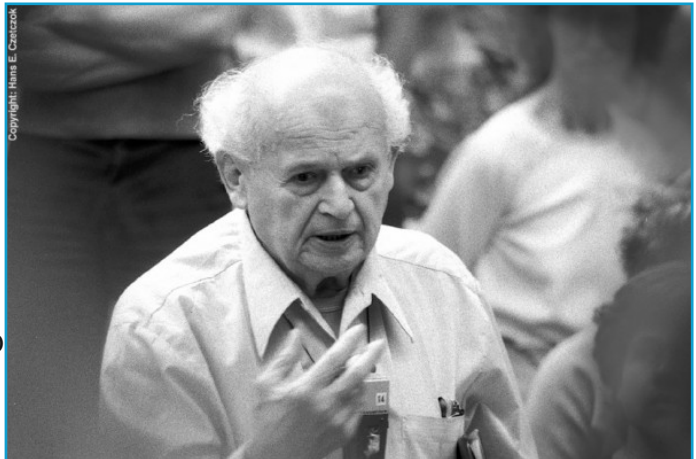
Southern Lights Aikido
613 E. Main St.
Barstow, CA
92311
760-565-2454
southernlightsaikido@gmail.com
Find us on Facebook



Posture according to the Feldenkrais method & Aikido / Eli Hill

I am a Feldenkrais practitioner and I practice Aikido with Sensai Yonathan Sagiv in the Dojo in Modi'in. Last year Sensai Yonathan asked me if I could give a short lesson about posture according to the Feldenkrais method. As I prepared the lesson I was struck by how much the principals of Aikido relate to posture according to the Feldenkrais method. This actually is not so surprising because Dr Moshe Feldenkrais practiced martial arts & founded the Jujitsu school in France after the second world war, before he invented his method in Israel.

For Feldenkrais posture is a dynamic concept, like the harmony we practice in Aikido. This is the reason he opposes teachers telling their pupils in school to "sit straight". "Straight is an esthetic concept, and as such doesn't have a practical exact use, and cannot be used as a scale for correcting posture." (Feldenkrais, "Improving Ability – Theory and Practice", pp 84', my translation). Although there is no objectively correct posture one can still relate to its qualities. In a correct posture there is no muscular effort and "the slightest effort will move the body in any direction with the same ease." ("Improving Ability – Theory and Practice" pp 93'). This guideline reminds me of Randori in which the energy of the attackers leads the body of the defender in any direction, while he remains standing on two legs.



Moshe Feldenkrais, founder of the Feldenkrais method

Although Feldenkrais doesn't describe a specific posture for the standing position, In "A potent Self" he does give a more concrete framework: "The head has to be in a place in which it is free to float whilst it is towering at the top of the spinal column...The first vertebrae of the neck has to point to the crown of the skull." (pp 225). In the continuation of the chapter he says that the shoulders should be relaxed so the hands are free to move; the stomach muscles should be relaxed; and the attitude should be alert. These guidelines are indicators for a better posture.



The fourth principal in Aikido is "extend your Ki". Sometimes when we are all worked up Sensai Yonathan will remind us that Panta Ray - everything flows. "Don't hinder your Ki" he says. When one has the open attitude of extended Ki, then the body is aligned in the posture that I described above. The guidelines for the correct posture hold also for the horizontal position or for ukemi. "Actually all of the body postures are O.K, as long as they don't defy the laws of nature, that require the

skeleton to balance the body in gravity, and that the muscles will be free to move." ("Improving Ability – Theory and Practice" pp 85). I am happy that I have had the opportunity to integrate my knowledge in the Feldenkrais method with Sensai Yonathan's gentle & confident instruction.

Using Aikido Principles to be a Good Witness / By Wes Cuatt

I would first like introduce myself; my name is Wes Cuatt. I retired from the Calhoun County Sheriff Department after 30 years of working as a road cop and computer forensic specialist.

I would like to clarify that while what I say in this article may appear to some that I am against the right of people to carry a firearm, I do in fact believe every person that wishes to exercise their right to carry a firearm, should do so. However, I also think there should be a lot of pre-planning and thinking before acting (or reacting) in a high stress incident. A person must keep in mind that, from the time they squeeze the trigger and that piece of lead starts moving down the barrel until it comes to a complete stop, they are responsible for everything in its path. That path could include the subject that piece of lead was meant for, property in the surrounding area and any innocent person in the room as well as the possibility of someone on the opposite side of the wall if it should go through. This responsibility includes possible civil, criminal and monetary action as well as their own mental state following (sometimes for years) the incident. Thinking about all of this, using a weapon in a high stress situation is a very scary commitment to make. Sometimes it may be wiser to stand back and take mental notes of everything you see around the suspects; what they are wearing, what they are carrying, anything you can think of to help police catch this person. This may relieve you of the possibility of damage to another person's property or, more importantly, of hurting an innocent person.

If you use the principles of Aikido during high stress situations; relax, let your shoulders drop, breathe slowly, concentrate on your center and just be aware of your surroundings,

it will not only help you calm yourself but will make it so that you can see everything around the room...to see how many suspects there are, if there is someone in the background that may also be armed. The principles will also help you to be calm enough to notice if the suspects are wearing anything unusual, their height, weight, if they have a tattoo that can be seen, what kind/color of coat, shirt, pants, shoes; anything to help identify them to the police.

I'm aware that while reading this, it may appear that it would be a very simple thing for a person to do. However, having been in high stress situations and having interviewed numerous people that were in high stress situations, this is not an easy thing to do. When I became involved with Aikido and started to be aware of the principles of Aikido and attempting to use them in these high stress situations, it definitely became a lot easier. Simply, if a person can take just a fraction of a second to settle themselves down, regain their center, control their breathing, and let their ki flow, they can be more aware of what may or may not be happening in their surroundings.

A very good way to help enhance our awareness in becoming a good witness is to play mind scenario game. This is a practice in police training: any given scenario, ask "what-if" and mentally play the scenes in your head. During the day wherever you're at, whatever you're doing, especially if you're walking into some type of a business such as a bank or store, imagine that there is a gunman there. Look at that person. Try to remember everything you can about that person. Look around the room and see if that person happens to be with somebody else. Are there some little kids around? Is there somebody else with that person? When you are leaving, look at a vehicle leaving and remember everything you can about it. When you get back in



Continued at the top of next page

your vehicle take a piece of paper and try to write down everything about it including the license plate. If you are with someone, make a game out of it and see who can remember the most.

Next time you are on the mat, try and use the principles and these scenarios to remember what other students may or may not be doing or who they are talking to. This will help build your skills to be a good witness as well as also help your skills on the mat for showing Zanshin before, during and after a technique. It will also help you be aware of your surroundings at all times.

I have watched a lot of tests of different ranks. During these tests, students may or may not show Zanshin at the end of the technique. When they show Zanshin at the end they often are staring at uke to make sure uke does not reengage the attack, which is important. But, there's another very important part of Zanshin; having leftover ki to watch the surroundings not only for possible other attackers but also bystanders or anything else in the room we need to know about such as having the area clear enough we don't fall over or run over someone or something while doing a technique. Keep in mind; while the mat is generally a large open area free of obstructions, off the mat if we are in a house, bar, store, etc., we are not going to necessarily know what is behind us when we are backing away from an attacker. Wouldn't we look awfully silly after neutralizing the situation if, while backing away from the attacker we fell over a chair, coffee table, or any one of 1000 other things? This is why it is so important that we learn to be aware of our surroundings. You can easily learn to do this in every day life by doing it on the mat. During your next test, and we all know that is a high stress situation, when backing away from uke, show Zanshin towards uke and also beware of your surroundings. Make mental notes of what people watching the test are doing.

It is very important to understand that when we train, what we do on the mat and how we

handle ourselves on the mat will carry over to off the mat. So, if you can be aware of your surroundings on the mat that is exactly what you will do when you're off the mat. So, it will help you become a better witness to help the police if the need arises. I'm not saying this is the answer to all situations. Every situation is different. Every situation calls for different answers. However, if there is no immediate threat of danger to yourself or anyone else, if the threat is only against property, it would be much safer for you and others to be a good witness. Take in as much information as you can.

Suggested Media / Oren Shamir

I hope to start a new column on the subject of suggested media. We in Mt. Scopus dojo (Jerusalem) get together once in a while to watch films, which usually either involve martial arts or eastern/japanese culture. I thought it would be fun to give film suggestions from time to time.

This time, I'm recommending the film '**After the rain**'. Based on a script by Akira Kurosawa and filmed in 1999, the film depicts a ronin's attempts to gain a position with a local lord, and his dilemmas between what the strict japanese culture deems appropriate, and what he views as the common good. Both the fight scenes and the moral dilemmas and their resolution relate, to my mind, to the idea that when Nage accepts attacks and approaches the situation with the spirit of 'loving protection of all things', it forces the attacker to confront his own foolishness in attempting an attack in the first place.

My favorite quote from the movie -



*'Swords are not made for
butchery
... unless they're used by
imbeciles.'*

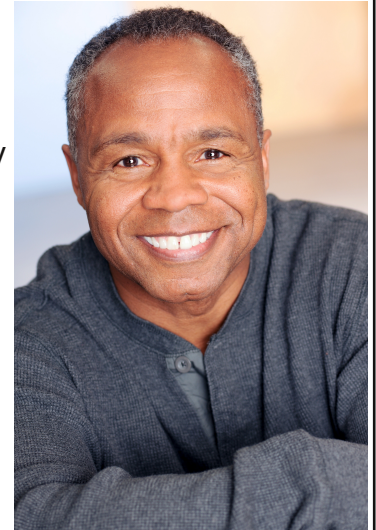
*'They're here to suppress
the stupidity in our hearts.'*

Watch a scene at:

<http://youtu.be/2jW8t5jZyEk>

From Aikido to Real Estate / John Robertson

On August 3, 2013, I taught my last class at AIA in Eagle Rock (Los Angeles). I had delayed my departure because of all the transitions that were in play and I didn't want to make things more confusing than they were. As I knew the day was coming, I thought I was ready for it, but it still got to me, wow, no more Aikido, what's this going to be like?



I had been laid off from my job as a Tax Manager/Supervisor about two and half years earlier, and from that time until the beginning of this year I did bit acting jobs and people's taxes to get by. Finally, an old friend, actually an ex-boss suggested I go into Real Estate. He knew that last thing I wanted to do was go back into the tax field, I had had it with the stress! He turned me onto a Real Estate school and wished me the best of luck. Long story short, I passed the California Real Estate Examine and went shopping for a realty broker. My friends who were also in the Real Estate "bizz", suggested Keller Williams. I was told that they where fair to their agents and had a great training program. Short story shorter, I signed a contract with the Studio City, CA office and officially became a Realtor.

I walked into Keller Williams' beautifully modern office in Studio City and kind of lost my breath for a minute. I should have realized I'd be nervous, it had been over two years since I had been in a corporate environment. There where so many busy, no nonsense, smiling faces I didn't know. Out of pure habit I immediately focused on "Keeping My One Point." I swear the first day was a lot like the first time I did Randori. The only difference was I was being attacked from at every corner by my ignorance. I got "Off The Line" with every new encounter by simply smiling and agreeing with every handshake that came my way. I got "off the line" and let these new experiences pass through. I got "off the line" so much it was like traveling on one of those moving ramps at the airport but at top speed.

When I got home that night I exhaled by doing Misogi Breathing and yoga. I signed up for all the classes that Keller Williams offered. My friends were right, Keller Williams has a great training program. I was confident that this would protect me from unexpected ignorance attacks. Yet I still had to do something about the distance I felt between me and all those smiling faces, their years of experience I didn't have yet. I simply felt out of control, and then I heard myself: "Control The First Move". I couldn't control the office or any of those people, but I could control myself. I could control my breathing, I could relax, and I could go in with an Aiki attitude and harmonize with my surroundings. I could "touch them first".

Again, to shorten a long story, day by day I got better and better at "Greet and Meet" – actually it became kind of fun. The classes were great. I don't know if you ever stop learning in this field, it's an on going education. You're given a mentor to teach you to fall and help you roll out of it. Even the most successful agents have mentors or couches. I'm told even Tiger Woods has a golf coach, same thinking. Like Aikido, you master Real Estate by practice. Practice makes the master. One question that is asked in Real Estate classes is, "How far are you willing to go to be a success in this business?" That's *Continued at the top of next page*

something that Aikido students could ask themselves about their practice.

Over the years Aikido has taught me that harmonizing with your opponent or partner is the key to performing a successful technique. Real Estate has one book after another, from guru to experienced business practitioners, which do nothing but teach students to harmonize with their client and themselves.

It's only now that I really realize what Sensei Kobayashi meant when he said, "The techniques are merely the means to learn and make the principles of nature part of oneself so that one can apply it in his or her daily life." I'm living that right now.

My mentor told me the other day, know the difference and similarity between "mindset and mechanics". This to me is the same thing as, "Seidokan Aikido emphasizes the balanced practice of principles and techniques."

There is a strong emphasis on ethics in Real Estate, do the right, or better yet, do the legal thing. Once Kobayashi Sensei told me, "John, it is not how strong (in my case how fast), but rather how correct you are that counts."

My goal in Real Estate is of course to be as financially successful as I can. But my spiritual goal is to master "Control the First Move." I'm going to get to the core of that principle even if I have to wear my Hakama to the office. One thing's for sure, it's time to walk the talk I spoke as an Aikido teacher for all those years.

Meditation & Breathing / Oren Shamir

Recently I spent an intensive month at a dojo in Europe, as uchi-deshi (live-in student). That left me with many ideas I could bring back to my dojo, and some I would need to ponder over.

As live-in student, life revolves around the dojo. The routine usually started at 6:30 with weapons training, followed by an 8am meditation, and from then on the day revolved around Aikido lessons, food (communal shopping and cooking), cleaning and more Aikido.

Morning meditation was divided into 7 stages, but I'll only detail the first 4. Before you start, it's good practice to pass around some tissue and blow your noses well, as forceful exhalations through the nose can.. well, you know.

Forceful Exhaling exercise

90 fast breaths where you exhale forcefully through the nose, and let the breath come naturally back in. These are fast breaths, each takes less than a second

Forceful Inhaling and Exhaling exercise

40 fast breaths where you inhale forcefully through the nose, then exhale forcefully through the nose. These are also fast breaths, each taking about a second

Misogi breathing

This is the same Misogi breathing we usually do in the dojo. Inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth while contracting the throat slightly and producing an out-breath sound.

Kotodama chanting - Su, O, Aa, E, I

Chanting of one of the five sounds above, each corresponding to a part of the body

I think that the first two exercises (which are types of Pranayama) really helped my Misogi breathing open up and reach deeper levels. When the body is saturated with oxygen, there is no urgency to breath, and Misogi can be done in a relaxed manner - the breath is more even, and there is space to explore how the body breaths.

Changes to Dojo Membership Fees and Promotions

Starting the first of year (2014) our Dojo Membership fee will no longer be \$250. We will start using a sliding scale; based on the total members of each dojo.

- A dojo with less than 10 members (2-9) will now only have a fee of \$50
- A dojo with 10-19 members will now have a fee of \$75
- A dojo with 20 or more members will have a fee of \$100



These numbers are slightly different than what I'd mentioned in June, not significantly different but slightly so. Mrs. Kobayashi apologizes for the change but she's reviewed the math and the operating costs and felt that this change was needed to make ends meet. I am sure none of you will be upset by the **new lower fee structure**.

When I was discussing this change with Mrs. Kobayashi, she asked how "we" would know how many members the dojo had. I got her to understand and agree that we'd know because each of the dojo heads would tell us. We wouldn't be dealing with strangers and need verification; we're dealing with our long time instructors and friends.

Now, I want to carry that thought over to promotions.



We will no longer require that Shodan, Nidan or Sandan promotions coming from a Shihan, that has current Instructor Certification status, be sent in, along with a DVD, for approval. (We still will need the paperwork, of course, for our records and to issue a certificate.) My feeling is that if you have earned your status or rank, we should have trust in your abilities to carry out the duties or responsibilities that go along with that rank.

This is not to say that you may not want to send in a copy of the test; but you'd be sending it in just so we can see how well someone did, not so we can approve of your decision.

I hope these changes are seen as positive steps forward for Seidokan, which is Aikido for a Modern Way of Life.

In the coming weeks I plan on sending out more about promotions and who can do what at each level of Instructor Certification.

In Oneness,

Dr. Mark Crapo