



Aikido Insights

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AIKIDO INSIGHTS

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 1994

YEAR OF THE DOGS

Editor's Note:



We have now entered life and training in the new year of 1994!

The staff of Aikido Insights hopes that your new year has begun successfully. For myself 1993 has been a very busy year. So much so that I must ask forgiveness for the absence of the summer and fall '93 editions of the newsletter. However, we are now into the new year of learning and growing.

I am excited to share that in the second month of this year is the 60th year of Dang Thong Phong, Sensei and we have planned a celebration. In February as part of Phong Sensei's birthday celebration, M. Fujita. Sensei is traveling from the Hombu Dojo in Tokyo, Japan. We are honored that he has accepted our invitation to come celebrate with us and teach Aikido for 2 days.

Another cause for celebration is the graduation to Shodan of Tam Huu Do, James Fisher David, and Frank M. Kane for their perseverance and hard work! Congratulations to each and every student for a his and her resolute persistence in sticking with practice. Not only does each student benefit in growing, he or she benefits other students by faithfully attending practice.

Finally, in this new year I want to encourage each student to strive toward following more closely our Sensei, Dang Thong Phong in learning harmony and peace; to grow in flexibility of mind and body. Growth occurs when each student practices each technique looking to learn something new about the technique, him, or herself and their partner even if the technique has been executed hundreds of repetitions. Most of all, I hope that each student would expand his or her interest and love of Aikido to his or her partner(s). This is not an easy task when our partner has performed a technique with less considerate gentleness because of conscious and/or unconscious issues. May that student, when he or she discovers that they are the one who has an unresolved issue by the response of partner(s) be open and flexible to seek amends, and help to facilitate growth in the gentle power of Aikido.

Jim Wenrick □

Congratulations !!!

Aikido Insights is proud to share the advancement to Shodan of

**Tam Huu Do
James Fisher David
Frank M. Kane**

Best wishes for your growth and continuing development in Aikido



Advancements

Kyu 6

- 1159. Tony Kames
- 1195. Hoang Vu Le
- 1179. Alan Young
- 1210. Chiko Wong
- 1202. Rachel Irene Casey
- 1205. Eric Raye
- 1212. David P. Bohannan
- 1121. George Nacouzi
- 1224. Michael Kim
- 1194. Jose A. (Tony) Del Pinal
- 1174. Gilbert Randall Penland
- 1150. (Tom) Thang Duy Nguyen
- 1138. Lu T. Do

Kyu 5

- 1003. Thuc Uyen Denise Nguyen
- Luong Ngoc Thai
- 1134. Michael L. Dotzenrod

Kyu 4

- 938. Mike Meezan
- 1052. Victor Moyano

Kyu 3

- 938. Howard Anderson

Kyu 2

- 888. Christiaan Adam Carrillo
- 1135. Scott Howard
- 864. Mark Hopkins
- 792. Thuan Q. Hong

Kyu 1

- 701. Andrew Avalos
- 705. Eric D. Womack
- 758. Pham Huy An



NEW YEAR CLASS

by Mike Meezan

Many Tenshinkai members began the year off right with a special class on Saturday, January 1st, 1994, New Year's Day. Master Phong had told us that it is a Vietnamese tradition to practice or do what you like doing best on New Year's Day and the rest of the year will follow suit. We all took his wise advice and despite more than a few bloodshot eyes from the previous night's revelry, warm smiles were in abundance.

We began the class as always with our warm-up exercises, rolling and high falls. Sensei Phong then took the mat to demonstrate a technique. As many of his students know, special occasions usually mean special techniques and today was no exception.

We enjoyed his demonstration of this new year Kokyu-Nage and practiced to make it our own. Many students said that this class felt more like a seminar than a normal class and Sensei Phong made us all feel especially welcome. Out from his bag of 10,000 techniques came another "special" one which we again practiced many times.

The end came too soon for all of us as we all sat and thanked Sensei Phong for a wonderful class. But, once again Sensei surprised everyone when he and Mrs. Phong brought out food and drink for all. There was quite a selection from which to choose and they were all delicious.

One by one we left our sensei, Master of Aikido, surprise, and hospitality. He helped us begin a new year with the right frame of mind, that of peace, harmony and love. From all that attended the New Years Day class, Thank You. □



WELCOME
MASATAKE FUJITA, SHIHAN
8TH DAN
GENERAL SECRETARY OF HOMBU DOJO
TO
TENSHINKAI AIKIDO FEDERATION
WESTMINSTER - CALIFORNIA

Masatake Fujita, 8th Dan, Aikikai Shihan and Administrative head of Aikikai Hombu Dojo. Joining the Aikikai since 1950's, Fujita Shihan is now one the major decision makers and has traveled extensively abroad. According to the Encyclopedia of Aikido, Aiki- News, Fujita Shihan is also served as Technical Director for the National Cultural Aikido Bond of the Nertherlands. He is also known for his powerful technique.

Masatake Fujita, Shihan will visit Tenshinkai Aikido Federation, Westminster, California around mid February 1994. During his visit, two seminars is planned to be on Saturday, February 12 and Sunday February 13 at Budo Center of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation in Westminster, California. For more information about this event, pleas call Dang Thong Phong Sensei at (714) 894-1003.

The Nature of Uke-Tori Relationship

by Tom Williams

The goal of Aikido is to become, for a moment, one blended whole, rather than two or more separate entities. In this way, each person becomes the living embodiment of In-Yo or Yin-Yang.

Aikido is the coming together of all elements in perfect harmony. O'Sensei said, "Enjoy yourself in training and strive to comprehend its true purpose."

To connect with this state of 'perfect unity,' each of us needs to work on unifying our ego states. Discard the idea of you and your partner as separate sides reacting to a situation. Instead, become the totality of the moment.

Let go of control and dominance; let go of knowing how it is supposed to be. Get "mushin"-no mind. Do not intellectualize. Act from your hara.

The uke should do his or her best to help the tori succeed. Do not make the tori wrong by resisting. Follow the tori's lead; forget right/wrong. Do not restrict your Ki to show the Tori has his or her form wrong.

Use your best ukemi every time to help the uke be in the right spot. There is no need for wordy explanations. O'Sensei said, "Techniques of the Sword cannot be encompassed by words or letters; do not rely on such things-move on toward enlightenment."

Avoid resistant ukes and individuals who constantly want to "teach you" the techniques, especially as you progress to the higher ranks. It is better to practice with sincerity for fifteen minutes than to talk about it or watch for one hour.

A good uke attack sincerely, sacrificing his or her position to help the tori train and demonstrate understanding of the technique. He or she should always attempt to recreate Sensei Phong's technique accurately and not take unfair advantage of the

Uke's compliance.

The traditional structure of paired training is the tori practices four times, left, right, left, right, then a change to the Uke for four times.

Avoid dominating training time as the tori. Learning as the Uke is equally important. Throwing effectively involves balanced experience of the uke and tori positions.

Maintain your connection with your partner. Zanshin (the remaining spirit) begins with the intention to attack. Keep your Ki musubi (Ki connection) throughout the techniques. Zanshin remains even after the throw and the fall are completed.

The intention is for all students to train together in vibrant, joyful and harmonious spirit. The uke and tori depend upon each other to progress in Aikido. □

Opinion

This article, written by a Shodan, arrived at the editor's desk about three weeks ago. Recognizing the author's thoughtful observation and sincere intention to better our practice, we have decided to print his constructive criticism. We hope that a dialogue will be established, and any reply from our readers will certainly be very much appreciated.

The Editor

As all members of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation know, there are only ninety minutes for our training each time we attend class. Out of those ninety minutes, 20 to 25 minutes are devoted for the warm-up exercise. About 20 more minutes, on and off, are for our Sensei to show and correct the technique or techniques of the day. Together these two activities have already taken up to 40 to 45 minutes of our training time.

So, what we have left are 45 minutes to take falls and perform techniques, being Uke and Tori. If for half of that amount of



time (say, 20 minutes) we are to stand around talking, time left for actual practice is limited. We then have not given the technique a chance to be absorbed, nor ourselves a chance to grow.

If we devote ourselves totally to the precious limited amount of time then perhaps we will be able to breakdown the old conditioning that we have about ourselves, and certainly will reach new heights in our practice.

It is fortunate for me to have learned all techniques directly from our Sensei without the interference of higher belts, because there was none at the time.

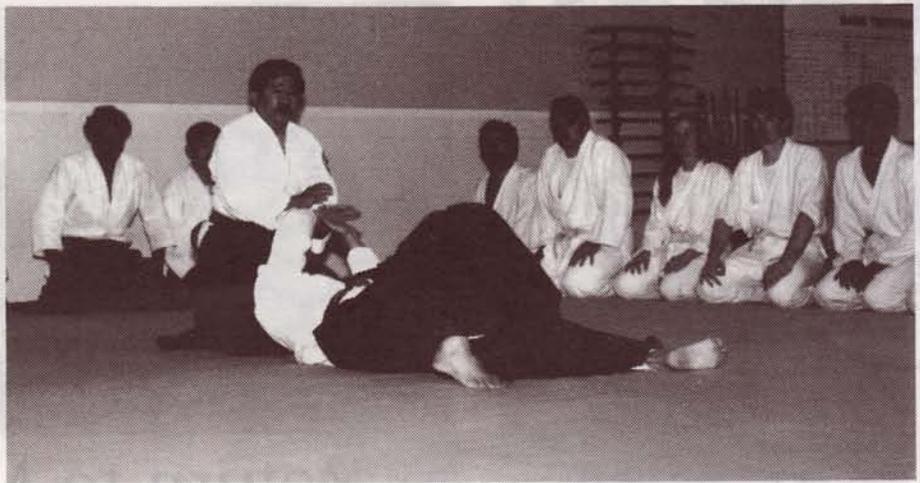
Lately, it is nice to see higher belts showing techniques and giving advice to lower belts. It is also nice to see lower belts accepting advice not from one but many higher belts. But there are times when these lower belts do not know what to do, this way or that way or who to listen to, this brown belt or that black belt. I believe in these moments there is confusion even damaging to those individuals.

Most of us trust that the higher belts know the techniques accurately as being taught by our Sensei, but, as we might all recall, once in a while, our Sensei ask a few pairs from different levels of proficiency to perform some basic techniques. In those instances, these higher belts are clumsy, at a loss, and they deeply disappoint themselves.

I do not know if we should or should not show the technique or give advice to lower belts since even we are uncertain about ourselves.

Chien Ngo

Sensei Dang Thong Phong taught me Aikido in Saigon, Viet Nam, beginning in 1971. The training ended with the fall of Saigon in April, 1975. Two months later, by rare coincidence, we were in the same concentration camp, Trang Lon in Tay Ninh province. I was released before Sensei Phong, and some years later escaped to Malaysia and to the U.S. Last March I had the chance to visit with him at his Tenshinkai Headquarters in Westminster, California. It was a great joy for both of us, meeting again after 18 years and after so many crucial changes in life. Sensei Phong asked me to write for the newsletter "Aikido Insights". My learning and knowledge about Aikido are rather limited, but I complied to show respect to him.



Aikido, As I Had Learned

by Nguyen K. Minh, M.D.

Learning a martial art was always my strong wish, but I was also afraid it would harm people if I could not control my temper. After being told by a friend that Aikido neutralizes only the aggressive act, not the person, I enrolled in an Aikido class of Sensei Phong in Saigon, finally at 36 years of age. There I learned not to punch or to kick back, but to divert the attack, leading the opponent away from me or to the ground. Sensei Phong appeared to me as a modest, gentle, sincere teacher. I came mostly to the morning class, starting at 6 A.M. It was energetic and refreshing to begin the day that way, with one hour of continuous exercises, exchanging harmoniously with classmates, before returning home for a shower, breakfast and going to work.

But Aikido means much more to me. The word Aikido embraces the beauty and the truth of life. AI means harmony or living in harmony. KI is the life force, or energy, of everything in the Universe. Ki is the essence of the Universe, and is the same in every person. If someone attacks you, he is presenting his Ki to you, first from his mind (thought), then from his limbs (action.) You must harmoniously receive his Ki, then lead it away from you, not to oppose or destroy it. The Founder of Aikido, O'Sensei Morhei Ueshiba, vividly teaches this harmony in his demonstration video. His hands never touch the opponent, but his Ki gently meets the opponent's Ki and directs it toward the ground. The oppo-

nent's body smoothly and effortlessly follows (as is the meaning of "the touchless throw" of the word kokyū-nage.) To me, that is winning without fighting, a meaningful way to avoid the conflict and to keep a lasting peace. Otherwise, win-loose, loose-win never ends and hate and revenge will poison the life of everyone concerned. O'Sensei Ueshiba has given to posterity a precious martial art. Studying Aikido, for me, means learning the wisdom, the power and the truth of life itself. It is a lifetime process.

Our society is more violent than before. Violence happens partly because the victim is "paralyzed by fear," which encourages the attacker and makes him think that his crime is "a piece of cake." Fear comes from not knowing what to do to defend oneself and in not being prepared. Learning a martial art prepares the student for those critical circumstances, enables him or her to be calm, ready for action. Such appearance may ward off the desire of the attacker. With Aikido, the attacker will face not only a person calm, ready and fearless, but also gentle and kind toward him. The mental attitude may have a more powerful effect on his mind.

As a physician, I see other beneficial effects of martial art, moreover with Aikido. We badly need exercise in our modern way

of living, full of convenience and comfort. In earlier times, to cook we needed to chop wood and carry water. Now all we need is a twist of the wrist to turn on the water faucet and the fire. We sit in the car going to work stand on the elevator to mount upstairs and sit in the office chair most of the time. At home, we sit in the lounge to watch TV. The only muscles working are the ones of the eyes and fingers on the remote control. Lack of exercise will lead to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases to name only a few diseases which take a heavy toll every year. Learning martial art will bring daily exercise to the body, burn those extra unwelcome fat deposits, strengthen the heart and lungs and will lessen the risk of these diseases. Aikido uses more Ki than muscle power and is less strenuous for all ages.

Again, it was my memorable joy to meet Sensei Phong after 18 years. In addition to his kindness and gentleness, as always, I see in him an undaunted courage and perseverance in adverse circumstances: he had tried to escape from Saigon 18 times, a record number. It is gratifying to see Tenshinkai flourish, again under his leadership, with young faces eager to learn Aikido for themselves and for the community. My best wishes to Tenshinkai and to Sensei Phong. ■



A Return to Mount Baldy

by Tam Do

On May 29th, 1993, I had the opportunity to accompany Sensei Dang Thong Phong to an Aikido seminar at the Zen Center on Mount Baldy. This was the second time that Sensei was invited to teach there, and it was also my second time to go with him.

The Zen Center has been run, as I understand it, by Sensei Frank McGouirk of Aikido-Ai dojo. This Aikido seminar has been an annual event and usually lasted the whole weekend. Because of Sensei Phong's tight schedule, he could only participate in the morning session of the seminar.

After the early breakfast, Sensei Phong, his son Joey (who was the photographer for the trip), Eric Womack and myself, left the heart of Orange County around 7:30 in Eric's car. The weather was very nice though a little bit cool (at least for an old guy like me!). There were some confusing moments as we debated whether we were on the right track or lost in the vast mountain because of the existence of some "mysterious" tunnels (which Sensei Phong and I swore never existed during our first trip!). After about an hour driving on the winding road we finally arrived at the Zen Center where we found Tom... who had just also arrived.

Although there were many more cars in the parking lot than the last time, it was

very serene and the air was crisp. I recognized right away the many pretty cottages silently lying scattered among the many big and small boulders, among the tall and not so tall pine trees...

Unlike the last time when Sensei Phong did not know in advance that he would be requested to conduct a seminar, McGouirk Sensei asked him to teach the very first class this time. Meeting McGouirk Sensei in his cottage, Sensei Phong took the opportunity to present as a gift to McGouirk Sensei the videotape of the International Martial Arts Festival together with the last two editions of our Aikido Insights!

Sensei Phong started his class at exactly 9:30. There were about 30 people and there were fewer black belts than last time. Sensei Phong did not teach as many Kokyu Nages this time. He concentrated instead on the control techniques such as Sankyos and Shiho Nages. Everybody seemed astounded, yet enjoyed the very circular movements and the high degree of effectiveness of these techniques as they were demonstrated by Sensei Phong. This most unique and beautiful style of Tenshinkai Aikido was further enhanced by not only Sensei's grace and impressive skills, but also by his charming personality and his practical teaching method.

After two hours, Sensei Phong concluded

his class for lunch break. An avid photographer himself, our Sensei could not resist his wish for souvenir pictures. Five minutes before lunch, he announced a picture taking session in taking advantage of the natural and lovely scenery of Mount Baldy as backdrop.

After lunch, McGouirk Sensei's son, Bill, volunteered to take us to the most talked-about waterfall in Mount Baldy! We spent about 20 minutes driving and then hiking to a secluded spot where we found a smaller but more picturesque waterfall. Some stretch of snow were still on the summit. The scenery was very calm and peaceful. Again, more pictures were taken! And off course, it was unavoidable!

As Eric negotiated the treacherous downward the mountain road, I sat in the back seat watching the scenery fly by the car window. We were leaving Mount Baldy. The techniques during the seminar, the fading pain in my wrist, the black and white images of Aikido uniforms in motion, the warm greetings to Sensei Phong, the expression of admiration and awe on the face of participants, the silver waterfall and its immense rocky wall background... all blended together in my memory...



1993 in pictures...

Sperry Images



Tenshinkai Aikido Federation
25th Anniversary Celebration
Budo Center
Westminster - California
Jan. 16th, 17th, 1993
(Left - Above left / right)

Zen Center, Mount Baldy, California
Aikido Seminar by Dang Thong
Phong Sensei . March 1993
(Below left/right)



January & March 1993

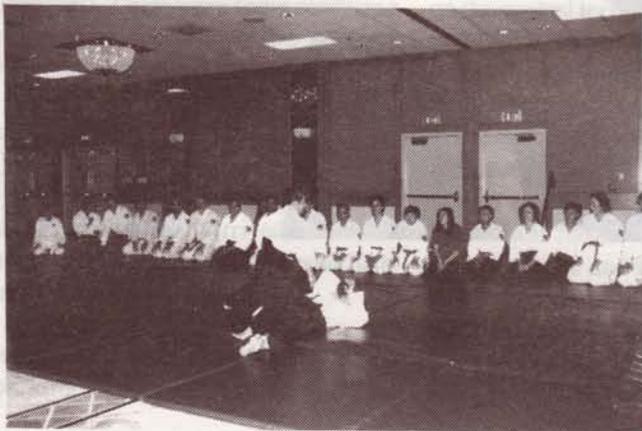
April 1993



The 6th Osu Festival
Sequoia Health Club
Buena Park - California
Aikido Seminar - April 93



Sensei Dang Thong Phong taught
at the Aikido techniques seminar,
Sheraton Hotel, Universal City
May 93 (Below left / right)



May 1993



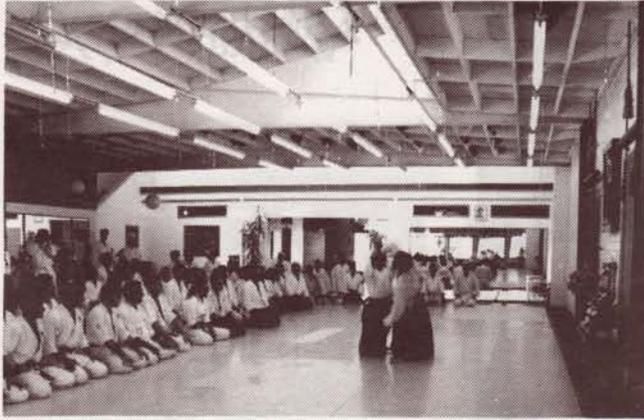
**International Martial Arts Festival
Sheraton Hotel
Universal City - California
May 93**



Sensei Jimmy K. Yamaue
(9th Dan, Aiki-Jutsu)
Sensei Wally Jay
(10th Dan Jujitsu, 6th Dan Judo)
Sensei Wai Ming Chau
(Wu Mui Kung Fu)
Sensei Karl Marx
(9th Dan, Keichu-Ryu Karate)
Sensei Dang Thong Phong
(5th Dan Aikido, 5th Dan Judo,
6th Dan Tea Kwon Do)

(Pictures below)
Demonstration by Phong Sensei
and Tenshinkai's members.





Frank McGouirk Sensei
60th Birthday
Aikido-Ai, Whittier, California
(August 93)

A session with Phong Sensei at this
occasion.



Tenshinkai Picnic / Training
Central Park
Huntington Beach, California



August 1993

8991...@93
 Sensei Stanley A. Pratin,
 AikiNews Magazine Editor-in-chief,
 visited Tenshinkai Aikido Federation
 and interviewed Sensei Dang Thong Phong



Sensei Stanley A. Pratin
 taught at the Aikido seminar,
 Tenshinkai Aikido Federation's Headquarters Dojo



Sensei Stanley A. Pratin
 with the adult class.



Sensei Stanley A. Pratin
 with the children class.

September 1993

October 1993



CAMP BUDO' 93
Burbank - California
Seminar with Sensei Phong
October 93



November 1993



Sensei Dang Thong Phong was conducted into the list of those who have been successful in their endeavor, and have glorified the Vietnamese





Advancement to Shodan of
Tam Suu Do
James Fischer David
Frank M. Kane
Headquarters Dojo
Westminster - California



December 1993

First training session
January 1st, 1994



New Year's first training session
January 1st, 1994
Headquarters Dojo
Westminster, California



AIKIDO DEMONSTRATIONS

Dang Thong Phong Sensei and Tenshinkai Aikido Federation members will have a demonstration at the opening of the New Year Tet Festival 1994 on Friday, February 11th, 1994 at 3:30 p.m. The festival is held at the back lot of the 99 Supermarket of the ASIAN VILLAGE on Bolsa Avenue (between Moran St. and Magnolia St.) in the city of Westminster.

SPECIAL SEMINARS by MASATAKE FUJITA, Shihan

Two days of seminars will be held at Budo Center - Headquarters dojo of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation in Westminster, California, on Saturday and Sunday February 12 and 13, 1994. Fujita, Shihan, 8th Dan, General Secretary of the Hombu Dojo will be the Special Guest Instructor.

For more information, please call (714) 894-1003.

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Dojo _____

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WESTMINSTER, CA 92683



AIKIDO TENSHINKAI FEDERATION

Affiliated with Aikido world Headquarters Tokyo - Japan

Chief Instructor

DANG THONG PHONG

Self Defense training

Mind & Body coordination

8536 Westminster Ave., Westminster, CA 92683
(corner of westminster Ave. & Newland, next to Stater Bros Market)

(714) **894-1003**

AIKIDO TRAINING SCHEDULE

Monday thr. Friday

8 - 9:30AM *Adults*

5 - 6:30PM *Juniors*

6:30 - 8PM *Adults*

Saturday & Sunday

10 - 11:30AM *Juniors*

11:30 - 1PM *Adults*