



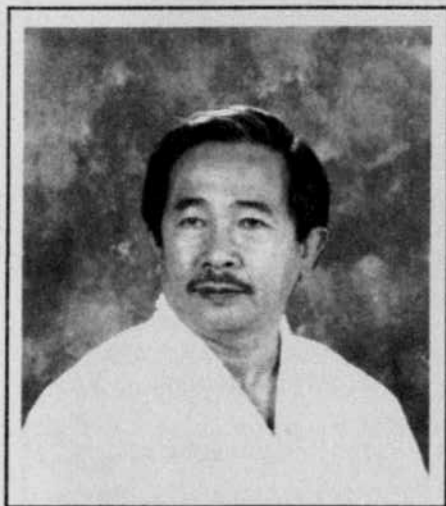
# Aikido Insights

Tenshinkai Headquarters

Westminster, California, U.S.A \* Winter 91. Vol. #

## DANG THONG PHONG SENSEI

Founder Aikido Tenshinkai Federation



Dang Thong Phong Sensei

### DEAR FRIENDS,

*I am confident that after years of practicing Aikido, You all understand like myself, Aikido is a martial art of love. We are all very proud of it. We will never forget the most compassionate teaching of our late Master Morihei Ueshiba: "martial art is not a fighting technique to combat your adversary. On the contrary, martial art is an art that leads us to be in harmony with nature, according to the oneness principle of nature. If we talk about winning, it only means winning over the deterioration, discontent, and division of the mind. Whoever bears such detrimental, discontent, disunified feelings within him/herself is already defeated." Disciples have the duty to study and understand this marvelous teaching.*

*The key to success in practicing Aikido is contained in this teaching. It is the unique characteristic of Aikido. It does not resemble any other martial arts.*

*In Aikido technique, there is no opposite force; rather one relies on the opponent's force. At that particular moment your opponent has to yield to your will. At the particular moment, your opponent is yourself (ego). The opponent and Aikidoist are one. There is no struggle. To think of struggle is to think of division between yourself and non-self or ego and non-ego. Aikido is absolutely a non-combative form of martial art. It is only a form of duel. In combat, you always want to win or to get something from your adversary. Dueling is the form of training used to enhance the Aikido technique. In Aikido there is no relationship of adversary/opponent, but duelist and contestant are merely nouns which show two individuals who are fighting. Once you understand the ultimate teaching of Aikido, these two individuals cease to be two separate contestants. They are two entities that are trying to harmonize in order to seek a balance, like the motion of the wind and cloud. When the wind blows, the cloud floats. The movement of the floating cloud subsequently interacts with the wind.*

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### "INNER INSIGHTS"

by Jim Wenrick

"Doing Ericksonian Therapy is a lot like Aikido", was the statement of Dr. Stephen Gilligan, a clinical psychologist, lecturer and black belt in Aikido.

As this statement entered my mind at a seminar in November of 1989, I thought to myself, "What is Aikido?". After I had completed the seminar given by Dr. Gilligan I decided to learn more about Aikido. At the time I had no intention of becoming actively involved in a martial art of any kind for the main reason of my age. I was no longer a youth. The other reason for my not wanting to become involved in a martial art, I was not interested in kicking, punching or "learning to kill someone", much less having that done to me!"

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## EDITOR'S NOTE:



Jim Wenrick

The Budo Center takes great pleasure that you now hold the first issue of "Aikido Insights" in your hands. This newsletter is one of Dang Thong Phong Sensei's endeavors to bring to pass O'Sensei's desire for Aikido. The specific purpose of the Tenshinkai Federation and the newsletter is to disseminate Aikido philosophy, skill and technical development in accord with the founder's vision.

It is the intent of "Aikido Insights" to be a non-partisan publication. The authors of articles will be expressing their understanding and experience with Aikido. Therefore, from time to time it may publish articles which the readership may view as controversial. We do not seek to cause contention, rather thought and discussion whereby each reader may have the opportunity to grow, learning to accept another's views in harmony and peace.

Many thanks go to Phong Sensei, Jim Ogborn, Eric Womack, Quang Nguyen, Tam Do, Tanh Phan, Tho Le and countless others who were behind the scenes for all of the time

and hard work it has taken to realize this first issue.

"Aikido Insights" will welcome future articles from any rank or age Aikidoists, as a matter of fact anyone. If you are interested in submitting a composition, please send it to The Budo Center, 8536 Westminister Ave., Westminister, California 92683, phone number (714) 894-1003.

May each of you continue to learn and grow in your experience with Aikido.

## "INNER INSIGHTS" *Cont...*

A short time after the seminar, I was talking with one of my co-workers in the Emergency-Trauma Department where I worked. She told me that she was interested in Aikido and had learned of a beginning class being given at a city college. She asked me if I was interested in taking the class with her. Reluctantly, but with some interest, I agreed.

The first class was comprised of learning about dojo etiquette, clothing and what was expected of each student. It was in the second class that I began to really learn about Aikido.

The sensei explained and demonstrated what he wanted each student to do. I quickly discovered that even though I heard his instructions and viewed his demonstration, I was not able to replicate his instruction or demonstration. During the practice one of the senior students observed that I was having difficulty and came over to assist me. He said, "relax and just do it. Let your body make the moves." So I attempted to follow his verbal in-

## AIKIDO INSIGHTS

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structions and demonstration. Much to my dismay, again I could not replicate his direction. Within myself I felt frustrated and humiliated that I could not follow his simple directives, even though he was very supportive and positive.

Reflecting upon this experience after the class I realized a number of things. First, I was not as integrated as I believed. My mind and body were divided. Second, I discovered that during the direct instruction I felt that I retreated inward as if I had to defend and protect myself. Intellectually I understood that I did not have to defend myself, yet this action occurred automatically.

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## 1992 TET FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

*by Eric Womack*

Goldenwest College was the scene of the 1992 TET Festival held on February 1-2, 1992. Saturday afternoon was the martial arts demonstration. Dang Thong Phong Sensei, introduced the students from the Budo Center of Westminster, CA., headquarters of the Aikido Tenshinkai Federation.

The large crowd of onlookers were not disappointed. Thousands of eyes watched as the Aikido demonstration began. Many of the spectators for the first time saw the beautiful, spherical moves of Aikido, along with powerful throws and locks. Multiple attacks and weapons including Kenjutsu were masterfully demonstrated. The crowd was treated to a thrilling display of proficiency and skill by the students of the Budo Center. Spectacular throws and falls had the huge crowd applauding and taking pictures.

Everyone enjoyed the demonstration and the art of Aikido has a lot of

new fans. Phong Sensei received flowers and a plaque of appreciation from the organization of the event. The Vietnamese New Year is off to a good start!

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## FORT SASKATCHEWAN SEMINAR NOTICE

Fort Saskatchewan Aikido Club (Alberta, Canada) will host a seminar with Dang Thong Phong - Fifth Dan and chief instructor of the Aikido Tenshinkai Federation. The seminar will be held on February 14&15&16, 1992.

Phong Sensei has a very graceful style and over 40 years in martial arts. He has dedicated himself to Aikido and the teaching of O'Sensei. This will be a very special learning experience for all. Contact the Fort Saskatchewan Aikido Club at (403) 998-1407 for times and location.

## OFF THE MAT

*by Eric Womack*

'91 is out the door, and a New Year begins!

Hi folks, here I am sitting at home and looking back over 1991, now that it's in the history books. We had a lot of changes, some good and some that will change us forever. We saw the USSR change to the C.I.S. and open her doors to Democracy. Home interest rates are now the lowest in over 15 years. We learned the tragic news that the great Magic Johnson has the HIV virus.

All these things will effect us - some more than others. But for me, I'll always be grateful that I started that first step in looking for a good place to learn the Art of Aikido. I remember starting with many preconceived notions. After all, like most of us, I read some books and saw a movie.

My first time on the mat was an eye opener, I learned etiquette, the show of respect, rolling and falling. Tenkan, Kokyu Nage, Shiho Nage, Kote Gaeshi (I thought that was a girl!). Would I live through this? I thought I was going to die! Who said yellow belt test! I'm just trying to make it to the next practice. Does everybody go through the same pain and sore muscles? As time passed things started getting better.

Then at O'Sensei's Memorial there was a demonstration put on by the students of the Budo Center. That was the best, I loved it. Everyone did great. I had better practice more. Before I knew it, Summer had come and there was a picnic in the park. It was a perfect day. I have a lot of new

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Demonstration for Tet Festival at Golden West College  
on February 1, 1992



## AIKI-BUDO DOJO 4TH-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

*by Eric Womack*

Saturday, January 25, 1992 marked the 4th Anniversary of the Aiki-Budo (Budo Center) in Westminster, CA.

Dang Thong Phong Sensei, began the celebration with the promotion of the six Budo Center students to the grade of Shodan. Joseph Jill, Leu Tho Hai, Pham Duc Nghia, Nguyen Nguyen Hanh, Tran Quang Anh, Le Thuc Thuy Doan. They each received their certification and Hakama along with their Black Belt. Each new black belt received a gift. Phuc Le, (one of the parents) provided each new black belt with a professional photograph that was taken of them while testing for their black belt certification. Joseph Jill was asked to give a short speech on the effort it takes and the road ahead for a new Shodan. After the black belts promotion, many other students were called before the crowd of happy onlookers to receive their promotion to a higher Kyu. Then the action began!

Master of Ceremonies, Quang Nguyen introduced the audience to the "Thrill of Flying" obstacle jumping. This was a thrilling warm up to start the demonstration.



Various students performed Aikido techniques along with Kata forms, Aiki-Jo and Kenjutsu. The audience was delighted when four of the younger students put on their self defense demonstration.

At intermission, traditional gifts were handed out from the drawing. Great excitement rained over the entire dojo. To keep the suspense flying in the second half of the demonstration, the students performed Randori and techniques with knives. All the students displayed great skill, and their families and friends enjoyed the performance. Flowers were presented to Phong Sensei by the students. The drawing ended with the grand finale of the color television set presentation. It was generously donated by Phong Sensei. Lottery tickets were also distributed to all present over 18 years old for a chance to become a Millionaire!

At the conclusion of the exciting Aikido demonstration, refreshments, many gifts and possible big money winners were anxiously scratching their lottery tickets. The 4th Anniversary of the Budo Center was a great success! This will be a day that students, family and friends will long remember. Over 150 students at the Budo Center can only look forward to the next anniversary with great expectations. We hope to see you all here next year!



Aiki-Budo Dojo members and their families at the 4th-anniversary celebration

# MY TRIP TO JAPAN

by: Jim Oghorn

It is very difficult for me to put into words the feeling's I had felt at the time Sensei Phong offered me the great honor of accompanying him to Japan. In fact, they changed from feelings of warmth and humility at the beginning to a sense of dread and disappointment at the possibility of my Sensei not being able to attend the celebration to which he had been invited due to the problem of not being able to obtain a visa to leave the United States to travel to Japan. My feelings of fear and dread lifted when I learned that Dang Thong Phong Sensei would be permitted to attend due to the tireless and persevering efforts of Peter Serano, Eric Womack and the Travel Agency, as well as all the people who helped keep the Dojo open during the absence of Sensei Phong. To all of those who were instrumental in contributing to Sensei's trip and peace of mind, thank you!

A trip to Japan to see the places where many of the martial arts like Aikido had originated had been my lifelong dream. This dream intensified when I began to study Aikido. For me to think I would be meeting the founder's son, Kisshomaru Ueshiba in person and seeing the Hombu Dojo was incomprehensible.

When arriving in Japan I was met with my first major challenge, the pay telephone; all of the writing was in Japanese! In addition, there was a three and one-half hour bus ride to the hotel. This was not a pleasant experience after sitting on the air plane for an 11 to 12 hours! I thought to myself, "now when I pick up Sensei Phong at the airport everything will be complete."

My next challenge was to buy a train ticket to the airport which would allow me to meet and pick up Sensei at the airplane. This problem was easily solved because I discovered that I could purchase the ticket at the hotel. The

hard part was locating the correct gate at the train depot! Again, communication was the issue, for everything was in Japanese. Luckily a Japanese man was going to the airport and he overheard me talking with the station employee. He told me to follow him to the airport.

After arriving at the Tokyo International Airport I was not permitted to go to the gate where Sensei would arrive. In addition, I discovered that there were 3 or 4 exit gates. After much time and searching through many people I located Sensei Phong!

The following day the 50th Anniversary of Aikikai Foundation and the 60th Anniversary of the Hombu Dojo had begun. It was a unique experience for me. As far as I could see most of the attendants were Japanese people and they were all very formal. Almost everyone was greeted by Moriteru Ueshiba (Waka Sensei), Kisshomaru Ueshiba's son.



From left to right:  
Sensei Yoshimitsu Yamada, Sensei Akira Tohei,  
Sensei Nobuyoshi Tamura, Sensei Dang Thong Phong

It was impressive to be in the presence of so many high ranking aikidoists at the awards ceremony. A surprising highlight for me occurred when Dang Thong Phong Sensei was called on stage to stand in front of the entire International Ceremony! My feelings soared when I witnessed the look on his face; the happiness shown was a lifetime's worth of good memories.

The day following the awards ceremony we took a taxi ride over to the Hombu Dojo where a plaque was presented and a tape given to Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba by Sensei Phong, President of The Aikido Tenshinkai Federation. Sensei Phong received a great deal of recognition everywhere he went in Japan which gave us a much warmer welcome than we expected. There were times when I could not believe what was happening. It seemed dream-like to me. I was thinking, "someone please pinch me so I can know if this is a dream or reality." I seemed unreal to be in the same room with Kisshomaru Ueshiba. He was a very polite man who smiled frequently.

*(Continued on page 15)*

## ABOUT SENSEI DANG THONG PHONG

Born on February 10, 1935, Sensei Dang Thong Phong is the sixth child of a seven-child middle class family. His stature is short and many people think of him as Japanese, especially when he is on the mat teaching his students. He began to study Aikido at the age of twenty-three with his brother, Sensei Dang Thong Tri. Together, they were studying Shaolin with old Master Vu Ba Oai.

Sensei had a great passion for martial arts. He could skip a meal, but he could not miss a single session of martial arts study. He could deprive himself of anything to save money for martial arts school fee.

Coming back to Vietnam from France in 1958, Sensei Dang Thong Tri brought along with him a wonderful gift to the Vietnamese people: "Aikido" which they had never seen. For years many Vietnamese people had longed for a transcendent martial art and finally Sensei Dang Thong Tri was able to teach it. He was invited to teach Aikido to high ranking disciples of the famous Shaolin teacher Vu Ba Oai at Han-Bai Martial Arts School in Saigon.

In the same year, an Aikido Dojo was established on the top floor of a three story building located at 94 Phan Thanh Gian Street, Dakao, Saigon, Vietnam. Since then, that Dojo has become the "home" of Aikido in Vietnam. It is the only Aikido Center in Vietnam given the honor of being officially recognized by the venerable Supreme Master Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido, and by the World Aikido Federation.

In 1960, Aikido in Vietnam welcomed Master Mutsuro Nakazono of Japan. His intention was to improve and energize the movement of Aikido in Vietnam. Master Nakazono's teachings were deeply ingrained in the hearts of each Vietnamese Aikidoist, including General Chief of Staff of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.

In 1964, Sensei Dang Thong Tri, was invited to the United States to teach Aikido. He transferred the teaching leadership to Sensei Dang Thong Phong. With his energetic will and ardent passion for the martial arts, especial-

ly Aikido, Sensei Dang Thong Phong expanded his martial arts over all of South Vietnam. At the end of 1974, almost all provinces of South Vietnam possessed Aikido Schools. Classes were conducted in the morning, afternoon and evening. Sensei Dang Thong Phong was on his feet eight hours a day teaching the military, as well as civilians at the "Home" Dojo at 94 Phan Thanh Gian Street. In addition, Aikido was being taught at two famous High Schools for girls, Gia-Long and Trung-Vuong, Petrus Ky and Chu-Van-An boys' High Schools, the Central Custom House, the Cultural Center, the City Police Department Head Quarters, the Oriental Aikido Dojo, Duy-Tan Youth Movement Center, Cong-Hoa Stadium, as well as in many other cities.



Sensei Dang Thong Phong and his very first Judo and Aikido Dojo in 1963, Saigon, Viet Nam.

Sensei Dang Thong Phong shouldered the responsibility of producing excellent close-combat soldiers for the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces. As a consequence, he was given the supreme position of the Master of Martial Arts in the R.V.N.A.F. He was the Director of Military Martial Arts and Physical Education School where Martial Arts instructors were trained.

During the war, Sensei Dang Thong Phong's expertise, extensive knowledge in theory, as well as practice in the martial arts were indispensable to the R.V.N.A.F. It was understood that many of the battles in Vietnam were not fought on defined "front lines," and it was essential that all soldiers be trained in martial arts in order to be successful in close-combat anywhere.

In addition, his presence in all the R.V.N.A.F. Martial Arts arenas was sine-qua-non. He alone was the technical commissioner of Martial Arts for the R.V.N.A.F. and the General Martial Arts Association. He was the Head of the Close Combat instructions team at Thu-Duc Reserve Officers School and technical assistant of Aikido for the National Military Academy, 5th and 18th Army Divisions, 4th Air Force Division and Aikido Instructor of the R.V.N. Women's Military School.

Being multi-talented and energetic, he was present at most of the Martial Art Exhibitions in the entire country of South Vietnam. At

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# CUỘC ĐỜI VÕ SƯ ĐẶNG THÔNG PHONG GẮN LIỀN VỚI VÕ THUẬT

Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong sinh ngày 10 tháng 02 năm 1935 là người con thứ 6 trong gia đình 7 người. Ông có vóc dáng đặc biệt thấp và nhỏ người, khi bước lên sân tập mọi người đều có cảm tưởng là một người Nhật Bản, với điệu bộ uy nghiêm nhưng tấm lòng luôn mở rộng của ông làm nhiều người cảm phục.

Ông bắt đầu học võ năm 1950 về 2 bộ môn Judo và Thiếu Lâm tại Hội Võ Thuật Hàn Bái Đường. Đầu năm 1958 bắt đầu học Aikido với người anh là Võ sư Đặng Thông Trị. Ông đam mê võ thuật hơn tất cả thứ gì trên

Đến năm 1960, Việt Nam được tiếp nhận một vinh dự lớn: Võ sư Mutsuro Nakazono từ Nhật qua giúp phong trào Aikido được tiến mạnh hơn. Ông là người có công lớn trong những bước đầu để đặt nền móng vững chắc cho môn phái tại Việt Nam. Ông cũng là vị Thầy khả kính đã hết lòng truyền thụ võ công cao đẳng cho Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong.

Năm 1964, Võ sư Đặng Thông Trị được mời qua Mỹ huấn luyện nên đã giao lại quyền lãnh đạo phong trào Aikido Việt Nam cho Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong.

## TRÊN ĐÀ PHÁT TRIỂN

Với ý chí cương quyết, với lòng nhiệt thành say mê võ thuật, và với một sự trân trọng đặc biệt đối với môn phái Aikido, võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã phát triển môn phái này rộng rãi trên toàn quốc. Cho đến cuối năm 1974, rải rác khắp nơi trong nước, các phòng tập Aikido mà Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong kính cẩn gọi là “Đạo-đường” đã mọc lên, hoạt động liên tục với các lớp sáng, chiều, tối...

Tại Thủ đô Sài Gòn, ngoài Trung Tâm Aikido Việt Nam, còn có phòng tập Trường Nữ Trung học Gia Long nổi tiếng nhiều hoa khôi nhất nước, Trường Nữ Trung học Trưng Vương, hai Trường Nam Trung học Pétrus Ký và Chu Văn An, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế, Centre Culturiste, Nha Cảnh Sát Đô Thành, Đạo đường Aikido Đông Phương, Trung tâm sinh hoạt Thanh niên Duy Tân, Vận động trường Cộng Hòa v.v...

Trong Quân đội, các Quân trường, Học viện, đơn vị thuộc Quân lực Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã đảm trách những chức vụ tối cao về võ thuật trong lãnh vực lãnh đạo và huấn luyện. Ông là giám đốc võ thuật Trường Võ thuật và Thể dục Quân sự Thủ Đức, Trưởng chuyên đào tạo cán bộ Huấn luyện viên võ thuật cho các đơn vị Quân đội, Ủy viên kỹ thuật của Tổng hội võ thuật Quân lực Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Huấn luyện viên trưởng, Cận chiến, cố vấn kỹ thuật Aikido cho Sư đoàn 18 bộ binh, Sư đoàn 5 bộ binh, Sư đoàn 4 Không quân, Huấn luyện viên Aikido Trường Nữ Quân Nhân Quân Lực Việt Nam Cộng Hòa.

## ĐA NĂNG VÀ NĂNG ĐỘNG

Vào thập niên 60, trong các cuộc biểu diễn võ thuật trên toàn quốc, người xem thường thấy một người thấp nhỏ, luôn luôn quật ngã và đánh té một người khổng lồ, đó là Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong và Uke của ông là Võ sư



Biểu diễn Aikido tại Hội Việt Mỹ (1968) Võ Sư Đặng Thông Phong trao cờ kỷ niệm cho ông Hồ Thối Sang Thứ Trưởng Giáo Dục.

đời này, ông có thể nhin một bữa ăn chứ không thể bỏ một buổi tập nào.

Năm 1958, Võ Sư Đặng Thông Trị từ Pháp trở về Việt Nam, mang một món quà tuyệt diệu cho người Việt Nam, đó là môn võ thuật Aikido. Hội Hàn Bái Đường, một Trường chuyên dạy võ thuật kỳ cựu nhất đã mời ông đến dạy cho một số môn sinh cao cấp.

Cũng năm ấy, phòng tập Aikido đầu tiên tại Việt Nam được thành lập, chót vót trên lầu 3, cao ốc số 94 đường Phan Thanh Giản, Sài Gòn. Võ đường ấy là “cái nhà của Aikido Việt Nam”, dù cho bao nhiêu tang thương biến đổi xảy ra trên đất nước, và là Trung tâm Aikido duy nhất tại Việt Nam được Tổ sư Morihei Ueshiba và Tổng Đoàn Aikido Thế giới (Aikikai Foundation) chính thức công nhận cho đến năm 1975, là năm Cộng sản Bắc-Việt thôn tính miền Nam.

Người “quản gia” trung kiên của “cái nhà” này là Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong.



Judo Nguyễn Hữu Huy. Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong sử dụng đòn thế kỹ thuật Aikido trong các cuộc biểu diễn, nói lên sự uyển chuyển, nhẹ nhàng và hữu hiệu của môn phái này. Vì thế, giới báo chí Anh ngữ tại Việt Nam lúc bấy giờ gọi ông là “Little Powerful Man”.

Trong biểu diễn, huấn luyện và phát triển, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã hết lòng phát động và giới thiệu môn Aikido, cho nên nhiều người tưởng rằng ông chỉ chuyên về Aikido mà thôi.

Sự thật, ông là một tài năng đa dạng về võ thuật. Thời niên thiếu, ông học Thiếu Lâm với Võ sư Vũ Bá Oai, Judo với Võ sư Bác sĩ Nguyễn Anh Tài, Võ sư Mutsuro Nakazono, Phạm Đặng Cao, Zonca, Ivers, Takata và Morioka, 2 vị này từ Nam Vang qua Sài Gòn để dạy bổ túc cho Judoka Việt Nam.

Về Aikido, ông được hân hạnh thụ giáo trực tiếp với các Võ sư Nhật Bản danh tiếng quốc tế như Võ sư Mutsuro Nakazono, Nobuyoshi Tamura, Tadashi Abe. Ông phải làm việc thật vất vả trong 2 năm liền, dành được một số tiền lớn để sang Nhật. Năm 1967, ông sang Tokyo tu nghiệp tại Tổ đường Hombu Dojo, lúc Tổ sư còn sanh tiền. Trực tiếp thụ giáo với Tổ sư và Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba một thời gian và tốt nghiệp Đệ tam đẳng huyền đai tại đây. Sau khi về nước, ông được Tổ Sư Morihei Ueshiba và Kisshomaru Ueshiba cấp giấy chứng nhận, Đại diện cho Tenshinkai để phát triển môn phái Aikido tại Việt Nam trên tinh thần Hòa bình và Tình thương... Cũng nên biết Tổ sư đã đặt tên cho chi phái Aikido Việt Nam là Tenshinkai vào thập niên 60.

Về nước, sau chuyến đi lịch sử này, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong thành lập Tổng cuộc Aikido Việt Nam. Ông được quý vị võ sư trong môn phái ân cần giao phó chức vụ Chủ tịch Tổng Cuộc. Thời gian trước ngày thành lập Tổng Cuộc, mỗi khi có võ sinh đủ trình độ thi lên Đai đen, Việt Nam phải mời các võ sư Nhật qua làm Giám khảo, vì thế có lúc cho tới 2-3 năm mới có một kỳ thi Đai đen.

Sau khi Tổng cuộc được thành lập, theo ủy nhiệm của Hombu Dojo, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong được phép cấp Đai đen đến 2 đẳng.

Nguyệt san Võ thuật, tờ tạp chí chuyên đề Võ thuật duy nhất của Việt Nam trước năm 1975, đã viết: “Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong từ ngày nhận chức Chủ tịch Tổng Cuộc đã hết lòng lo cho tương lai của môn phái và để hết phần tâm trí còn lại trau dồi đạo đức và tài năng của mình” (VÕ THUẬT số 11, ngày 01-11-1969).

Ngoài Thiếu Lâm, Judo, Aikido, ông còn học Taekwondo từ năm 1964 đến 1974 với các võ sư Đại Hàn trong phái đoàn Quân đội Đại Hàn sang tham chiến tại Việt Nam. Năm 1967, do lời mời của Trung tướng Choi

Hong Hi, Chủ tịch Tổng cuộc Taekwondo quốc tế, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong sang thăm viếng và quan sát tổ chức Taekwondo tại Seoul, Thủ đô của Đại Hàn.

Năm 1969, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong là nhà điều dắt Phái đoàn võ sĩ Taekwondo Việt Nam sang tham dự Giải vô địch Taekwondo Đông Nam Á Châu kỳ I tại Hồng Kông, mang về cho đất nước những vinh quang và thắng lợi cực kỳ to lớn: chỉ có 5 võ sĩ thi đấu mà đoạt 7 huy chương vàng, 2 bạc, 2 đồng.

Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong còn là Tổng Thư ký Tổng Cuộc Taekwondo Việt Nam và Tổng Cuộc Judo Việt Nam, Trọng tài Quốc gia của cả 2 Tổng Cuộc này, Hội trưởng Hội Aikido & Judo Việt Nam và Chủ tịch Tổng Cuộc Aikido Việt Nam từ 1967-1975. Ông đã đạt được số đẳng cao nhất tại Việt Nam về 3 môn phái: Aikido (5 đẳng), Judo (5 đẳng) và Taekwondo (6 đẳng). Võ sư còn học Kendo với Võ sư Tomoni Sudo, tùy viên văn hóa Nhật tại Sài Gòn. Tổng kết thời gian từ 1964 đến 1975, tại Việt Nam đã có khoảng 20 ngàn hội viên Aikido, trong đó có 70 đai đen. Thành quả vĩ đại này là công sức của nhiều người, nhưng chắc không ai có thể phủ nhận được phần đóng góp to lớn nhất vẫn là của Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong.

## PHÁT TRIỂN AIKIDO TẠI HOA KỲ

Ngày 30-4-1975, Cộng sản Bắc Việt dẫn quân vào chiếm Thủ đô Sài Gòn. Tất cả quân nhân, công chức, đảng phái của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa bị bắt nhốt, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong là một sĩ quan ưu tú của Quân đội Cộng hòa cũng chịu chung số phận với các bạn đồng ngũ. Sau 3 năm tù, ông đã vượt ngục trốn về Sài Gòn tìm đường vượt biên. Mười bảy lần trốn ra đi, nhiều lần bị



Võ Sư Đặng Thông Phong và phòng Aikido của Không Đoàn 4 Không Quân, phi trường Bình Thủy, Cần Thơ (1970)



bắt lại, bị giam và lao động 45 tháng.

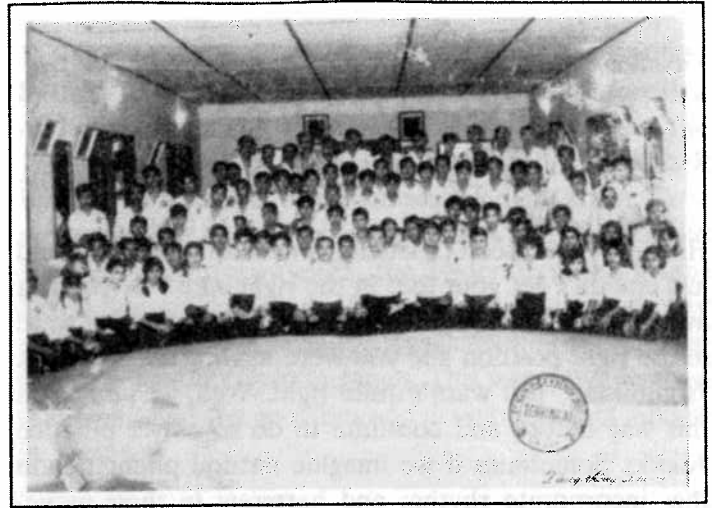
Năm 1983, ông được thả về. Nghĩ đến con em Việt Nam đang thiếu người dạy dỗ về tinh thần và đạo lý, ông lại tiếp tục dạy Aikido tại Võ đường Quận Bình Thạnh và Quận 5 Sài Gòn.

Năm 1985, thành công trong chuyến vượt biển lần thứ 18. Ông đến được đảo Galang thuộc nước Indonesia. Một năm sau ông đến định cư tại Hoa Kỳ, Tiểu bang California.

Vừa chân ướt chân ráo đến Hoa Kỳ, ông được Hội Budo Educational Center ở Sacramento mời dạy suốt ngày 26-4-1986, ngày Giỗ Tổ sư Morihei Ueshiba. Ông cũng được Aikido Institute ở Oakland (California) mời dạy một đêm. Sau đó, phòng tập Aikido Alberta, Edmonton, Canada mời dạy Seminar vào năm 1986 và 1990, Tổng Cuộc Taekwondo Canada (ITF) cũng đã mời Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong sang dạy Self-Defense cho 2 Khóa Đại nâu và Đại đen vào năm 1987. Đến năm 1990, Ban Tổ chức Giải Vô địch Taekwondo Quốc Tế lần thứ 7 (ITF) được tổ chức tại Montreal Canada cũng đã mời Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong sang dạy Self-Defense cho các nhà diu đất và Võ sư Taekwondo của nhiều quốc gia đến tham dự.

Năm 1987, mặc dù vừa đến Hoa Kỳ không bao lâu, cuộc sống chưa được ổn định, nhưng với quyết tâm và lòng say mê truyền bá Aikido, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã cố gắng lập một Phòng tập mang tên Aikido Tenshinkai Dojo tại thành phố Garden Grove, California. Hoạt động được 2 tháng thì chủ đất đòi lại phòng để làm việc khác. Đến giữa tháng 01-1988, Phòng tập thứ 2 được thành hình tại thành phố Westminster, California, mang tên Budo Center dạy 2 bộ môn Judo và Aikido. Văn phòng Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai đặt tại đây. Hoạt động được 4 năm đã có 900 người ghi danh theo họ gồm hầu hết các sắc dân sống tại Mỹ, nhưng chủ yếu là người Mỹ và Việt Nam. Số hiện diện đến tập thường xuyên lên đến 180 người. Võ đường hoạt động liên tục 7 ngày một tuần lễ. Đây cũng là Võ đường trung ương của Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai. Hiện nay Budo Center dồn mọi nỗ lực để phát triển môn phái Aikido.

Sau năm 1975, hàng triệu người Việt bỏ nước ra đi, hiện có mặt khắp nơi trên Năm Châu. Trong số đó, nhiều người là học trò của võ sư Đặng Thông Phong. Sống nơi đất mới, họ đã mở Võ đường Aikido để truyền bá như tại Pháp, Phi Châu, Hoa Kỳ, Canada, South Pacific... kể cả những học trò của Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong còn ở lại Việt Nam cũng đang tiếp tục nối gót theo ông để truyền bá Aikido. Tất cả đều nằm trong hệ thống Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai do ông lãnh đạo.



Võ Sư Đặng Thông Phong và phòng Aikido trường Sĩ Quan Trù Bị Thủ Đức (1971)

Tổng cộng số võ sinh của Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai lên hơn 2,000 người thực sự đang luyện tập rải rác khắp võ đường trên toàn thế giới.

Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã tham dự nhiều lớp Aikido Seminar của các **Shihan** như: Shoji Nishio, Morihiro Saito, Matasake Fujita, Y. Yamada, T.K. Chiba được tổ chức tại Hoa Kỳ.

Hơn 40 năm luyện tập và truyền bá võ thuật với nhiều bộ môn như: Thiếu Lâm với nhiều hệ phái khác nhau, Judo, Kendo, Taekwondo với đẳng cấp cao nhất nước Việt Nam, nhưng ông đã quyết tâm chọn Aikido để truyền bá vì đó cũng là lý tưởng của đời ông. Tháng 11-1991, Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong đã được hân hạnh tiếp nhận một vinh dự lớn, Tổng Cuộc Aikido thế giới do Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba đặt giấy mời Võ sư tham dự Lễ kỷ niệm 50 năm thành lập Aikikai Foundation và 60 năm thành lập Hombu Dojo tại Tokyo Nhật Bản ngày 17-11-1991. Ông là người Việt Nam duy nhất được mời với tư cách là Chủ tịch Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai tại Hoa Kỳ.

Ước vọng của Võ sư Đặng Thông Phong là đóng góp thật nhiều vào sự phát triển và bành trướng Aikido trong khoảng thời gian còn lại của cuộc đời. Một ngày nào đó trong tương lai có thể thành lập một viện Aikido trên một khu đất rộng rãi, u nhàn, để làm nơi tu dưỡng cho những người mong mỏi đi theo con đường Hòa bình và Tình thương do Tổ sư Morihei Ueshiba vạch ra, con đường đưa đến Hạnh phúc và Giác ngộ cho toàn thể mọi người trên thế giới.

Viết theo tài liệu Tổng Cuộc Aikido Tenshinkai

## SEEING THE WAVES, HURRICANES, AND WATER HOSES

by Sean Caffee, Shodan

Have you ever been practicing an Aikido technique and just couldn't get your feet in the right spot? Or you felt awkward and uncoordinated? Or, maybe, your feet were in the right position and you were moving correctly but "something" just wasn't quite right. Well, we've all felt this way before and continue to do so as we practice Aikido. Sometimes if we imagine natural phenomenon that incorporate rhythm and harmony in their movements, it can help us to visualize the correct movements for our techniques. Not only can they help us visualize techniques, but natural phenomenon can help put us into the proper state of mind also.

One of my favorite visualizations is the ocean wave. It has natural rhythm and energy. Techniques that I use this image for are Sayu Undo and Tenchi Nage. Both techniques begin with the Nage stepping off of the direct line of the attack as the Uke continues his forward motion. At the beginning of the movement, there is almost a feeling of an undertow lifting the Uke, like the bottom of a wave pulls at your feet just before it crashes on the beach. After the initial movement, the Nage uses his arms to continue the wave's movement as it breaks on the attacker, just as the wave builds up until it crashes on the beach..

For techniques such as Kota Gaeshi that involve the Uke spiraling around the Nage, the hurricane serves as an excellent visualization. As you know, the middle or eye of the hurricane is calm, whereas it is on the outside edges of the hurricane that things are whipping around at tremendous speeds out of control. You should feel like this when doing Kota Gaeshi. You are the center of the movement and you are in control.

In Aikido, many times our arms are in a position known as the "unbendable arm position." It is that position that your arm is in when it is almost fully extended but is still slightly bent. It is a very natural position and one that your arm will go to when relaxed. While performing Aikido techniques, you want to extend energy or Ki through your arms (and throughout your body). To help yourself extend Ki through your arm, try imagining your arm as a hose and KI as the water running through that hose. As you all have experienced, a hose with water running through it is much harder to bend than an empty one. If you practice extending Ki when you move, it will greatly

improve your techniques.

I hope the examples that I have used may explain how visualizing natural images can help improve your techniques. Actually, any image that helps you "see" the movement more clearly is great; it doesn't have to be natural phenomenon. The images that I have used as examples will continue to help me as I practice the many complicated techniques of Aikido.

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### DEAR FRIENDS

(Cont. from page 12)

*Aikido is a philosophy of harmony. It is not a philosophy of combatants. Not only is it a martial art and a philosophy, it is a science. Indeed, if you make a correct move in Aikido, your duelist will fall easily. You should ask, "Why does a duelist fall?" You shall see that your duelist's gravitation has moved away from its center. Falling is inevitable. Gravitation and center of force are parts of physics. It is a science. It is our Hara (oneness). It is a straight line from one toe to the other of the two feet. If the Hara is moved slightly away from the straight line, one could lose his or her balance. The center of gravity is lost and one can easily fall. When one's center of gravity is lost, the individual is no longer able to endure a push, no matter how light the push. Losing gravity is losing the balanced position between oneself and the universe or nature. This illustrates clearly the relation between oneself and the universe. Many have not perceived this philosophy. We always believe that there are boundaries between oneself and the universe.*

*You have come a long way! Study it; Train continuously to perfect your martial art. It will enable you to live a peaceful and compassionate life. When I mention the term "The Highest Perfection", I do not relate it to gaining the rank in Aikido. Even if you can move to the 10th rank physically but have not absorbed the philosophy of oneness, or the relation between oneself and the universe, you have not attained the "Highest Perfection." Moving up the rank only means that you have acquired Aikido technique of softness over hardness, weakness over strength, calmness over anger and less over more. Take the "less over more" principle for example. It does not mean to take one against many. It means that if the UKE uses more force (to fight) this will only enable the NAGE to easily defeat the UKE and the NAGE uses less force to reach harmony. This is not the essence of Aikido technique. The essence of Aikido is the ability to understand the harmony between one's own*

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## ABOUT SENSEI ...

(Cont. from page 6)

many of these exhibitions, spectators saw a short man, Sensei Dang Thong Phong easily throwing, and pinning a giant opponent, Nguyen Huu Huy, a teacher of Judo. The techniques Sensei Dang Thong Phong used at the demonstrations were the "TE's" and "WAZA's" of Aikido. He wanted to display the suppleness, softness and efficiency of Aikido to those watching.

At exhibitions, as in instruction and development of Martial Arts, Sensei Dang Thong Phong always introduced and emphasized Aikido. This led the spectators think that he only specialized in Aikido. In fact, he had a great deal of experience in many martial arts.

In his youth, he learned Shaolin from Master Vu Ba Oai who was the best disciple of the Genius Martial Arts Master Han-Bai. He studied Judo with Nguyen Anh Tai and Master Mutsuro Nakazono. Master Nakazono was the favorite disciple of Grand Master Jigoro Kano. In addition, he trained with Judo teachers Pham Dang Cao, Zonca, Ivers, Takata and Morioka. Takata and Morioka came from Phnompenh to perfect Vietnamese Judokas.

He studied Aikido with Sensei Dang Thong Tri, Masters Mutsuro Nakazono, Nobuyoshi Tamura and Tadashi Abe at Saigon Vietnam (1958-1964).

Sensei had to work hard for two consecutive years to save enough money to go to Japan to study and improve his Aikido.

In 1967, he returned to Tokyo, Japan with the intent to improve his Aikido techniques. There he studied at the Hombu Dojo with O'Sensei Morihei Ueshiba and his son Kisshomaru Ueshiba. After returning home, Sensei received a certificate issued by O'Sensei and his son recognizing him as an official representative of Aikido. It also gave Sensei Dang Thong Phong an official blessing to propagate Aikido in Vietnam in the spirit of peace and love from Tenshinkai, a name given to him in 1960 by O'Sensei Morihei Ueshiba.

After that historic trip, Sensei Dang Thong Phong endeavored to establish the Vietnamese National Aikido

Federation. When this was established, he was entrusted by the Vietnamese Aikido Practitioners with the function of President of the Federation. However, before the Federation was established, all students testing for a black belt had to be judged by Japanese Aikido Masters. Consequently, the Masters were invited to preside over the tests. With this completed, the Federation was established. Sensei Dang Thong Phong was given the authority to issue first and second degree black belts by a delegation from the Hombu Dojo in Japan. This was the milestone that facilitated the activities and development of Aikido in Vietnam.

It was written in "the only one magazine specially devoted to martial arts in Vietnam before 1975", that since receiving the function of President of the Vietnamese National Aikido Federation, Sensei had been trying to do his best to propagate Aikido from Saigon to the countryside. It seems that he spent all his time thinking about Aikido. All his efforts were channeled into perfecting the situa-



An Aikido class at the 18th Division in 1971, Vietnam

tion of Aikido in Vietnam. All his energy went into elevating the position of Aikido in his country. The ambition to make all Vietnamese people practitioners of Aikido was seen very clearly in him. He devoted himself, heart and soul to Aikido. In his heart and mind, he believed there was nothing else other than Aikido. Notwithstanding his devotion he never boasted of his Aikido talents. What people saw in him was modesty, politeness and generosity. Smugness has no place in his

mind. His earnest desire was merely to improve his knowledge of martial arts.

As written in foregoing magazine, Sensei Dang Thong Phong studied many other kinds of martial arts. Besides Shaolin, Judo and Aikido, he also studied Taekwondo for ten years. He learned Taekwondo from different Korean teachers in Korean Army Divisions participating in the Vietnam war side by side with the United States Army. In 1967 he was invited by Division General Choi Hong Hi, President of the International Taekwondo Federation, to go to Seoul, South Korea to visit the organization of Taekwondo team participating in the First South Asian

(Continued on page 14)



## THE ROAD TO BLACK BELT

*by Quang-Anh Tran*

The seriousness of the dojo, and the tedious sounds of people falling on the mat had drowned my mind as I sat listening to the instructor explain a concept in Aikido with a couple of other beginning students. I could not understand the ideas and philosophies of Aikido, then. All I could comprehend was that each time Sensei had demonstrated a technique, I saw him turn in several circles, and with a wave of his hand, the Uke (the person who becomes the recipient of his or her opponent's strategy of Aikido defense) fell with a loud bang onto the mat. I would not have seen the essence of Aikido's techniques had it not been for that day when I was called up to fall for Sensei Phong.

As I stood up in front of what seemed like thousands of people, I saw their faces and eyes looking at me. The Sensei had always had this humoring smile, as if he knew how I felt, and what I was thinking. I tried extremely hard to stay calm, but my heart was pounding, and my hands were numb as if they were dipped in cold ice.

Nevertheless, I walked slowly up to the middle of the mat, face to face with the Sensei. I thought to myself, "What must I do now?" The Sensei, easing my fears, looked at me and bowed. Of course, I bowed in return, though with an insecure feeling of what I was doing. He instructed me to grab on to his wrist as tight as I possibly could. I did as he said, but surprisingly, I felt an incredible force from his extended fingers leading my whole body off balance into a rotational spin. My whole body practically flew in circles. I felt so helpless because I had no control what so ever over my body which was still spinning. Immediately I could feel the gradual end of the circular pull. I thought that was the final part of the technique, but Sensei further waved his hands towards my face and I dropped onto the mat, surprised that I was still alive.

Perhaps, the most interesting thing about that incident was that Sensei Phong used the minimum amount of strength to get me down. The technique, though it may sound complicated, took place in a couple of seconds. I can still remember him neutralizing the force that I pushed onto his wrist. My view point about Aikido was different after this incident. This experience was just a fraction of Aikido's philosophies. I knew I had much, much more to learn... and learning, I am.

## A SMALL THOUGHT

*by Quang Nguy*

In the course of your Aikido training, you will often hear Dang Thong Phong Sensei say, "We need to learn with sincere heart, and the open mind of a beginner." This is very true in all forms of learning and training. If we don't, we will surely disrupt the long and joyous journey that is Aikido. Closed minds and short cuts lead to misconceptions.

Regardless of the student's experience, or proficiency level in another martial art, there will always be advantages and disadvantages..

Experience teaches that moderation is beneficial. An experienced person may have an advantage when he/she sees an important point of a technique and comprehends it a little faster than the person with no prior experience. However, that same person may have greater difficulty with other techniques because of habits learned which block him or her from assimilating the new form. Also, he/she may miss many important things that look too simple at first glance. In contrast, the person with less experience in martial arts will encounter many different obstacles. This is because everything is new to them. This is positive since he/she does not have habits or misconceptions which may get in the way. It is not unusual to see the more experienced person advance very smoothly for a while, and then get stuck and very frustrated to the point they are at quitting. On the other hand, you may see a beginner have all the difficulties of most beginners right from the start, learning step by step..

There are many rewarding challenges lying ahead throughout the Aikido journey. Actually, what really matters is that the student prepares with "an open mind and a sincere heart", and in this way, he/she can begin to recognize his/her strong and weak points. In the way of Aikido, let us be reminded to always have a beginner's mind, inside or outside the dojo. There is so much to learn and it's all just too good to miss!



## OFF THE MAT

(Cont. from page 3)

friends now - people I would have never known. I'm just starting, but I've learned a lot. I feel I must practice more!

Sensei Phong went to Japan to the 50th Anniversary of the Aikikai Foundation, with great honor. Sensei Phong was very happy and all the students were happy for him. He was with the top Aikido people from all over the world. When he got back the First Aikido Tenshinkai Federation committee meeting was held.

Now it's winter and the brown belt's are getting ready for their promotion test to Shodan. Also, there will be a demonstration for the 4th Anniversary of the Budo Center at the end of January. I feel I've learned so much these past months, I've made a lot of new friends and I'm feeling better about myself as I progress. I'm getting far more out of Aikido than I'm putting in. All I have to do is keep showing up to practice with an open mind and a good attitude. Maybe, just maybe, I'll be one of those brown belts getting ready for the Black Belt test. Someday, just maybe....

See you on the mat!!

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## DEAR FRIENDS

(Cont. from page 10)

*force and the Natural Force. We are all one. There is no reason why we cannot love all the natural creatures as we love our own self. Recognizing this, Aikido is called a martial art of love.*

*You are all members of the Association of Heaven/Soul. Heaven/Soul is generous. It loves all. It treats everything equally and fairly. All creatures are the same. A Pope, a Dali Lama, or a Venerable person are all the same. When it comes for "their time," they will die. Heaven/Soul would let it be. A bandit, a murderer, a ferocious tiger, a venomous snake, no matter how dangerous they are, if their time has not come, they will not die. Heaven/Soul would let them live. Heaven/Soul neither fight for the good nor abandon the evil because this is "DO" (The Way). It is the nature of both good and evil. "DO" is the place where happiness is preserved and catastrophe is contained. You are member of Tenshinkai Association and are to strive to understand Aikido philosophy clearly and absolutely. Never take anyone as your opponent so as you strive to eliminate that person like an enemy. Never fight over anything or seek to kill anyone. Remember the principal of Aikido. Never! Never, in the name of financial gain, social status, or*

*privileges conduct a bad gesture while putting aside the teaching of Aikido! Remember the stories of the "Breaking of the Chopsticks" or "Tiger and the Farmer." Band together and teach what you have learned to all students of Aikido. There is a Latin proverb: "Qui Dicet Dicit," which means "Whoever teaches, learns." While teaching you will upgrade your knowledge, and progress. There is another Latin Proverb which says, "Qui nonproficit, deficit," meaning "Who does not progress will regress."*

*You are a disciple of Aikido, the martial art of Love. Your purpose is to live the life of a disciple of Aikido, a peaceful and moral life. Show love. Never use force to suppress others even in a contest. Because in Aikido we understand this Latin Proverb: "Violenta non durant." This means, "Violence will never endure."*

*I wish you success in your training and happiness to your family and loved ones.*

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## DANG THONG PHONG

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### "INNER INSIGHTS"

(Cont. from page 2)

The sensei said, "learning must take place in a positive way. No good learning takes place when there is a negative / condemning atmosphere."

I searched my memory and realized that my defensive feelings and sense of retreating inward prevented me from receiving instruction or communication. These were the same feelings that I experienced often with my father. As a consequence of this early learning and subsequent experience I discovered that I often retreated inward and was inwardly defensive trying to protect myself from a perceived threat. I also realized that this was an inner process and my exterior did not reflect what was happening to the untrained and inexperienced observer.

Many hours of practice have occurred since my second Aikido class. I am becoming a little more confident and relaxed in my movements on the mat. In addition, I have noticed that off the mat and outside the class my movements have become more smooth and graceful. Beside this, I have become more aware when I am moving inward toward a defensive posture. More than ever I understand some of the effects of my early childhood learning and how it is "in my cells".

I am thankful for Aikido and Sensei Phong, and realize that I have a great deal to learn. I am looking forward to these life transforming lessons..

## ABOUT SENSEI ...

(Cont. from page 11)

Taekwondo Championship in Hong Kong. The team brought great honor to Vietnam. The five competitors won seven gold medals, two silver and two bronze medals.

Sensei Dang Thong Phong was also the Secretary General of the Vietnamese National Taekwondo Federation and the Vietnamese Judo Federation. He was also the National Umpire of those two Federations. In addition, he was the Chairman of the Vietnamese Aikido-Judo Association from 1964 to 1975. He earned the highest degree in three different Martial Arts in the Republic of Vietnam: Aikido (fifth dan), Judo (5th dan) and Taekwondo (6th dan). He has also studied Kendo with Master Tomoni Sudo. A certificate of excellence was issued to him after these studies.

From 1964 to 1975, Aikido in Vietnam flourished under the direction of Sensei Dang Thong Phong. there were approximately 20,000 members, 70 of them reaching the degree black belt. Many members contributed to this success. However, no one could deny that the greatest contribution came from Sensei Dang Thong Phong.

### SENSEI DANG THONG PHONG IN THE UNITED STATES

April 1975, South Vietnam was militarily occupied by the North Vietnamese Communists. Sensei Dang Thong Phong was once a part of the Nationalist Regime. He was imprisoned for three years together with his companion-in-arms before he escaped and returned to Saigon where he lived as a fugitive and awaited the opportunity to flee Vietnam. He unsuccessfully attempted seventeen times to depart and was finally arrested and was sentenced to forty-two months in prison.

After being released from prison in 1984, he deplored the fact that people in the city, especially the youth, were living in vice. Eight year old children were smoking, twelve year old children were drinking beer, as well as other alcoholic beverages. Many teenagers were addicted

to many different drugs, such as opium, heroin and marijuana. Young people were committing robbery and other crimes. Sensei Dang Thong Phong determined to fight against the vice and reclaim the pitiful children by reorganizing a team of Aikido instructors. This team soon separated into different groups, teaching Aikido in gymnasiums in various districts in the city. His dojo at 9 Phan-Thanh-Gian Street had been taken by the communist authorities, consequently he could not even approach it. He had to ride a bicycle almost 30 kilometers to teach Aikido at Fifth District in Cholon Binh-Thuan District in Gia-Dinh. In this way, he gathered some thousand youths to practice Aikido.

In 1985, seeing that the question of teaching could be passed on to his former students holding black belts, Dang Thong Phong returned to his plan of seeking freedom and family. On this his 18th attempt, he successfully escaped and became a boatman landing on Galang Island of Indonesia. One year later, he journeyed to Sacramento California where he joined his beloved wife and his two sons who had resettled in California in 1975. Eleven years of longing, loneliness and anxiety. And there also, he rejoined his brother, Sensei Dang Thong Tri, who had become an instructor of Tai Chi Chuan.



An Aikido class at the main Dojo of Aikido Tenshinkai Federation in 1972, Saigon, Vietnam

After Sensei Dang Thong Phong's personal resettlement was complete, he received many requests to teach. First the Budo Educational Center

at Sacramento invited him to teach a seminar on April 26, 1986, the memorial day of Grand Master Morihei Ueshiba's death. He was also invited by the Aikido Institute in Oakland to teach for evening. Soon after, the Alberta Aikido Dojo in Edmonton, Canada invited him to teach seminars in 1986 and 1990. In addition, the Taekwondo Federation at Quebec requested that he teach Aikido self defense classes to brown and black belts. In 1989, the Committee of the Organization of International Taekwondo championship in Montreal Canada sought him to teach Aikido to Taekwondo leaders and teachers from different nations.

In 1987, after two years, Sensei Dang Thong Phong was feeling like a stranger in a strange land. However, dealing with many obstacles he was able to open a dojo called



"Aikido Tenshinkai" in Garden Grove, California. But, the dojo did not last long. The landlord reclaimed the house for his personal business. A second dojo was set up in the first week of January 1988 at Westminster, California with the name "Budo Center" which was also the Home of the "Tenshinkai Federation Office." It was here that Sensei Dang Thong Phong began teaching Aikido and Judo in the morning, afternoon and evening seven days a week. Within only four years, nine-hundred students enrolled in classes. The students were native born to a variety of different countries besides Viet-Nam and the United States. One hundred and eighty of the original students remain at the Budo Center.

In October 1991, after being formally recognized by the Hombu Dojo of Japan, Aikido Tenshinkai Federation was officially in operation. At the Budo Center the only martial art taught is Aikido.

The fruit of his effort had finally been born. Sensei Dang Thong Phong was devoted more than ever to Aikido. For more than forty years of teaching the martial art styles of Shaolin, Judo, Kendo, Taikwando, Sensei has finally focused on instructing only Aikido. Morihei Ueshiba is his ideal. He possess deep respect because he learned Aikido directly from its founder at the Hombu Dojo. O'Sensei proved to him that Aikido is in deed the martial art of love in which there is no winner or loser. Sensei Dang Thong Phong manifests the same love in every Aikido class that he teaches. This is one reason why he was officially invited by Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, (President of International Aikido Federation in Tokyo Japan) to addent the 60th Anniversary of the Hombu Dojo.

Finally, Dang Thong Phong understands that Aikido is a limitless martial art. He often says, "The more I teach Aikido, the more I have to learn. My knowledge of Aikido is only a molecule of a grain of sand on the beach. One can say they understand Aikido only when they see themselves as No-Thing-ness; This is the Universe. In Aikido it is can be said that we unify our KI with the Natural KI or the cosmic power. This is "DO" and IT is OM-NIPOTENT. Do is love, peace and Justice. These three are indispensable factors that lead human beings to live in happiness. This is the philosophy of Aikido and is what O'Sensei Morihei Ueshiba taught his students.

Sensei Dang Thong Phong's dream is to contribute to the expansion of Aikido during the remainder of his life. He plans never to stop his study of Aikido. In addition , he would like to build an Aikido Institute on a large piece of

land away from noisy towns and struggling life. This Institute would be a "Home" for Aikido and a place where people from all over the world who are interested in Aikido could come and enjoy the "DO" of Aikido.

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## MY TRIP TO JAPAN

*(Cont. from page 5)*

After Sensei presented the gifts, Doshu invited us to a special dinner where we were to be honored guests. In reality it was Sensei who was to be honored and I felt like I was along for the ride. That evening there were so many Aikido masters from around the world. I felt that I should be serving dinner to them. At the dinner Sensei Phong was reunited with Nobuyoshi Tamura Sensei from Saigon, Vietnam.

The following day we returned to the Hombu Dojo for a 6:30 A.M. workout. Waka Sensei was leading the class. In Japan the belt are only white and black. My blue belt must have attracted some attention!

On the floor of the Dojo were tatami mats. They were much harder than the surface I was used to practicing on. Another difference in practice was the time spent with warm up exercises. At the Hombu Dojo the warm up time was much more brief. Almost the entire mat was full of black belts, some Shihan, 8th degree. I was paired with an instructor who showed me great care, friendliness and patience. The teaching at Hombu Dojo was very similar to Budo Center, very smooth and fluid movements.

The same day we went to Iwama to visit O'Sensei's original dojo and the keeper of the land, Saito Sensei..

Near the conclusion of our day we boarded a train for the four hour return ride to the hotel. We did not think of the fact that our visit included being in Japan during the week days. After riding for a short while the passenger doors opened and a rush of approximately 50 people pushed into the car. During the boarding, Sensei Phong and I were separated. At the next train stop 50 more people thrust into the train. We were packed too tight that if someone would happen to become faint they could not fall to the floor. I thought Orange County was crowded, its' nothing like Japan! The only way that our party could communicate was to yell out how many stops were left until we had to leave the train. Fortunately, prior to our last stop enough people left to Sensei and I could be reunited.

I found that eating in restaurants in Japan was extremely expensive. The least expensive dinner at the hotel coffee shop was thirty dollars! During a time when Sensei was out walking alone he found a noodle restaurant outside the hotel, it was only twenty dollars for all of us to eat.

On the day we were scheduled to leave Japan Sensei Phong and I wished that we had more time to work out at the Hombu Dojo.

The time passed too fast, recalling and writing about my trip with Sensei to Japan makes me think I will remember these experiences for a lifetime. The whole trip was an incredible experience, one which I will cherish my whole life.

Finally, I would say to the reader, "be kind to foreigners who cannot speak our language or read our signs. Help them if you can and be proud to be a part of Aikido Tenshinkai Federation." Not only did Dang Thong Phong Sensei receive International recognition, so did the Aikido Tenshinkai Federation. Please remember that any student who is a part of Aiki-Budo (Budo Center) receives top notch training. He or she would do well to think it a privilege to obtain Aikido training from Dang Thong Phong Sensei.

Thank you Sensei Phong for inviting me to accompany you to Japan. The Aikido Tenshinkai Federation and I are receiving a gift for a lifetime.



Sensei Dang Thong Phong and Jim Ogborn in a noodle soup shop - Tokyo, Japan.

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**AIKIDO TRAINING SCHEDULE**

|  |  |                                 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Monday<br>Wednesday<br>Friday              | 8 - 9:30 am<br><b>ADULTS</b>   |                                 |
| Monday<br>Tuesday<br>Thursday<br>Friday    | 5 - 6:30 pm<br><b>CHILDREN</b>   | 6:30 - 8:00 pm<br><b>ADULTS</b> |
| Monday<br>Tuesday<br>Wednesday<br>Thursday | 12 - 1 pm<br><b>PRIVATE and GROUP INSTRUCTION</b><br>General - Weapons - Self Defense Training |                                 |
| Sunday                                     | 8:45 - 9:50 am   | <b>ADVANCED</b>                 |
| Saturday<br>Sunday                         | 10 - 12 Noon   | <b>MIXED</b>                    |

合氣道

**I ♥ Aikido**