

Aikido Insights

Tenshinkai Aikido Headquarters - Westminster, California, U.S.A. * Issue # 10. Spring 1995

Aikido Insights

Founded 1991

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EDITOR'S PROTE!

by Jim Wenrick

Any student of Aikido, regardless of his or her level, will find there has been much written about Aikido techniques, the philosophy of Aikido and whether it is an effective martial art in street combat. However, not much is written about life in an Aikido dojo.

Here at the Tenshinkai Aikido Dojo, Chief Instructor, Dang Thong Phong, Sensei puts a great deal of emphasis on Aikido techniques, student safety, and the philosophy of peace and harmony of Aikido, (his purpose is to mirror the atmosphere and teaching of the Hombu Dojo in Tokyo, Japan). He also stresses the fact that he views his students at the dojo as a family. It is a home away from home for some and simply a family for those with little family of their own. Family life at every level is influential not only in the family itself, it is also

connected to the local, country and world communities..

In this issue of Aikido Insights, the staff and writers of each article hope that the reader will not only get some of Aikido training/technique, activities and philosophy at the dojo, but most importantly receive some of the family atmosphere that is shared at Tenshinkai Headquarters Dojo. I personally have been a part of this sense of family in each of the training sessions, as well as when a student has been absent and when he or she returns to train. The student is warmly welcomed back into the family without reservation. This feeling is difficult, if not impossible, to explain. Please understand, I realize there is no perfect family, in fact most have problems. However, what remains is the issue of connectedness, and no matter where the individual is or what he or she is doing, they remain a part of the fam-

So, as you read these articles, and experience them in a variety of ways, if you are moved in any small way, as you would be in your training experience of Aikido, go with it. This movement may involve practicing Aikido a little differently; writing a small article, or participating differently in family, dojo or community activities. I don't know, and you may not know either what, when or how it will be different. Yet, you can know that it will and you will be different as you train in, read and write about your Aikido experiences. Isn't it exciting to wonder how your Aikido experience will change you and your involvement with others inside and outside the dojo?

Congratulations !!!

Aikido Insights is proud to share the advancement to Shodan of:

Scott Edward Howard

and

Christiaan Carrillo

Best Wishes for your growth and continuing development in Aikido

Congratulations

to the following students for passing their test on March 31 and April 2-3, 1995.

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1268 Steve Huynh Ce

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1301 Michelle Vu

1318 Sunny Tran Dang

1323 Thao Phuong Huynh

1324 Calvin Nguyen

1341 George Ce

1363 Scott Woodard Joshua Mengola Pham Anh Khoa

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A Letter From Sensei Dang Thong Phong

Dear Friends,

Once again, Aikido Insights is coming to you through the efforts of our editorial staff. I hope that you, our readers, will continue to participate in sending us letters and articles to share about our own Dojo's activities. Our office will make sure that all of your letters and articles, once received, will be printed and published on the next issues of Aikido Insights. We can learn a great deal from each other, and by the same token, become great friends, within the large Tenshinkai family.

A long time ago, Vuong Duong Minh, the philosopher, said: "Education is similar to a ship sailing upstream; if it does not go forward, it will be pushed backward". This can be applied to all aspects of life. It does not matter what profession you are in, you always have to improve on your level of expertise in order not to be left behind.

The same thing is true in Martial Arts training, and especially so in Aikido. O' Sensei Morihei Ueshiba continually improved upon himself, not only in the physical aspect of his training, but also in its mental and philosophical aspects. Thus, from his studies of traditional martial skills which concentrated on combat prowess and physical strength, he took a giant step beyond, and founded a Martial Art which teaches its practitioners to seek the eradication of conflicts.

Our Aikikai Dojo, Westminster Headquarters, is considered the place where all practitioners can congregate in one Aikido family, without consideration of which school is attended. Everyone can come and train in a relaxed atmosphere. This is the place which can help you forget about all the stress, headaches and heartaches of everyday life. We make sure that our Dojo is always kept clean from inside out, thanks to the voluntary participation of all students who take turns in sweeping the mat, wiping the mirrors, emptying the trash, and so on. Everyone considers this place his or her own house, and everyone is aware of his or her financial responsibility towards the school, keeping this Dojo a shrine where O Sensei's teachings are passed along.

Sincerely,

Sensei Dang Thong Phong, President Tenshinkai Aikido Federation

REGINNER'S MIND, AGAIN.

by Lynn Seiser

Aikido has been a fascination for most of my adult life. I found a class that meets my schedule. I step on the mats for the first time at eight a.m. There is no indication what I will do or face today. Starting over isn't easy. I am ready to start. Again.

I took my first martial arts class twenty-six years ago. Since then I have studied Judo, Karate, Sil Lum Pai, Wing Chun, Tai Chi Chuan, San Soo, Kali/ Escrima, and Jeet Kune Do. I have spent long hours training and sweating, but at forty-four, I am starting over. Again. My first lesson is to empty myself before I can take in new teachings. Years of developed habits and patterns, years of punching and kicking have made certain moves natural. I now have to unlearn what took so long to learn. The lessons keep returning. The usefulness of a glass is in its emptiness. I am emptying. Again.

While unlearning what I depend on, the very things that make me secure, I am faced with my own fears. Fear comes from the fantasy of what I believe may happen. In learning a new art I am faced with these fantasies and the fears they produce. Without my usual defenses, I am vulnerable. Learning to roll is my biggest fear. Sometimes I feel I am too old to learn how to throw myself against the ground, something I have tried to avoid. I fear injury more from myself than anything else. Yet I know that is always the case. In emptying, one is faced with themselves and their own fears.

To face my fears, I have to let them come up. They do, with ease. Again.

Patience is also learned as my new skills are developing. I practice the same technique repeatedly. Learning the basics take time and patience. I know this mentally, but sometimes wish I would progress faster. Everything takes time and there is no hurry. By showing up for class consistently and repeatedly practicing the basics, even I can progress in a short period. It is a long journey, which never really ends. I have chosen a new road again.

I have also learned, again, to appreciate those who take the time out of their own workouts to help me. I appreciate their patience as they show and tell me



the same things over and over again. My mind understand what they are saying, even though my body does not always respond to what I ask of it. In time it will. I am learning to appreciate the subtleties of Aikido. I also appreciate the dedication and patience of those who have been on this journey longer and are sharing it with me. Thank you. Again.



OUR RESPONSIBILITY

by Mike Dotzenrod

The daily operations of the dojo are more than just teaching Aikido. The dojo is a business like any other, causing Sensei to also be concerned with the financial, promotional, and administrative matters. Administratively, Sensei maintains a record of his students, tracks our attendance, updates promotions, and deals with the behind-the-scenes management of the dojo.

Sensei must also manage the financial well being of the dojo. Basic expenses must be handled, such as rent for the space, utilities, and other miscellaneous costs, which include our dojo newsletter, which Sensei generously gives

to us free of charge, only asking for donations to help subsidize the costs of its production. Sensei has also incurred the large cost of traveling to Vietnam to coordinate the Tenshinkai's efforts there. Now Sensei must incur the huge costs of bringing Fujita Sensei back to our dojo, which he must try to offset with a seminar fee. For Sensei to meet these expense obligations, he

must bring in a revenue. This is obtained obviously through our membership fees. The amount of revenue taken in depends on the number of attending members. The dojo must maintain a certain level of memberships just to break even. Unfortunately, students come and go, causing a fluctuation in the dojo's income. Our responsibility, as members of the Tenshinkai, is to assist Sensei by promoting the dojo. This can be done easily through word of mouth. When the conversation allows, talk about the dojo. Don't keep it a big secret. If you find someone is interested, invite them to the dojo to observe one of the classes. Give them literature or a newsletter that gives information about Aikido and the dojo.

Many have never seen or heard of Aikido. If there is an opportunity, an excellent resource to show would be one of the dojo's demonstration videos. We have all put in many hours of training, and have many more ahead of us. It is important to all of us to keep the dojo running and successful. Let us not think of it as just a dojo, but as a family business, in which we all have a vested interest. In doing so we can insure our training dividends into the future.



November 28, 1994, Master Phong returned from a successful trip abroad. I know I speak for the entire Dojo when I say how thankful I am for the safe return of Sensei, as well as our fellow students. That evening in the dojo, I felt a great sense of love and happiness from all the students, having their teacher back home. It was at this point that I was inspired to question what it is about this man that draws so much admiration and respect?

I began to think of those character traits that first come to mind. Master Phong is a noticeably humble and honorable man, always carrying a polite and courteous demeanor. I have never heard him make a bad comment about anyone. He is a kind gentleman, greeting

everyone with a smile. These are all wonderful traits, but I think it would fall short of trying to define this man. I must try to address what drives him.



Sensei is a man of great devotion, dedicating his life to Aikido. He is on a constant drive to spread the way of

Aikido. At times you see him ex-hausted from long hours of preparation for certain events or festivities. He willfully does this for his

love of the art and his students. In the dojo, he gives generously with his teaching. He is continuously patient and sincerely concerned about the development of his students.

Sensei is the central embodiment, the father figure, that unites all of us as a family under the roof of Tenshinkai. I believe respect and love exists at such a high level in our dojo because of him. the sum total of his character, devotion, and values make him a symbol, a role model, for all of us. We all hope to absorb all his great qualities into our own hearts.

I know this article may only lightly touch on a few insights of our teacher, but it was written, first of all, in thanks to him for what he has given me. And secondly, I hope this article makes others realize how much Sensei gives. These are valuable gifts, which should never be taken for granted. The best way we can thank him is to dedicate ourselves to diligent training, developing ourselves and focusing on his teachings. We are the measure of his success. Let us make him successful... let us make our Sensei proud.



I have learned a visualization exercise that can be used to help develop and accumulate Ki. It is used during the breathing exercise at the end of the warm-ups. It can also be practiced at home during seated meditation.

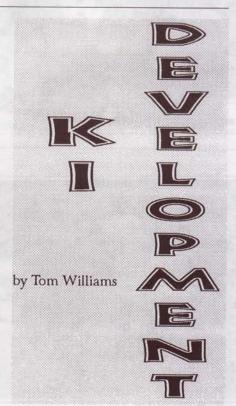
Ki is stored in the tanden (tawn-den, center of being, or one-point). This is located approximately 2 inches below and in from the navel. Breathing is to be performed from this area of the abdomen, expanding and contracting naturally without any undue force.

During the inhalation phase, use your mind-intent to move your Ki from this point down to the tip of your tail bone and up through your spine to the top of your head. Upon exhalation, picture the Ki flowing down the front of your head to the point below the nose above the upper lip.

Continue moving the Ki down through the Adam's apple and the front of the chest until it accumulates in the tanden once again. This is one complete cycle. It is important to keep the circuit open so that the Ki can flow freely.

With enough practice, you will not only accumulate Ki, but be able to sense what and where it is and move it around at will. Eventually, you will be able to extend your Ki and blend it with another person's. As an added benefit, cycling Ki properly through the various parts of the body will result in a healthy body, mind and spirit.







Celebrating 27 Years at Tenshinkai Aikido Federation

- Fujita Sensei receives a gift during the celebration
- Distinguished high ranking guests of Aikido
- Dang Thong Phong Sensei presents a gift to Fujita Sensei.
- & Fujita Sensei presents the Certificate of Shodan and Hakama to Scott Howard Edward and Christiaan Carrillo, members of the Headquarters Dojo.







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- Fujita Sensei visits TAF
 Headquarters Dojo,
 Westminster Aikikai
- Theresa Doan demonstrates Randori with two Ukes
- Jim Fischer demonstrates
 Kokyu Nage with two Ukes
- Khanh Truong demonstrates Kokyu Nage
- Victor Moyano demonstrates Koshi Nage







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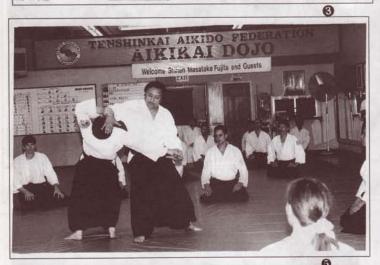














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- George Shoji Kongo demonstrates at the celebration
- **2&0** Fujita Sensei teaches a seminar to the juniors' class
- ♠,♠,♠ & Pujita Sensei teaches a two day seminar to the adult class

= First Experiences=

by Eugene Howell

Recently, our Dojo was host to Shihan Mastake Fujita, who came to teach us in a two day seminar. We had visitors from other Dojos in Southern California and everyone who attended had a good time practicing Aikido with Shihan Fujita.

At the same time, we were celebrating the twenty-seventh anniversary of Tenshinkai Federation, and the seventh anniversary of the Federation in Westminster. Our own beloved leader, Sensei Dang Thong Phong, shared some of his memories with us about the early days in founding Tenshinkai Federation and its growth. We were celebrating Lunar new year, the anniversary of the Federation, the anniversary of the Federation in America, Phong Sensei's birthday, and the presence of Shihan Fujita . As I listened to Phong Sensei share his memories, I remembered that I too, was celebrating an anniversary. I have been studying at our school for one year as of the first of February. In this short time and I have built many memories.

To begin, I was sixty years of age when I first began studying Aikido. Many years ago, in the distant past, I had been involved in the study of Karate and even further back, I had been an amateur and then professional boxer. I fought eightysix amateur fights and twenty-seven professional fights. I was attuned to competition, the one-on-one battle for supremacy, yet, I had heard of Aikido and what I heard, I thought I wanted to know more about. I was working in the area near our Dojo and one day while passing, saw the sign. I stopped and Phong Sensei was there. He invited me to come and participate in a practice session, which I did.

I had always prided myself on my physical ability, the strength of my hands and arms, (the product of many years of hard physical work), and my love of contact sports. With me it had always been, "the rougher the better." So, I looked forward to my first lesson here!

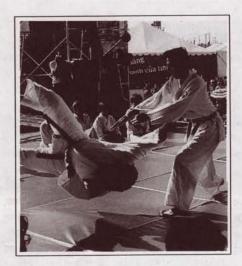
I recall that first lesson vividly. When it was over, I felt a sense of pride that I had not known in quite some time; the pride was in being able to survive the first session. I had become somewhat of a "couch potato" without realizing it. I was terribly out of shape and did not have even a semblance of balance. As I floundered around on the mat during the warm-up exercises, the term "beached whale" came vividly to mind. (I am six feet four and weigh over two hundred and fifty pounds, so the term "whale" is not too much of a misnomer.) Somehow, though, I called upon some hidden inner strength and made it through the first session. Within the next day or so, I was so sore I could barely walk, as muscles I did not know I possessed began to torment me. There have been times in the past when I would have just said that this wasn't for me, and quit. Something told me, however, that I wanted what I had found in this small Dojo and that I needed to keep returning. I did return, many times.

After about a month of practice, I had a bad back problem. It was not an injury I suffered at the school; it was a condition caused by age and previous injuries. I missed four months but returned on February 1, 1994. That was what I consider my real beginning. As I began to study seriously, I began to see many things differently than when I had first walked into the Dojo. Phong Sensei impresses me more and more each time I see him. He is not very large in stature, but he is just as large as he needs to be. His moves are perfection. If anyone ever again uses the phrase "poetry in motion" I will know whereof they speak. But it is not only Phong Sensei. I looked at the Black Belt assistants, and I see not the swaggering or the braggadocio that I have seen in Karate and other arts, but what truly epitomizes honor and respect. I see men who, if they were to walk through a field of Tigers, the Tigers would be advised to walk softly, yet in these practitioners of Aikido, I do not see anyone seeking confrontation. There is a peace in these people that comes from confidence in your abilities and in mastery of themselves.

As I practiced, I became less and less clumsy. I began to fall with some confidence and began to learn the techniques for promotions. I gained my Yellow Belt, which was a very proud moment for me, then my Orange Belt, again a proud moment. Now, soon, I will test for my Green Belt. Yes, I am learning more about Aikido but I am also learning more about myself. I have not found the true inner peace that I hope comes with time. I see others performing some of the exercises that I cannot do any more or never was able to perform. I am too heavy and my wrists, although strong, are too weak for me to do push-ups on the backs of the wrists. I am trying to lose weight and I hope some day to be able to do these just like everyone else.

Although I try, I am still unable to do the Shikko (the crouching walk), because of arthritis in my knees. I keep telling myself that someday I will be able to do this. I am not as agile and limber as others. No one else at the Dojo has ever faulted me for my inability to do these things, they accept me as I am. It is my own pride that makes my lack of ability difficult for me to tolerate. Pride can be a man's worst enemy sometime and I hope that I can still maintain pride in myself, yet, at the same time lose egotism that makes me impatient with myself because I cannot do certain things. Perhaps if I can conquer this enemy within myself, I will be able to concentrate more of my energies in learning Aikido.

I could have searched the world over and I do not think I could have found a better group of people with whom to share my spare time. I have not found companions here, even friends, I feel like I have gained a second family. Anytime I walk into the Dojo, I feel like I am at home, that I belong here. I hope this feeling never ends.



From time to time, usually at the end of practice, Sensei will give us what I like to call the "Hang in There, You're Doing Fine" lecture to console those of us who may be having difficulty grasping the techniques. Actually, I always feel as if Sensei is talking directly to me and I always bow my head deeply in embarrassment while listening to his thoughts on our practice of Aikido.

Sensei reminds us that Aikido's ethical ideal is to defend oneself without inflicting unnecessary injury to another person and unlike many other martial arts, it emphasizes movement, not muscle, and skillful technique are hard to understand sometimes and may take more time and effort to master.

Sensei knows that sometimes many of us become discouraged in our practice because we just can't seem to do a certain technique correctly or maybe we feel as if we aren't making any real progress in our overall practice at all. In times of frustration, we must not be discouraged and should push ourselves to persevere, to practice harder if we must. Sensei has seen students quit Aikido rather than continue because of their perceived lack of understanding or confidence in themselves, and he is sorry to see any student leave for that reason, because that is a loss for all of us as a school.

Do not worry if you do not see great change in your daily practice. The important thing to remember is as long as you do practice, there is always progress,

"HANG IN THERE, YOU'RE DOING FINE."

by Tom Nguyen

no matter how small. Sensei notices, though you may not, for it is always harder to observe changes going on inside. He sees in our daily practice our developing character, our diligence and patience, and our open attitude and positive participation. For in practicing Aikido, we are always striving to conquer the one obstacle that stands in the way of further progress and better understanding. That obstacle is ourselves and in learning to overcome our own perceived weaknesses and limitations through our daily practice, Aikido becomes more than merely a martial art, put a path of self-discovery and inner growth.

As a lower belt, I always watched the upper belts in awe and admiration of the things they could do. I'd be happy if I could just be one-tenth as good as they are, I'd tell myself. There were countless moments when I felt I didn't deserve the belt I was wearing and a couple of times, I seriously considered leaving the dojo. Now looking back at the almost two years I've been here, though I may not have noticed much change at any point along the way, overall, I see that I am a much changed person and that in practicing Aikido, I am still changing and constantly redefining the limits of what I think I can and cannot do.

I have gained a lot from Aikido. I now have a more positive outlook and renewed self-confidence (I actually like myself better), stronger health and improved coordination (I'm not such a klutz anymore), and I've made many supportive friends here at the dojo (the dojo has truly become like a second home to me and my fellow students, a second family). I continue to make my way along the path of Aikido, but the road is hard and there are still times I just need to hear those encouraging words, "Hang in There, You're Doing Fine."

Congratulations!

Aikido Insights is also proud to announce the opening of a new Tenshinkai Aikido Federation branch in Austin, Texas. Instructor Huu Tran and wife, Instructor Phuong Nguyen have been granted the responsibility of Austin Aikido Tenshinkai by Sensei Phong in November of 1994. Please feel free to contact our new branch at:

Austin Aikido Tenshinkai 2700 W. Anderson Lane #301 Austin, Texas, 78757 Phone: (512) 834-7572.

Congratulations also to the following members from Austin Aikido Tenshinkai on passing the March 26 & 28, 1995 tests. Best wishes and good luck on your path to success!

KYU7:

1456 Le Tran Minh

1457 Rouville M.Fisher1458 Nguyen Cong Bao

1459 Le Phuong Khanh

1460 Vo Tuan

1461 Nguyen Phuong

1462 Nuyen Hung

1463 John Khuong Quach

KYU6:

1432 Trinh Thu Thuy

1433 Le Hoang An

1434 Nguyen Huy Dien

1435 Tran Huu Minh Nhat

1436 Nguyen Anh Thu

1437 Le Thuy Ngan

1438 Webb Roberts Bishop

1439 Brian F. Jacobs

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Over the past few months, Tenshinkai Aikido Federation has been extremely fortunate in its many endeavors. These events have not only promoted Tenshinkai Aikido locally by has gained world-wide recognition and admiration.

During the month of February, we were honored to have Shihan Masatake Fujita, the General Secretary of Aikikai, Hombu Dojo, teach a two day seminar at our central head-quarters. While on his visit to Tenshinkai Aikido Federation, Shihan Fujita was also invited to stay for the 27th Anniversary Celebration of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation. To remark on this joyous occasion, Shihan Fujita wished the Federation many years of happiness and many successes in training.

With the coming of the Vietnamese New Year, we were invited to perform at several of the festival sites. With a tight schedule and a few weeks to prepare, our members put on

two remarkable demonstrátions at the Tet Festivals in February. Many thanks to the demonstration team and all members and friends for their great support.

In April, Tenshinkai Aikido Federation will be observing the passing of O'Sensei with two special seminars for juniors and adults. All junior members are requested to attend a seminar on April 30, 1995 from 10

AM to 11:30 AM. A seminar for adult members will be held from 11:30 AM to 2 PM. A pot-luck luncheon will be held afterwards. All semninars are free of charge.

Coming up in June of this year, Sensei Phong has been invited to teach a seminar in France hosted by Sensei Patrick Rene Dimayuga of the Sakura Dojo and Sensei Jean-Michel Wiesener of the Aikido Club D'Mady. As some of you may remember, Sensei Parick Dimayuga is an old student of Sensei Phong from Vietnam and visited us over the summer last year. If time permits, during this trip, Sensei Phong will take the opportunity to visit Shihan Nobuyoshi Tamura and the International European Aikido Federation.

Tenshinkai Aikido Federation is also celebrating the expansion of two dojos, one in Canada and one in Texas. Fort Saskatchewan Aikido Tenshinkai in Canada is re-open-



ing its doors after an unfortunate down turn. Much success is wished to Instructor Van Duong.

Austin, Texas is the new home to Instructors Huu Tran and Phuong Nguyen, a husband and wife teaching team. Aus-

tin Aikido Tenshinkai has now been opened for over four months. We wish Austin Aikido Tenshinkai the best of luck.

Several members of our central headquarters here in Westminster are pleased to announce the sponsoring of a remarkable Aikido student, Hai Nguyen. Hai just turned 10 year old last March; 1st Kyu student in Vietnam that has just immigrated to Indi-

ana. Hai will be joining our practice sessions from July 1st to August 12, 1995. We are all looking forward to her arrival.





TENSHINKAI AIKIDO FEDERATION

Affiliated with Aikido World Headquarters Tokyo - Japan

westwinster airikai

Chief Instructor
DANG THONG PHONG
Self Defense Training
Mind & Body Harmony

8536 WESTMINSTER AVENUE, WESTMINSTER CA 92683
(Corner of Westminster Avenue & Newland Street, Next to Stater Bros Market)

Phone: (714) 894-1003 Fax: (714) 897-9708

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





TENSHINKAI AIKIDO FEDERATION

HEADQUARTERS DOJO

WESTMINSTER AURIKAU 8536 WESTMINSTER AVENUE WESTMINSTER, CA 92683



To:				
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