



# Aikido Insights

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## AIKIDO INSIGHTS

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### Editors:

Jim Wenrick, Editor in Chief  
Dang Thong Phong, President

### Staff:

Dang Thong Phong  
Jim Wenrick  
Neta Wenrick  
Dinh Xuan Duong  
Le Duc

### Articles by:

Andrew Avalos  
Patrick Rene Dimayuga  
Scott Howard  
Mike Kelly  
Dale Charles McVey  
Victor Moyano  
Quang Hai Nguyen  
Tom Nguyen  
Jim Ogborn  
Regina Uliana



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of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation  
8536 Westminster Ave.  
Westminster - CA 92683  
Phone: (714) 894-1003  
Fax: (714) 897-9708

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## Shihan Masatake Fujita Visit in celebrating the 26th Anniversary of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation



## Editor's Note:



Between this edition of Aikido Insights and the last issue, Tenshinkai Aikido Federation Headquarters Dojo has seen a lot of activity. Many new faces, as well as regular ones were seen at the dojo.

In the beginning of the summer, a French Delegation visited for approximately two enjoyable weeks. We were also honored by visits from Fujita Sensei as well as Tamura Sensei.

As you read the articles in this issue, you will notice the great respect and admiration felt for Phong Sensei and his teaching. You may also become aware of the warmth felt by those visiting the Tenshinkai Headquarters Dojo. Many visitors also commented on the skill and professionalism of the chief instructor and his students.

It is my hope that you will be uplifted by the articles and encouraged to dedicate yourselves to working hard to grow in your knowledge and experience of Aikido.

Sensei Phong and Tenshinkai is proud of each student and encouraged by the time spent in training on and off the mat.

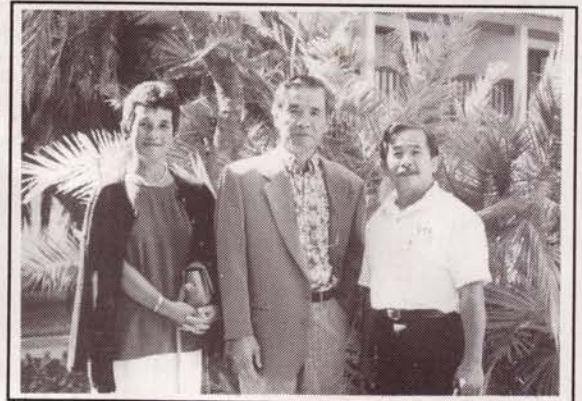
Finally, heart felt congratulations to each student who has graduated to a higher rank and a hearty welcome to the new students who have chosen to study Aikido with Phong Sensei.

**James Wenrick**

## 1994 IN REVIEW



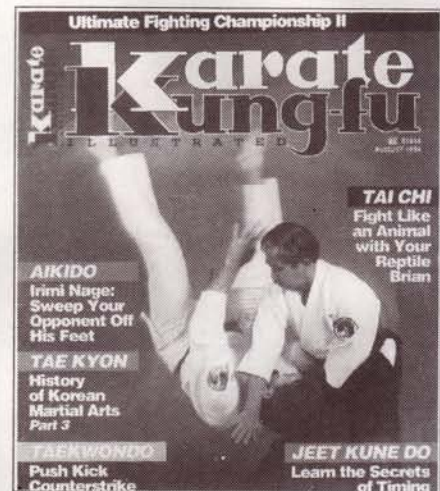
Shihan Masatake Fujita, 8th Dan Aikikai Hombu Dojo, February 1994



Shihan Nobuyoshi Tamura, 8th Dan Aikikai Hombu Dojo, and Mrs. Rumiko Tamura, September 1994



Phong Sensei presents a gift to Professor George Kirby at Camp Budo 1994



Phong Sensei appears on the cover of Karate/Fung-Fu Magazine on August 1994

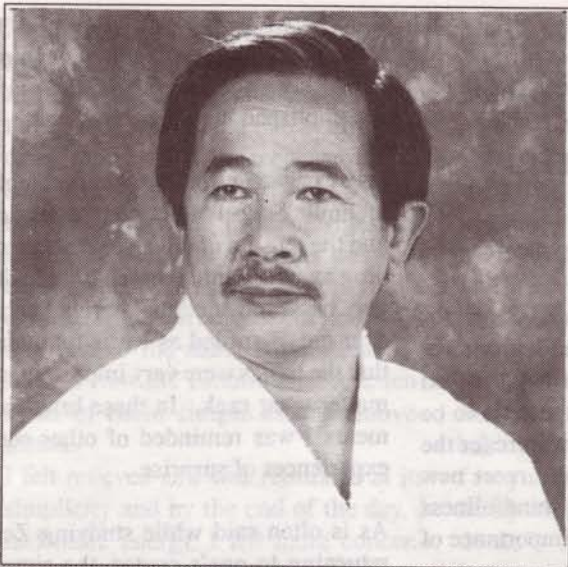


Patrick Rene Dimayuga Sensei, August 1994



Jean-Michel Viessener Sensei, August 1994





## A letter from Sensei Dang Thong Phong

their annual day of tradition named Camp Budo. This year Camp Budo featured 13 high-ranking masters from various martial arts from all over the world; who will share their knowledge with all participants.

endeavor for the past 36 years.

I place a lot of hope on you, dear members and it is my wish that all of you will wholeheartedly join me in the furtherance of Aikido within the loving embrace of our Supreme leader, Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the heir to O'Sensei Morhei Ueshiba's legacy.

### **Dear Tenshinkai Aikido Members and Friends,**

As you may have already known, Aikido Insights, Tenshinkai Aikido Federation's Forum is late in coming to your hands, to the disappointment of its staff. This delay is due to broken continuity. However, it is better late than never.

Several events have occurred in the recent past to our federation, such as the formal visit to our central dojo by Shihan Masatake Fujita, Aikikai Hombu Dojo's General Secretary, and Shihan Nobuyoshi Tamura, Aikikai European Representative, and his wife, Mrs. Rumiko Tamura. Also, two Aikido Delegations from France led by Mr. Patrick Rene Dimayuga, representing Sakura Dojo, and Mr. Jean-Michel Wiesener, representing Aikido Club D'Mady and two of their students came to train for eleven days at our central Dojo.

Another no less important event was receiving an invitation from the editor of Karate Kung Fu Magazine, Mr. Robert Young, to appear on the front page of its August '94 issue. The Ju-Jitsu organization led by professor George Kirby also invited me to participate in

Our Central Dojo was also involved in several martial art demonstrations in the community, as well as seminars at various locations.

With our federation's steady growth, the central dojo is becoming known to more and more people. This development has allowed the federation to set up 2 black belt examinations this year, whereas we only had one black belt examination per year in the past.

We especially appreciate the great contributions of Aikido Insights Mr. James Wenrick and his wife, Mrs. Neta Wenrick, who spent a great many hours perfecting manuscripts before they were sent to the printshop. Another person we can never thank enough is Mr. George Kongo Shoji, a member of Tenshinkai who has sacrificed much of his time to assist us during the visits by Shihan Fujita and Shihan Tamura. Mr. Shoji is also the liaison between Aikikai and the Tenshinkai Federation. It is through him that a better relationship were achieved between the two organizations, allowing me to further understand my responsibility and my role in the development of Aikido, which has been my

Dear Friends, I sincerely thank all of you for having contributed articles and letters for this special issue. I have also collected a number of photographs to be used along with those articles and letters. The goal of our newsletter is absolutely not to bring in a profit, however its realization is very costly. Moreover, we have to mail each new issue to different locations, resulting in a substantial amount of money being spent on postage. Because of that, I am asking for the understanding of each and every member: Upon receiving your issue of Aikido Insights, please remit your contribution of a few dollars to offset its printing cost.

Your generous support of Aikido Insights in your giving of your time, articles, letters and to following the way of Aikido is contributing to much growth. May you continue to pursue your chosen path of development.

Sincerely,

**Sensei Dang Thong Phong**  
President  
Tenshinkai Aikido Federation



# Shihan Masatake Fujita

## Visits Tenshinkai Aikido Headquarters

*By Regina Ullana*

The morning was brisk. As I entered the Tenshinkai Headquarters, Aikikai Dojo, for the weekend Aikido seminar, the atmosphere was friendly and bustling with movement. Many students had arrived early while others who were just arriving walked quickly with a sense of purpose. Some students were studying their speeches to be given in honor of our special visitor while other quickly arranged the furniture for the many expected guests. There was time to greet past acquaintances and meet new people. Throughout all the hustle there was a definite order, calm and mindfulness by all the members of the Dojo. Each student seemed to recognize the importance of the day.



Shihan Fujita took a picture with Tenshinkai members after class.

Arranging our gi's we knelt in line preparing to meet Shihan Masatake Fujita. In the background was the hum of voices from the audience. It was 10:00am. Dang Thong Phong Sensei walked into the room as it became quiet. Phong Sensei introduced Fujita Sensei and the class began.

Among the Aikido students, it was awe inspiring to see many black belts kneeling quietly. Some had come from as far away as France. As we all sat quietly, I felt concerned and somewhat out of place given these many advanced aikidoka. I imagine it would be like entering the Vatican in from with all its robed cardinals or like attending Zen sesshins (meditation retreats) when visiting the Roshis are surrounded by all the accomplished students.

I wondered, what kind of day it was going to be. I expected it to be rough, hard, physically taxing and certainly very difficult and confusing. I was also concerned about possible injuries since the dojo was very crowded. I had only returned to the dojo a month prior following a 6 month hiatus because of a knee injury. Another student had rolled into my leg. My tension and anxiety increased as we began. I expected I would have to spend most of my time being watchful of other students and less time learning any new movements. I also expected that Sensei Fujita would

show many difficult techniques in order to keep the interest of the many accomplished black belt students.

As we began I watched the movements, of Fujita Sensei. I noticed my tension and the tension of other students dropping away. Fujita Sensei started with very basic movements. A relief came over me. I smiled as I was reminded that the basics were very important, no matter what rank. In those brief moments I was reminded of other such experiences of surprise.

As is often said while studying Zen, returning to one's center, the simple and elegant is available to all, yet this is most difficult to achieve even for the accomplished since often there is clouding with many expectations and opinions about the nature of our reality and true self. In reading Plato's dialogues (a life time challenge for myself) returning to the simple words of the master philosopher again and again always reveals something rich and meaningful that it brings intense joy and a deep awareness of how truly elegant the mind is in its simplicity. It also brings a laugh and embarrassment as one sees what was always there, so obvious, yet missed. It is apparent when one sees that one can let oneself see. A new puzzling question emerges, "How is it that I could miss such beauty?" It is so simple. Each practice, whether it be the way of Zen, or mastering and practicing the say of thought of Plato, or studying the ideals and techniques of Aikido, is striving for excellence and simplicity of mind. Each as a spiritual journey brings to those sincere students as intelligibility and oneness and a union with the beauty and essence of the universe.

That's what it was like for me as I watched Fujita Sensei spend the morning returning to the basic steps. I felt a sudden oneness with all in the room, and with the many spiritual paths I have taken. For in that moment, I recognized again that, of course, it's simple. My tension was gone.



For the first morning we practiced these basic and simple steps over and over again. Sensei Fujita took his time. On the surface it appeared like a beginning class. And, though the movements were basic and fundamental, it was obvious the basics required profound mastery; reviewing them for everyone was welcomed. Fujita Sensei would then build and add slight variations, but he always returned to the same basic steps and showed how the variations were extensions of these simple elegant movements.

I felt relieved as I was reminded at its simplicity and by the end of the day, I had more energy. I left more concentrated and one-pointed than I had arrived. And surprisingly I was in less pain than I had felt since my return to practice.

On the morning of the second day, it was much like the first day. However, by the afternoon, I noticed I was more distracted. My energy level took a brief nose dive and my tension returned, I was tired and aware of pain. I felt awkward and definitely more aware of differences between my self and the other students around me. I was concerned that it was crowded and I was worried about being injured. I was looking at the clock more frequently, only to see that time was moving slowly. This was in contrast with the day before when I was surprised to discover I had been

practicing for many hours without even noticing the time. It did not occur to me until I reflected on this later that afternoon what had happened. There was a shift in training. The techniques were more difficult and we moved quickly through many techniques. We did not return to the basic steps as frequently. Many other students could keep up, but I was struggling and confused. I did not give up. I experienced a different kind of relief that day before I finished the seminar. I was definitely tired. However, I was not let down. Later, my spirits returned.

We took pictures and I risked asking if I could have a picture taken with Masatake Fujita Sensei. My wish came true. A friend and myself kneeled on either side of Fujita Sensei directly in front of the

dojo's shrine to O'Sensei and with large grins, we smiled and watched the cameras took our picture. I left that last evening with greater insight into the



Shihan Fujita presents a reprint of a banner hand written by O'sensei

ideal of Aikido and also its relationship with other aspects of my life, that it is simple and elegant. And when that spirit is shared it brings harmony and unity and bonds of friendship. □





# A Brief Interview with Shihan MASATAKE FUJITA

By Richard L. Smith

*Masatake Fujita, 8th Dan Aikikai Shihan and Administrative head of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo visited Tenshinkai Aikido Dojo and Federation Headquarters February 12 and 13, 1994. During that time, he gave a seminar and participated in the local Vietnamese Lunar New Year Celebration. Prior to Fujita Sensei's departure for Japan he graciously consented to the following interview with Richard Smith.*

**Richard Smith:** We are deeply honored by your visit, Fujita Sensei. The memory of your presence here during the last weekend has been remembered by us all. It is considered possessing great importance in the history of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation.

Since that time you have spent some time with us. I wonder if you might offer some suggestions as to how we might improve as individuals and as a dojo.

**Fujita Sensei:** As individuals, it is very important that each person recognize the significance of the principles of Aikido and to determine how to integrate them into his or her lifestyle. The spirit of Aikido must be allowed to surround the individual in daily life and to clarify each mind in order to reach enlightenment as did O'Sensei.

As a dojo, the most important goal is to maintain a safe and healthy environment. During training, care is to be taken to prevent accidents. It is the responsibility of the instructor to insure this goal. Also, it is the responsibility of each student and his or her partner to practice being mindful of safety. If the dojo is to prosper, instructor and students must keep safety in mind.

**Richard Smith:** Thank you, Fujita Sensei. Would you take a moment to share some things you found most interesting during this visit.



**Fujita Sensei:** One very enjoyable experience for me was the home made food that was abundant during the Tet Festival. I am very fond of spicy food; so, that made it all the more pleasant for me.

In general, it was wonderful to see how strongly the Vietnamese culture has become established in Southern California. I recognize it as a reflection of the spirit of America to accept different cultures and traditions. This spirit is very close to the harmony which is a basic principle of Aikido. Considering this, there is little doubt that Aikido will be very successful in this country.

Finally, I was very surprised to see the wide expansion of Southern California. Especially here in Orange County. I have seen very few high story buildings in contrast to Tokyo where there are so many high rise structures.

Also, I was surprised to see so many cars opposed to Tokyo where everyone is walking or taking the subway.

**Richard Smith:** Thank you Fujita Sensei for sharing your thoughts, teaching and sharing in the Lunar New Year Celebration.

It was a wonderful learning experience for each of us when you taught during the seminars. We wish you a safe and comfortable journey home, and your continued health and success in the work you do to spread Aikido. ☐





At O'Sensei's Memorial Celebration this year, my mind began to wonder how O'Sensei discovered Aikido. As I thought, I realized what he really discovered was himself. Each and every time a person steps onto the mat he or she encounters an opportunity to face themselves. It is where we can find that we are the only true opponent. I think that was a reason for O'Sensei's opposition to competition between students of Aikido. The competition would interfere with the true struggle each student has within him or herself. It is here fears and conflict begin to be outwardly manifested in our confidence, cowardice, ridiculing ourselves and/or other, and in trying to over come someone else.

The path that students of Aikido follow contains shadows and phantoms blocking the way, but once confronted and dealt with, they vanish. However, so many students leave the way thinking these manifestations were real.

used Aikido as a vehicle to pass beyond form, and self.

O'Sensei's struggle involved self discovery; this too is our struggle. His victory was in realizing who he was and being free to live a life without fear or doubt.

# THE GIFT

BY DALE CHARLES MCVEY

O'Sensei's greatness was not only founding another martial art, but in facing and defeating limitations each of us has placed on ourselves. He freed himself from the bonds of other's thoughts and actions, and

He learned to be direct and focused in the "now", not in the past, nor the future.

Discovering the "now" can only come in doing techniques. The repetitious training releases the mind from thought and allows for the continued integrated flow of mind, body and spirit which are united in action. Watching and/or reading about Aikido may be interesting but only in the act of doing can a person find release and discovery of his or her true nature.

This is the gift O'Sensei and our teacher Dang Thong Phong Sensei are giving. It is the chance to free ourselves of all limitations.

During the memorial celebration of O'Sensei's passing and each time before practice when I bow to O'Sensei's picture and Sensei Phong, I am thanking them for the gift of Aikido and self discovery.





# Tenshinkai Aikido Federation Visits The Bowers Museum

by Scott Howard

On April 30, 1994, the Bowers Museum of Cultural Arts planned a Cultural Arts Exposition Day. This day was replete with food, exhibits, and various demonstrations of different cultural arts.

Dang Thong Phong Sensei had been honored by being asked to present Aikido at the Exposition. This request was not unusual for Sensei Phong. However, it was the first time I was asked to be a part of the Aikido demonstration team. In a part of my mind, I knew it would be a wonderful learning experience and an opportunity to overcome some fear of performing Aikido in front of people.

In preparation for the demonstration day, each of us met at the dojo and Sensei Phong assigned each person to be in a demonstration group. Then he told each of us he wanted a specific technique to be displayed. His intent was to show the audience at the time of the demonstration how different techniques could be applied to various attacks. Tho Le and I were given Ryote Dori to display. In addition, Andrew

strating Morote Dori.

Upon arriving at the museum, Sensei Phong was warmly greeted by the director. I was surprised how beautiful the grounds of the museum were; there were statues and a water fountain. At that time everyone helped with the set-up of the mats in a great team effort.

The children were first to present Aikido. Mai Chi, Tammy, Khanh and Thanh put on an awesome display of Aikido. The crowd roared and responded with applause. These kids were smiling and made it look so easy. Next, the adults performed with smooth and flowing koryu nages. The audience saw the effectiveness of these techniques.

When my turn came, it felt like stage fright was upon me. My knees were knocking, my teeth were chattering, and I had difficulty with my breathing. I thought I would forget everything! However, once I was on stage I forgot there even was an audience. Everything went smoothly! It seemed like it was over in just a few



seconds! It was a great feeling to hear the applause as we bowed to the crowd.



Next, the black belt students demonstrated exciting Tanto Dori (wooden knife) and Randori techniques.

Concluding the demonstration, Sensei Phong amazed everyone with his powerful and graceful movements. He utilized spontaneous techniques I had never seen before. The crowd roared with approval.

After Sensei had completed his demonstration he motioned for all of his students to come out for a final bow. Another exciting Tenshinkai exhibition had come to an end.





# 1994 BLACK BELT PROMOTIONS

by Quang Hai Nguyen

On July 2, 1994 the Aikikai Dojo, Headquarters of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation in Westminster, California, celebrated its annual black belt promotion. It was the second time for Nidan and the 5th time for Shodan promotions since the re-establishment of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation in America.

In the beginning, Hai Nguyen, the master of ceremonies, introduced three new Nidan and six new Shodan recipients to the Tenshinkai members and families attending the ceremony.

In the opening speech to welcome those present and explain the purpose of the ceremony, Dang Thong Phong Sensei, President and Chief Instructor of Tenshinkai's Headquarters, Aikikai Dojo, reminded everyone of the changes and improvement of the Federation over the past several years. It was his hope to expand Aikido to everyone by building a strong foundation of both technical skill and organizational structure. Phong Sensei recognizes many good things that society provides to people. We then have



the duty to lend a helping hand to make the society in which we live a better place by spreading Aikido to everyone.

Phong Sensei has tried hard to succeed the past six years. As for a long term plan for the future of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation, all the members should continue to carry on its tradition. Phong Sensei asked everyone, especially the higher ranks, to increase participation with him in many ways to share their knowledge and experience with others.

He also welcomed the dream of many members to practice Aikido with the intention of teaching in the future. Phong Sensei fully supports these individuals, but for now, he asks everyone to focus on the most important task of training well, so that they can gain more experience and confidence in what they are going to do in the future.



Phong Sensei also reminded the Shodan groups that once they receive the black belt, it is not the end, but rather a new beginning in Aikido. He or she should practice even more in the hope of further understanding the essence of Aikido. They should never be satisfied with the black belt they earned and neglect to train daily. There is still much more to be learned. He emphasized that the training and development of the heart and mind are the spirit of Aikido. It is useless if people just train to look good with the techniques and ignore the important aspect of the philosophy of Aikido. The student must not only train in the techniques on the mat, but also use the concept of peace and non-violence off the mat. He taught us that Aikido is for self-discovery and growth. So whatever we do, it is to reflect the inside of us. Those who wear a black belt should be well liked and get along with everyone in mutual respect and fairness. They should be driven not to create a gap between members, but should be humble when sharing their knowledge with others. They should cultivate their inner self to



improve everyday so that others can see a good example to follow. It is not right if they tell others to do things that they themselves do not do. Everyone in attendance seemed to be deeply moved by Phong Sensei's speech.

Following Phong Sensei's speech he handed out the certificates to the new Nidan and Shodan recipients. His handshake conveyed a deeper meaning of love, and happiness for each student and his new beginning. The group understood its duty and hoped to do its best to follow its respect for Sensei's teaching.

Phong Sensei then tied the new black belt on each Shodan recipient, presented the hakama and finally the certificate. Everyone could see the excitement and honor in each Shodan student.

The applause seemed to be endless. Every member showed their joy from

his/her heart to the new black belt students. After that, one of the new Nidan students, on behalf of the Nidan group shared the experience of witnessing Phong Sensei being totally devoted to Aikido despite many difficulties in rebuilding the federation from scratch. Phong Sensei does set a good example by his dedication and strong will for the Tenshinkai Aikido Federation members to follow. He is truly a rare Sensei in this day and age. Everyone appreciates his teaching. The Nidan group also congratulated the new Shodan group for their black belt reward and hoped, as brothers and sisters, they join hands to work together to fulfill Phong Sensei wishes in spreading Aikido to everyone. Each new Shodan had a chance to come up and express his feelings and share his comments from years of training under the guidance of Phong Sensei. All of them had the same promise: "Not to let Phong Sensei down."



To conclude the ceremony Phong Sensei asked everyone to gather together to have pictures taken. Many smiles and handshakes were exchanged. In their eyes, everyone agreed that the ceremony looked very simple, but it was very emotional and that is why this event will bring unforgettable memories to each new black belt student and the attendants. ☐



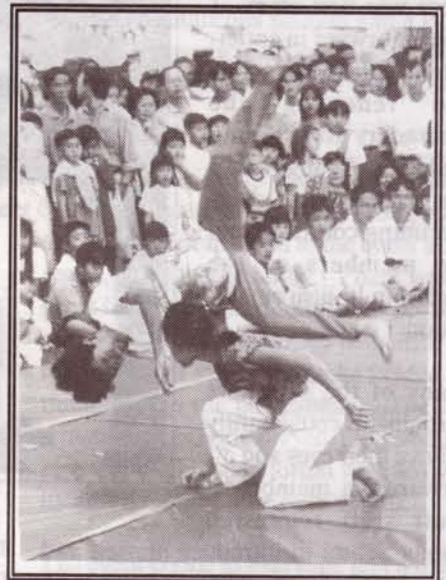
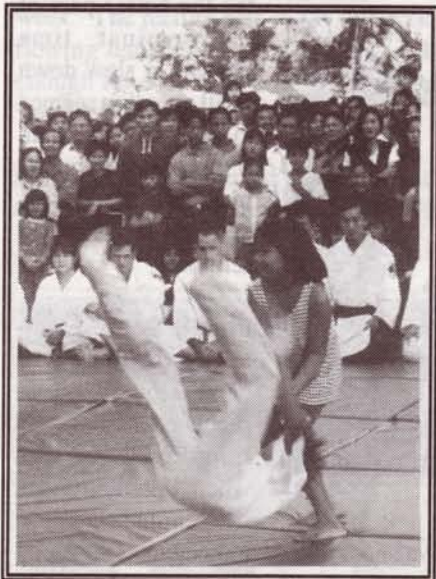




## 1994 MOON FESTIVAL

by Victor Moyano

Tenshinkai Aikido Federation performed a demonstration at Bolsa Grande High School during the Vietnamese Moon Festival celebration on September 24, 1994. The demonstration team drew a large crowd surrounding the mats. The thought of performing in front of such a large audience made me so nervous that concentrating was difficult. Fortunately, the demonstration was a great success I thought. Evidently, the reaction of the crowd gave the same impression. Loud cheers and applause were given to the demonstration team during high jumps, rolling, break falls, and techniques. Hopefully, all of Phong Sensei's students made him proud.





# CAMP BUDO 1994

By Andrew T. Avalos

Stepping out of the shower, I dried myself and reached for the peace necklace I am seldom without. Quietly, I slipped on a loose fitting shirt moments after a Sunday afternoon practice. Not just any t-shirt, but my prized "Camp Budo" shirt from Phong Sensei's first appearance at the Verdugo Recreation Center in Burbank, last year. Last year's event was first class. I looked forward in anticipation to this year's shirt and renewing the comradery from Camp Budo '93. Phong Sensei was greeted with overwhelming courtesy from the members of the Budoshin Ju-jitsu organization.

Many of the seminars participants could hardly believe their eyes and afterwards, a member of their staff requested Phong Sensei to introduce himself and speak briefly for the event's video record. He remarked that he watched me take ukemi for Phong Sensei at the International Martial Arts Festival at the Sheraton Universal Hotel and asked how long I have been with Phong Sensei. "Not long," I said. I didn't quite remember the gentlemen from the Sheraton demonstration until I reviewed the video tape later and spotted him in the visitor's section. He was very much impressed by Phong Sensei's technical expertise and was responsible for inviting the Tenshinkai Aikido Federation to this event.

Phong Sensei had rescheduled this year's seminar held on Oct. 2, from the early to the late afternoon. This allowed him

to preside over the adult class and still present his material from 3:00-4:30 p.m.

After practice Sensei, his younger son

we noticed as we walked it's length. The prior seminar had just finished as Victor and I adjusted some of the creases in it's length.



Phong Sensei began the seminar with an Ai-hanmi Nikkyo Kokyu Nage as Hai took perfect ukemi, as usual. Phong Sensei was crisp, focused and for the better part of the seminar time seemed to slow down as all attention seemed to focus on "our" mat. It grew quiet in the large practice area, despite the concurrent seminars.

Phong Sensei concluded the first round of techniques and I approached a gentleman from Brentwood with whom I participated in two seminars last year.

Joey, Victor Moyano, Mike Meezan, Scott Howard, Minh Hai Nguyen, and myself met for a "quick bite to eat" and to review the travel directions. Mike Meezan was kind enough to escort us in his "Deluxe" Toyota Minivan and all of us piled in at approximately 1:45 p.m. We arrived about 2:30 p.m., were cordially greeted by the event's host and dressed for the seminar that would follow shortly. The staff was extremely hospitable and made us feel very welcome.

The recreation center is fairly large with tennis courts lining the walkway leading to the steps to the main auditorium on the second floor. Several large mats were fixed in different areas in the large wood floored auditorium. The center mat had been reserved for Phong Sensei

We shook hands and began. Our members circulated assisting Phong Sensei with the presentation of techniques.

I noticed the enthusiasm for learning the movements from several of the attendees, despite, little or no martial arts background. Phong Sensei redirected into a more circular leading Gyakyu-Hanmi Nikkyo ending with a strong pinning technique. I practiced with several different students and then with Victor Moyano on the far edge of the mat.

Phong Sensei, again, was asked to speak into the event's video record by the workshop's staff. I believe the coverage was provided in conjunction with the local cable network. He spoke a few brief statements as Anh Hai translated.



Phong Sensei was greeted by Mr. Robert Young, Executive Editor of Karate/Kung Fu Illustrated Magazine. Last year during the event's lunch Phong Sensei met Mr. Young, working at that time as the Assistant Editor of Black Belt Magazine, and his wife. After his recent promotion to executive editor of Karate/Kung Fu Illustrated Mr. Young interviewed Phong Sensei to be featured on it's cover and subsequent article on "Irimi Nage."

Phong Sensei, in conclusion, spoke about some of the inherent principles in Aikido. He then engaged in Randori, again with Hai as his uke. He, then, motioned both Scott Howard and myself to the center of the mat. Sensei asked us

to demonstrate briefly. Logically, Scott and I both did the techniques practiced for the Lunar New Year Festival the previous week. The feeling was much different, however, as Scott and I both took ukemi in more of a spontaneous fashion and a free-flowing naturalness emerged. His inherent talent of taking ukemi is given, however, when the participant can extend well enough for even myself to follow, I thought to myself, This is Aikido. Zen and Aikido. Later, I described to Scott that he was "on fire."



Phong Sensei concluded class and thanked everyone for their efforts. The instructors all met for the group photo in a friendly and team-like fashion. At this time, Phong Sensei presented a beautiful arrangement of photographs from last year along with

the Tenshinkai insignia to the event's director, Mr. George Kirby. There was a great feeling of "community" as several of the instructors presented responses to the request of selected attacks fielded at random from the participants. The instructors openly displayed the selected responses in an open forum with sincerity and the highest level of conduct.



The event ended as everyone lent a hand to retrieve the mats in an orderly fashion. Phong Sensei was very well received. Even while we were undressing he was sought after by many of the events participants. Along with fond memories of the day, I also was especially able to come home with my prize of this years Camp Budo 94 t-shirt.

□





I met Tamura Sensei for the first time in Japan in 1991 at the Hombu Dojo during a practice session. Phong Sensei had mentioned that Tamura Sensei was his third teacher of Aikido in Vietnam. When they worked out together, you could sense the renewed bond that existed from long ago. After the practice session ended, Phong Sensei invited Tamura Sensei to Tenshinkai Headquarters.

Finally, after almost three years it became a reality for all of us. On September 13, 1994, the day of the celebration, Phong Sensei made a speech to Tamura Sensei and his wife. The speech acknowledged the previous Aikido teachings given to Phong Sensei and many people in Vietnam in the past and to thank him for visiting Tenshinkai Headquarters in California. A Honorary President of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation certificate was presented to Tamura Sensei shortly following the speech.



## Shihan Nobuyoshi Tamura's Visit to Tenshinkai Aikido Federation

by Jim Ogborn

Following this event, there were a series of short demonstrations performed by Tenshinkai Federation for Tamura Sensei. The demonstrations involving the children caught Tamura Sensei's attention. After the demonstration, Tamura Sensei was asked for guidance or advice, and to all our surprise he became very eager to conduct a class along with his wife.

It started with "Kokyu" breathing techniques. His ability to get all of us to visualize the breathing technique was unique and informative, as well as calming. After the breathing exercise, Tamura Sensei preceded with warm-up exercises. It was amazing to see his quickness and agility. You could feel that his Ki was very strong. Then he started the seminar. He threw his ukes with no strength at all, at times making the point of sharing himself with as many uke's as possible. He seemed to be a very giving person, just like another Sensei I know.

I was very fortunate to receive ukemi from Tamura Sensei during his demonstration of a technique. His technique was very smooth and full of Ki. He would always say to focus your energy through and pass your opponent. You could sure feel that energy in his technique.



At the end of the class, Tamura Sensei was asked for any last words of guidance. His reply: "As you get older, you will not be as limber and agile as your younger days so you must practice on the effectiveness of your techniques including the immobilization of your opponent." It seems like Tamura Sensei is getting more limber and agile, not less, but it sure is sound advice. That evening I was lucky enough to be invited to a special dinner arranged for Tamura Sensei and his wife. At the dinner, Tamura Sensei was given a special picture of Saigon from the 1960's to commemorate Tamura Sensei's visit there at that time. There were some very special words from Phong Sensei written on it.



In closing, I would like to give our deepest gratitude to Sensei Phong for his devotion to Aikido which has influenced a top Shihan to visit our dojo. Also I would like to give special thanks to our fellow students George Kongo for his expertise in translating Tamura Sensei's message to all of us. □







# A Teacher's Reward

by Dale Charles McVey

A teacher's life has only one true reward; seeing and being a part of the success of his students. And a student gives honor to his teacher following his guidance and then putting the lessons into practice. When a teacher and student share this experience each also shares the other's joy. And when other people are allowed to be a part of this moment, they learn how better to live their lives. Tenshinkai stu-

dents were permitted to be a part of just such a moment when Tamura Sensei came to visit his student and our teacher, Phong Sensei.

Tamura Sensei came with his wife with warm greetings to Tenshinkai Aikikai Headquarters on September 13, 1994. The evening was filled with warm greetings and ceremonies expressing both Phong Sensei's and the students' gratitude that Tamura Sensei was there. Phong Sensei presented Tamura Sensei with a plaque and the Honorary Presidency of Tenshinkai Aikido Federation to thank his teacher for all of his gifts of time and teaching. Tamura Sensei responded with gestures of praise and happiness at how well his student was upholding the ideals of O'Sensei and how well organized was the Dojo.

Both adult and children demonstrations followed. Tamura Sensei once again commented on the excellence of how Aikido was being developed at Tenshinkai. Showing Tamura Sensei's true gentleness and kindness, he said how sorry he was that the children would have to leave early, and he would not be able to practice with them.

During his practice with the adults, he showed great care and understanding for everyone on the mat. Even in the methods of warming up, he allowed us to see glimpses of what Aikido and its Ki truly meant.

In the hour, we practiced many of the fundamental techniques. And in training with him even the newest students remarked on how smooth and natural he moved. To describe each technique would be meaningless, because only in being present and participating could one really feel the specialness of the moment. After the seminar, I went away with a better sense of not just what Aikido is, but what type of person Aikido could make me.





# THE FRENCH CONNECTION

by Tom Nguyen

This summer we were honored to receive visitors from France. The delegation of four had traveled here to practice Aikido with Phong Sensei at the Tenshinkai Dojo for eleven days. The occasion was also a happy reunion between Phong Sensei and Patrick Rene Dimayuga Sensei, who had studied under Phong Sensei over thirty years ago in Vietnam. Dimayuga Sensei now heads Sakura Dojo in Lagravier, located in the middle of France. Accompanying him were Jean Michel Viessener Sensei of Aikido Club D'Mady, in Montmedy in northern France. Also in the delegation were Bruno Fallet, and Sebastien Iroville. The group was greeted by Phong Sensei and Nidan Vu Tran at LAX on Sunday, July 31, 1994 and driven to Phong Sensei's home, where Dojo members had assembled a pot-luck barbecue party to welcome their arrival. After a slight delay at the airport, the delegation finally arrived and greeted each other warmly with handshakes and smiles. While the younger members took advantage of Phong Sensei's pool, the rest of us noisily indulged in food and talk as we became acquainted with our new guests.



Our lively get-together on that relaxing late afternoon lasted well into the pleasant evening.

Our guests were eager to begin training the next morning. Showing not the slightest sign of jet lag or exhaustion from the long day before, they were exuberant and often times playful in their practice. It was inspiring to see that even though they had traveled thousands of miles from France, once on the mat, they were again at home and at ease. Though we could not readily communicate with each other, the universal spirit of Aikido and the bond of friendship and cooperation that transcends such differences allowed us to practice and share as one.

On this first day, Phong Sensei invited Dimayuga Sensei to lead both the junior and adult sessions. Dimayuga Sensei is a very warm and personable man and made his way around the mat to observe and critique every group of students during his teaching, which included a very powerful Kokyu Nage and an interesting (and very painful) choke hold. His expressive and lively instruction was very enjoyable and sometimes very hu-

morous. He even impressed us with his ability to speak some Vietnamese. Dimayuga Sensei related to one student in Vietnamese that having been born and raised in Vietnam the first 18 years of his life, he was a "nguoi viet" long before being a Frenchman.

After class, some of us had a chance to observe Viessener Sensei's graceful techniques and powerful command of Ki as he played with Bruno, leading him around smoothly and drawing him into the circular techniques with speed and then suddenly sending Bruno to the mat with an explosive extension of Ki. Several black belt students also shared techniques with the group in a friendly exchange, showing each other differing techniques and personal styles which were yet expressions of the same fundamental beauty of Aikido.

A visit to Southern California would not be complete without exploring some of our famous attractions and uniquely diverse culture, so in between classes Phong Sensei and fellow black belt students were able to take the group sightseeing. They went shopping with





nar next year. They also extended the same invitation to any member of Tenshinkai who may ever visit France, saying their dojos would strive to show the same warm welcome and generous hospitality that they had received. Viessener Sensei jokingly complained that Dimayuga Sensei, having spoken first, had expressed the exact sentiments he had planned to say him-

Phong Sensei at local shopping malls, including Little Saigon, where they dined at a Vietnamese restaurant. They just could not get enough of "canh chua", a strong-flavored soup with fish and vegetables. Even while they were away from the dojo, Aikido practice with Phong Sensei remained the singular thought in their minds. After enjoying the day at Universal Studios with Nidan Hai Nguyen and Shodan Khiem Hguyen, the group was insistent on returning for evening class and got their first experience of our infamous "rush-hour commute." However, in braving two hours of freeway traffic we made it to class just in time for practice. In fact, during their stay with us, their diligence and dedication to practice was such that they attended both morning and evening class and did not miss a single session!

The group also had a chance to stroll around parts of Los Angeles with Vu and other black belt students, seeing Little Tokyo, Chinatown and of course, the Walk of Fame in Hollywood. The day was not very leisurely as they had to once again beat the afternoon commute to return for evening class. On Wednesday, members of our Dojo took the group to Disneyland and since there was no evening session, they were finally able to enjoy themselves at a slower pace. They did not return from the Magic Kingdom until after midnight.

At the last evening session before their return to France, Phong Sensei presented to Dimayuga and Viessener Sensei each a special plaque to commemorate their visit with us. Phong Sensei had designed the framed gifts himself, including a formal portrait with Dimayuga Sensei, talking ukemi with Phong Sensei, and a group portrait with the Tenshinkai Dojo. The black belt students also had a gift to bestow to each member of the delegation. It was a small token to remind them of the time they had all spent together (including time spent on the freeways) and the new friendships. The guests expressed their desire to become members of our Tenshinkai



Federation family and would make official requests upon returning to France. They hoped to have Phong Sensei come visit them in France, and teach a semi-

self. Smiling as he patted his stomach, he did, however, point out that he had enjoyed Vietnamese food so much during his short stay that he had put on some weight. On behalf of Tenshinkai, Nidan Quang Nguyen expressed happiness at having the opportunity to meet fellow aikido students from a distant country (France) and share in the same spirit and brother/sisterhood of Aikido. He also shared the sadness that their visit had come to an end, but as he wished them a

safe journey home, Quang expressed hope for the future of our dojos and our continued friendship. The memories of our time together would be fondly be remembered in all our hearts.

Perhaps, the significance of the visit is best summed up by the plaque that they had pre-

sented to us as a gift. On the plaque there are three respective patches of our dojos and underneath the motto reads, "All together we build the future."



# Aikido

## A Moving Experience

### A Somewhat Comical Viewpoint

By Mike Kelly



I can remember my first visit to the Tenshinkai Headquarters. At the time I was in search of a dojo to learn the martial art of Aikido. As I sat (as a visitor) and watched the class, I was amazed at the ease with which the students were performing the rolling techniques. I thought this would be somewhat of a challenge since any type of gymnastic ability had escaped me in my childhood days. I further reminisced about when I was in the Boy Scouts and had to perform the front roll to receive one of the many badges required for a promotion to Eagle scout. I had trouble! As the class finished with the warm up and moved into techniques, Sensei Phong demonstrated an Ai Hanmi Ikkyo on his uke. The flowing motion of the technique (as in all Aikido techniques) is what had attracted me to the martial art of Aikido & Tenshinkai.

I have come a long way since that first visit to Tenshinkai, and still have an incredibly long road to travel. I have found that, not only does one have to perfect the technique of the day but must also perfect and control the nature of the body, which is to resist rather than flow. The nature of the body and our natural instincts (in my opinion) are the keys to the harmony of the Aikido techniques. One who can control an opponent (uke) by convincing his/her body to go with the technique rather than against it is the one who can master the techniques of Aikido in a natural fashion. However, to be able to do this, one must be able to apply the first rule, which is the rule of consistency.

I recently returned to Tenshinkai after a four month hiatus that was beyond my control. That first night back was quite an experience, although in reality just another day at the dojo. I remember it quite well from beginning to end. By the time warm up ended I was ready for the oxygen mask. While sitting there regaining my composure, I couldn't believe my luck, the first technique after my four month absence was Nikkyo, which makes anyone who has ever performed this technique hope the aspirin bottle at home is not empty. As the night progressed and the second technique was introduced, I said a prayer for some type of rolling Kokyu Nage or something just as mild. Well, as luck would have it, this prayer went unanswered. The second technique of the night was Yonkyo, another wrist assault! At that point I started thinking, Yonkyo might have been the technique that convinced me to

take the four months off. That night had finally ended and to my surprise I wasn't feeling too badly and was looking forward to the next night.

Night # 2, oh boy! The warm up is still working me hard and I can't find an oxygen mask anywhere. Technique time, oh no not Sankyo! At that point I remembered I had to stop by the grocery store on the way home to pick up some aspirin. The night had ended and I was happy the next day was Wednesday; no practice.

All joking aside, it is good to be back. I have made many friends at Tenshinkai and am proud to be part of the dojo. I would like to thank Sensei Phong for his professionalism and expertise. He is a true master. I am looking forward to tomorrow's practice (unless it's Yonkyo)!





# Our Encounter With Tenshinkai

Our flight was an agreeable one, but unavoidably delayed for two and a half hours at Roissy Airport in Paris, France. Finally, we landed at L.A.X. Sunday, the 31st of July, 1994. Our group was composed of myself and three "Meusiens". Our dream of arriving and seeing Sensei Phong was realized after evasively ducking the crowd and dealing with baggage problems. Finally, there he was, waiting with one of his "Uchi Deshi", holding a sign reading "Patrick".

Instantly, my mind flashed back about 30 years to Saigon. I could hardly believe it. We received a hearty welcome with souvenirs, flowers, flashing cameras and warm handshakes. The crowd of passengers was looking at us with a bit of curiosity, for here were these "Froggies", wearing worn out jeans and T-shirts being welcomed like V.I.P.'s.

It was obvious that I was feeling "at home" again. The sensations of heart, spirit and harmony were incredible at the rendezvous. Phong Sensei was still the same after all this time. He had not

changed at all! Perhaps, the only noticeable change was maturation and the intensifying of feelings. I could hardly conceive that Sensei Phong and Shoshinka of the Tenshinkai (Thien Tam Hoi) had again gathered together.

Phong Sensei organized such a remarkable welcoming reception that first day. After a good night's sleep to recover, we were all in good shape to dive into the primary purpose of our trip: Aikido.

Everyday, the class began with active warm-up exercises conducted by a different aikidoka. This method is excellent training for a student to move through the ranks of 1st kyu and shodan. In addition, everyone seemed to be feeling a real sensation of happiness. Phong Sensei said, "You feel born again in conducting a course for children and adults." He insisted upon this way of teaching in order to understand Aikido.

Jean-Michel and Bruno demonstrated "Jodori" (kata 24) in their own way. Meanwhile, 15-year-old Sebastian dem-



onstrated what could represent a relaxed attitude.

Sensei Phong exhibited his world of harmony, peace and a serious focus on his work. Each of us loved the atmosphere. It helped us concentrate to the utmost and extend ourselves, giving our best.

I was overwhelmed to see 70-80 children, youngsters, and adults in class. I had nothing but admiration. All of them were proud of their Sensei, especially when he easily threw a heavy man weighing about 190 pounds over his shoulders! It was great to be a part of the silence that appeared as the black belt students fell on the mat with a smile spreading over Phong Sensei's face. I noticed such a respectful atmosphere when someone came in late into the dojo.

Were we strangers or foreigners in this place? No, not at all! I found American, Vietnamese, Japanese, French or any other nationality considered as the same. This reminded me of the saying of Saint Paul, the Apostle of Jesus, "UT SINT UNUM."







Phong Sensei continued to demonstrate technique after technique and explained to us with great simplicity, a joke, a smile or a good word. Everything seemed so clear. I was so impressed with this school. What an education one received at this dojo!

Meanwhile, other parts of California were waiting for us. Here, everything is calculated in hours instead of miles of driving.

member the fragrances of Little Saigon in Westminster, California, and of times past.

It is impossible to put into words, yet I want to thank Sensei Phong. I would also like to thank his wife for her graciousness and her charming smile. We hold warm feelings in our hearts. Thank you very much, dear Sensei for all you have done for us.

A final extension of warm thanks to

Thinking of this, I want to extend so many thanks to Tom, Marc, Sonia and all the others for all their kindness to us. Thanks also to Quang, Hai, Vu, Khiem and Mike for all the assistance and "ballades" throughout our visit without forgetting their families. I can still fondly re-

all of you, brothers and sisters of Tenshinkai. You opened your hearts to the "Mousquetaries" from abroad. Gifts exchanged are deeply appreciated, but your brotherly and sisterly friendship will remain the best souvenir!

As in the famed Douglas MacArthur's words, "I shall return" (Sensei).

Many thanks again, Sensei. See you in France in June 1995.

**Patrick Rene Dimayuga**  
Vice-President,  
Sakura Dojo 19700 Lagrauleire,  
France French Delegation's Responsable



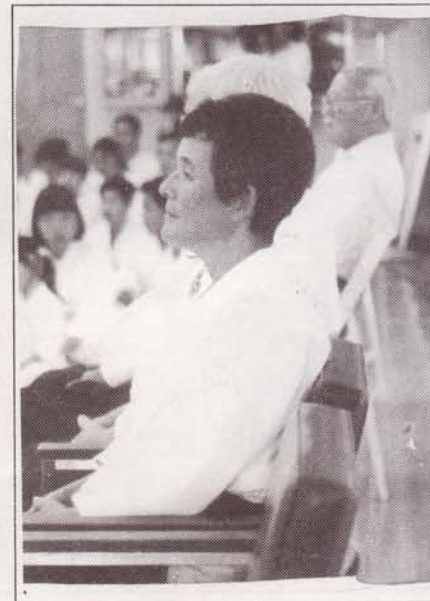
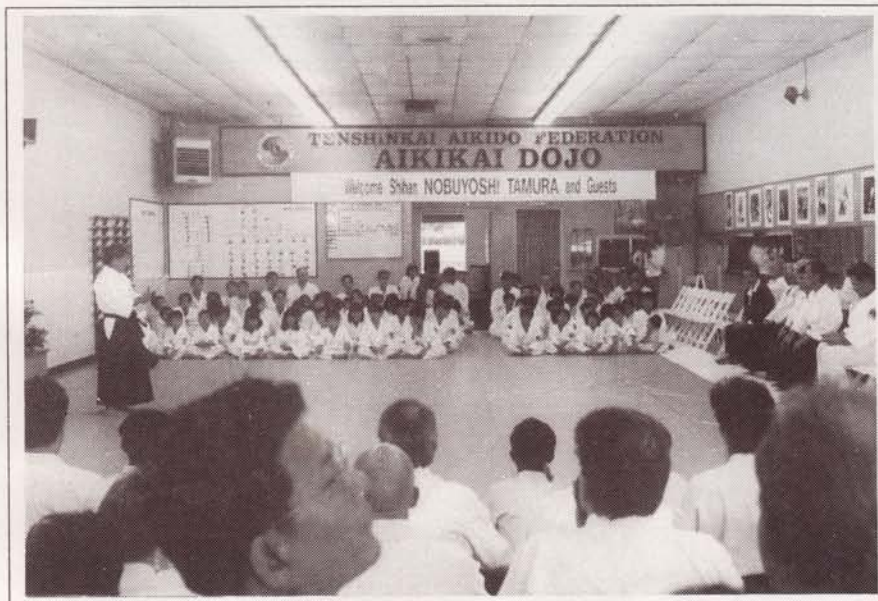
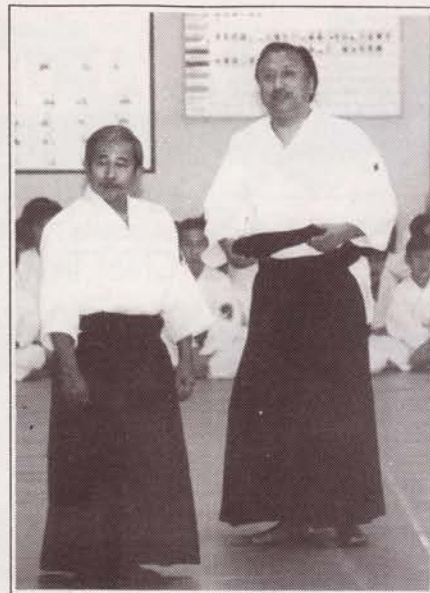




## 1994 ACTIVITIES OF TENSHINKAI AIKIDO FEDERATION









# TENSHINKAI AIKIDO FEDERATION

Phone: (714) 894-1003

Fax: (714) 897-9708

Affiliated with Aikido World Headquarters Tokyo - Japan

## AIKIKAI DOJO

Chief Instructor

**DANG THONG PHONG**

*Self Defense Training  
Mind & Body Harmony*

8536 Westminster Avenue, Westminster, CA 92683

(Corner of Westminster Ave. & Newland St., Next to Stater Bros Market)

### AIKIDO TRAINING SCHEDULE

#### MONDAY thr. FRIDAY

8 - 9:30 AM Adults

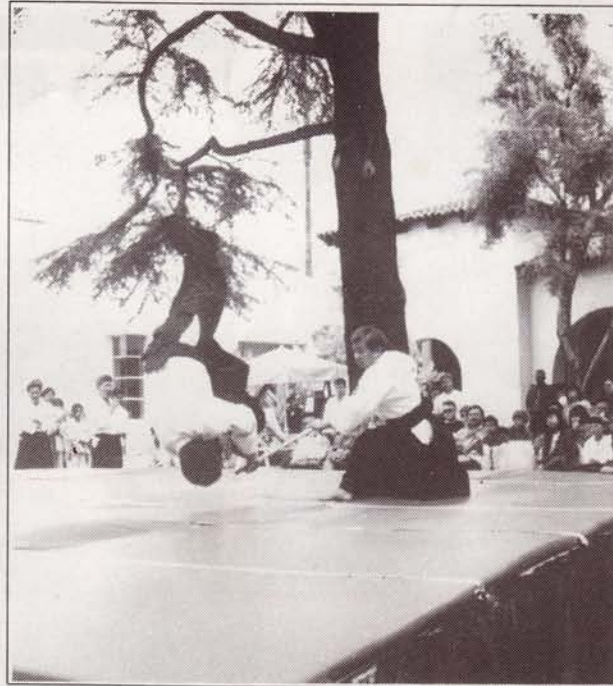
5 - 6:30 PM Juniors

6:30 - 8 PM Adults

#### SATURDAY & SUNDAY

10 - 11:30 AM Juniors

11:30 - 1 PM Adults



Tenshinkai Aikido Federation

### Aikikai Dojo

8536 Westminister Avenue

Westminster, California 92683



To: \_\_\_\_\_  
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