

CONTENTS

- 1 Banish Fear
- 2 Editorial
- 4 Anterior Knee Pain
- 7 Spatial Awareness and Understanding
- 8 Fear, Caution and Perservance
- 9 Injuries: A Path for Growth
- 11 Some Reflections
- 14 Aikido and Zen
- 15 'A Man Standing on a Rainbow'
- 21 Warwick Aikido Club Fund-raising Course
- 22 Promotions

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Chiba Sensei and Paul Robinson (uke), Coventry, Oct 08

Photo: Melina Kremakova

Banish Fear and Eliminate One of the Causes of Injuries

Shihan Chris Mooney explains



Shihan Chris Mooney

In the mid-1980s, I was asked to appear in the Crown Court as an expert witness because an Aikido student had been injured during training. When asked by the prosecution if I had ever sustained any injuries during my time training in Aikido, I said, 'Yes'. 'Could you tell us of some of your injuries?' With a certain pride, I began to recount a long list, starting from my feet and working my way up to my head! I felt the courtroom, already silent, becoming more attentive. The judge leaned over and looked down at me, and said, 'And you do this for pleasure?' In his summing-up, after a two-day court case, the judge said, 'It's not unlike cricket. There's a certain risk involved, and it's difficult to know whether a foul ball was delivered.'

Now, years later, reflecting on this,

I think that my pride in my 'battle scars' was somewhat misplaced, and showed my ignorance more than anything else. However, the judge was indeed correct. In any sport or activity, there is naturally risk. In the martial arts, by the sheer nature of the activity, this is even more the case. We are, after all, considering an activity which historically concerned the maiming or even death of other human beings.

Why do injuries happen?

Lao Tzu: 'Delusions in the mind, resistance in the body.'¹

Over time, I have noted several causes of injuries in our training.

The most obvious example of conflict is collision: literally, two or more bodies coming into contact in an uncontrolled way. Here, the basic cause is lack of spatial awareness.

Another common conflict in the dojo (particularly in the early stages of

¹ Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

continued on page 3



Chiba Sensei and Maciej Tomaszewski (uke), Polish Summer School, Wroclaw, Aug 2010

Photo: Beata Darowska

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Editorial



Photo: Franco

Ask anyone who engages in a physical activity - sport or martial arts - and it is quite likely that not only will you hear about his/her achievements but also the injuries sustained while doing an activity much loved.

This issue explores ways in which to avoid injuries by being aware of the signposts and what mental attitude to adopt to help in aiding the healing process.

Andrew Stones met Shihan Mick Holloway while they were both students at the British School of Osteopathy (BSO) in London. Andrew who was the most senior and dedicated student at the dojo shares with us his fond memories of Shihan Holloway. I have often heard Shihan Holloway speaking very proudly and highly of the commitment shown by Andrew in his practice.

When Shihan Holloway passed away in July 2003 Chiba Sensei wrote that 'Losing Mick Holloway for me is not simply losing one of my dearest disciple who had been with me for over 35 years. It means also losing a witness to the development of Aikido and its history in Great Britain from the time of the cradle to full maturity...'

This summer Chiba Sensei will be conducting a Memorial class for Shihan Holloway on Saturday 6 August 2011 at I Shin Juku, Central Aikikai, Burton-on-Trent (details from rhedmunds@hotmail.com) following the Birankai Europe Summer School in Worcester, England.

It is hoped that *BE Musubi* is seen not only as a vehicle for exchanging views relating to our study of Aikido but also as a historical document which charts the course and reflect important events in the life of the various organisations/dojos in Birankai Europe.

We also very much welcome articles from students who have travelled abroad to enhance their study in not only Aikido but also relevant or closely allied arts with similar metaphysical roots.

Photographs give an added touch to the presentation of the newsletter and with the ready availability of digital cameras we would encourage members to send us relevant photos. Please add the title of each photo (which includes name of subject, venue and date) and also the name of the photographer (an important person to credit!).

Please do not hesitate to send us any suggestions for *BE Musubi* - we are keen to produce a publication for your information which you will find useful and valuable. ☺

DEE CHEN

training) is poor methodology, for example being strong/heavy or light at the wrong times. Ideally, one should be stable when throwing and light when taking ukemi; the opposite situation is a recipe for injury. Another example is confusion between kihon waza and ki-no-nagare.

More deeply, fear is a common cause of injury; ironically, the fear of injury itself makes injury more likely. For the beginner, it may be fear of rolling; for the senior, it may be fear of kiri-otoshi. With consistent right efforts in our training, we learn to let go of our fears and a need to control, and place more trust in a response that is not just about the conscious mind.

Actually, many of these examples bring us back to the quality of the teacher-student relationship. Within the teacher-student relationship, many of these challenges are confronted and passed through.

At times, in the dojo or in the wider world, we may indeed want to be elsewhere. We are ungrounded in what is happening around us. Maybe it is because our reality is unacceptable, or difficult to relate to. We need to be more grounded to discover our security and inner trust.

Injuries indicate a need for direct and immediate change in behaviour, as the mind is using an extreme situation to express itself, often involving an actual stopping of the direction we are going in. The conflict may have been unfolding over a period of time. Usually, the part of the body damaged by the injury is already weakened in some way: the injury just brings the weakness to the surface for us to see. The unconscious need for change, for complete reassessment, is so great that it is dramatic. For students who continually get injured (the accident-prone), this situation arises through a conflicted relationship with reality, an inability to be fully present and aware of the world as it presents itself.

Chiba Sensei has expressed similar views, saying, 'In my opinion, sustaining injuries during training is largely a result of the practitioner handling his or her body in a fragmented manner, reacting with only a particular or limited portion of the body, instead of responding or deflecting with the whole body as a unified whole.'²

For students who continually get injured (the accident-prone), this situation arises through a conflicted relationship with reality, an inability to be fully present and aware of the world as it presents itself. ♪

Finally, sadly, it cannot be ignored that another potential cause of injury is malice. This possibility is something to which teachers especially must be very attentive: we are charged with transmitting the Art without malice, and not permitting cruelty to grow in ourselves or our students.

How to recover from injuries?

Of course, there are many practical aspects to the treatment of an injury: some injuries require rest, some ice or heat, some may need surgery. Almost always, the injured part must be strengthened and conditioned to prevent a subsequent injury. These are the practicalities: how does one go about this process?

In my opinion, the solution to an injury is to study it. In my experience, my injuries have been great teachers. As the Zen teachings put it, make your body one great inquiry: with all your 364 bones and 84,000 pores, listen. Listen. This is the fastest and most effective way to recover. If we do so, then our injuries become an opportunity to learn from the body's magnificent intelligence.

Preventing injuries?

Unfortunately, injuries can never be entirely prevented. Accidents will happen from time to time. Nevertheless, through consistent physical conditioning (strength and suppleness) and psychological conditioning (awareness), the occurrence of injuries and their severity can be minimised, the healing (learning) process can be activated and the body can be given the opportunity to rejuvenate. ☺

Shihan Chris Mooney 6th Dan
Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai
British Birankai

² Chiba Sensei, *The Study and Refinement of Martial Awareness*



Shihan Chris Mooney, Warwick Aikido Club Fund-raising Course, March 2011

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Photo: Kelvin Choi



Matt Teale explores

Anterior Knee Pain – An easily treatable/preventable Aikido injury

Aikido practitioners are at risk of knee problems (although I believe that the risk is less than for football or basketball!). This can have a major impact on our training because it interferes with suwariwaza training and deep knee bends. In my experience however, many of these injuries fall into the group of 'Anterior knee pain' which in general is quite easily treated or, even better, prevented.

For the sake of simplification we could separate knee pains into:

- a) pain above, immediately behind or just below the knee cap (Anterior knee pain)
- b) pain at the sides of the knee
- c) pain behind the knee
- d) pain deep inside the knee.

I will briefly summarize all of these types but bear in mind that this is a gross simplification for the use of teachers and Aikido students as reference. It is always better to seek advice from someone with expertise in this field. In particular, injuries which lead quickly to a lot of swelling, pain fitting the 'deep knee pain' category mentioned later and persistent pain should all be assessed by an expert. Also, you have to consider that pain can often be referred from elsewhere (the hip, the hamstrings or thigh muscles or another part of the knee).

Pain in the front of the knee -

In my experience, the most common type of knee pain to occur as a result of Aikido training (as opposed to an injury caused off the mat and simple aggravated by training) is anterior knee pain. This can be divided into pain just above or behind the knee cap and pain just below the knee cap.

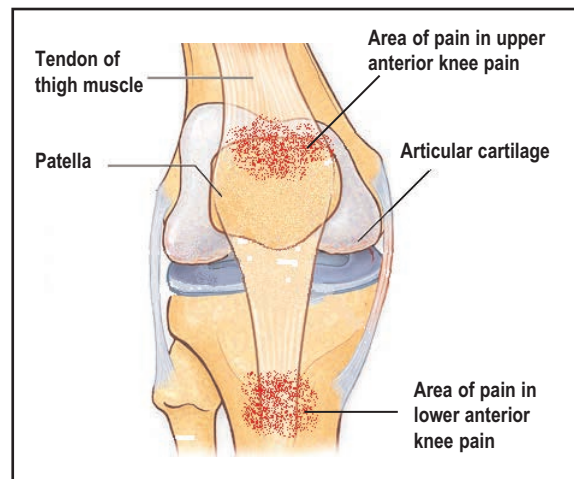
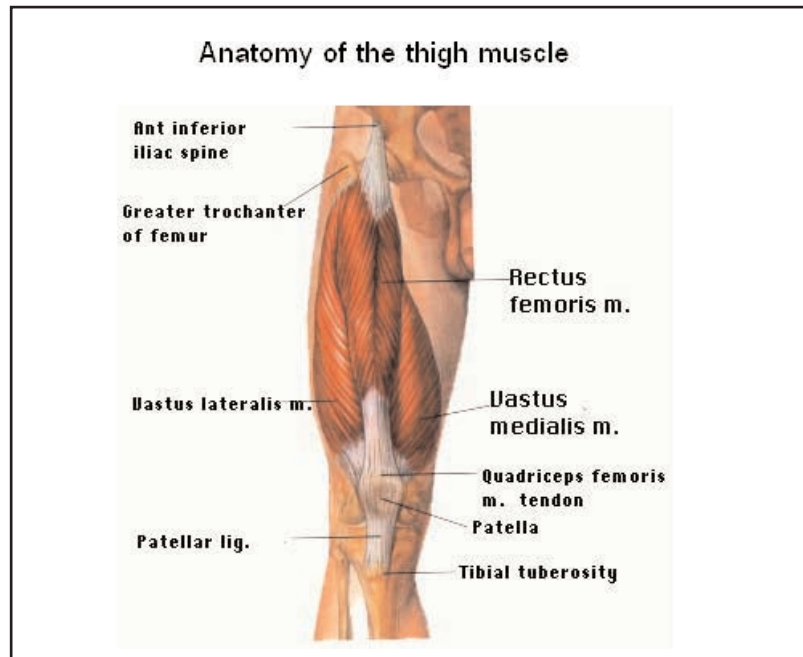
Pain just above or behind the knee cap is usually described as being more superficial – just under the skin or just under the knee cap. There is often tenderness where the thigh muscle attaches to the top of the knee cap. Occasionally there is tenderness under the knee cap when you press it but sometimes there is no tenderness at all. This is usually caused by chondromalacia patella. This is a condition that occurs when anybody builds muscle strength in the thighs with exercis-

es where the knee is always bent. It is common in athletes and particularly common in Aikidoka because we do not want the knees to be locked. To understand why it happens we have to take a look at the anatomy of the thigh muscle.

The thigh muscle is divided into 3 parts, the outer part, the middle part and the inner part. Most of the power is generated in the large outer and middle parts and the inner part (see vastus medialis on diagram) and is only used to lock the knee when it is completely straight and stiff (not something we do in Aikido!). If the outer and middle parts become stronger without developing the inner part the knee cap gets pulled off to the side every time you tense your thigh muscles. This means the knee cap comes out of its normal track and begins to rub against the front of the knee joint. Slowly over time this causes inflammation and with time can damage the cartilage at the back of the knee cap.

The pain comes on slowly or may happen suddenly after a lot of deep knee bends (at seminars etc). Often the

sufferer will describe a grating sensation on bending the knee which you can feel if you gently place the palm of your hand on the knee cap while it is being bent. Also the pain classically is worse when going down stairs. Even though this is the most common knee injury caused by Aikido it is also the most easily treated or better still prevented. If this is your problem, all you have to do is 'straight leg raises'. This entails clenching your thigh muscle very tight to lock your knee then raise your foot up and down in the air about 20 cm or write your name in the air instead. Do this at least twice a day for as long as you can and then do the other leg as well so you don't get lopsided. The drawback is that you have to keep this up for a long time to see the results (maybe a few weeks) but



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it's worth it and most importantly, you can't do yourself any harm. For people with good leg strength it is possible to get faster results by using weights on your ankles. I personally find doing isometric exercise (exercising without moving) by pushing my foot up against the underside of a low, heavy coffee table while I'm watching TV to be less boring and less distracting for others watching the TV with me. For best effects with isometric exercises you need to push hard (with the knee locked) for 6 seconds at a time, repeatedly (as often as you can).

I have been told that doing the isometric push for more than 6 seconds at a time, doesn't not have any added benefit.

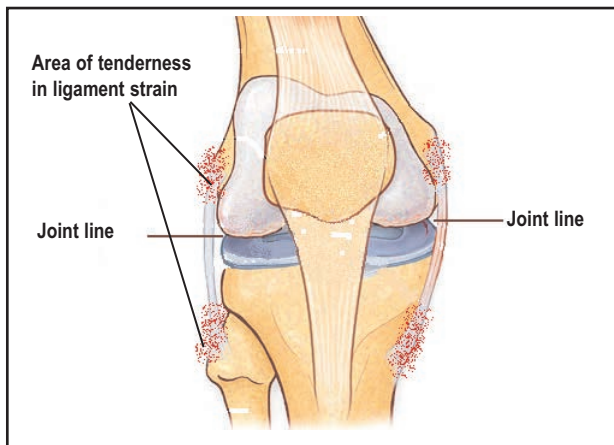
I believe that this problem is so likely to happen if you are training properly that the teacher should do regular preventative exercises. Chiba Sensei's abdominal exercises (rocking back and forth) are good for this but ONLY if (as he insists) the knees are kept locked at all times. However, I'm sure that a creative teacher could think up some other ways of doing the same thing if the students refuse to lock their knees!

Pain just below the knee cap with tenderness either at the very lowest tip of the knee cap, on the patellar tendon or over the bony lump where the patellar tendon joins the shinbone is usually caused by bursitis. This is a condition where the fluid filled sack (bursa) which is designed to reduce friction over bones becomes inflamed after repeated rubbing. There is obvious swelling and heat over the tender area. The common name for this is 'house-

maid's knee' because it was common in women who spent hours on their knees polishing floors.

Surprisingly, I have not seen this very often in Aikidoka but when I have, it has most

commonly been in people who are not used to doing a lot of suwariwaza (or are out of practice) suddenly doing a lot (seminars etc). I believe the best prevention is to do suwariwaza practice regularly. Once you've got it though, it is very difficult for an Aikidoka. Any friction over the inflamed, swollen bursa will aggravate it a lot. This means NO suwariwaza until it has calmed down and also great care not to bang the front of the knee against the mat while taking ukemi. Treatments include anti-inflammatory medication (by mouth +/- locally), acupuncture can be helpful if you find a good, holistic acupuncturist and in more severe cases, orthopedic surgeons and sports specialists may consider steroid injections. Once the acute inflammation has settled it's probably a good idea to wear knee pads for suwariwaza practice until you're sure it is completely OK. The best are pads which have a light, elasticated back and a padded front, so that they don't interfere with



knee bending.

Pain at the sides of the knee -

The first thing to work out here is - where is the tenderness in relationship to the joint line? The joint line is where the round end of the thigh bone meets the flat, table-like top of the shinbone. This is actually quite difficult to find and needs some experience. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the anatomy before there's an injury. If you feel down the side of the knee from top to bottom while it is bending and straightening, you'll find the round end of the thigh bone which is fixed and doesn't move at all. Immediately beneath this is the side of the flat end of the shinbone which moves freely backwards and forwards over the thigh bone. Between these two is a slight, linear dip which is where the cartilage that allows the bones to move easily over each other is.

If the maximum tenderness is above or below the joint line (usually on the most prominent part of the bone) then the injury is likely to be a strain to collateral ligaments that hold the joint together. The most common cause for this is someone else falling on to the side of the knee. In this case the injury will be on the opposite side to the impact. If the knee is wobbly this is a serious injury and should be seen as soon as possible because the ligament may have broken completely. If there is just pain and tenderness then the main treatment is rest, ice, elevation and compression (+/- arnica/ acupuncture/anti-inflammatories). Minor ligament strains are similar to ankle sprains in that as long as there is immediate rest, they usually do well and you can get back to practice quite

continued on page 6



Photo: Giannis Papagiannakis

Suwariwaza practice, Aikido at Kolonos, May 2011



Anterior Knee Pain. . .

continued from page 5

quickly (when the pain allows you) with little or no long term problems. It is a good idea to wear a knee support when you first get back on the mat until you feel the injury has recovered. Major ligament injuries may need a long term brace during training or even surgery.

If the maximum tenderness is exactly on the joint line there is a good chance that it is an internal knee injury (see deep knee pain).

Pain at the back of the knee -

This is a bit more complicated!

If the pain is in the area of the hamstring tendons, particularly in the point where the hamstrings join the bone below the knee crease, then the pain may be due to a hamstring strain. In this case you may find pain and/or tenderness higher up in the hamstring muscle. Hamstring strains can be dealt with as the ligament strain above – ie, rest, ice, elevation, and support (+/- arnica/acupuncture/anti-inflammatories) and once the initial inflammation has died down, heat and gentle stretching as well as heating ointments before and after practice rubbed into the muscle. However, be aware that pain in this area (especially if it is deep to the tendons or in line with the joint crease) may be an internal injury (see deep knee pain).

If the pain is in between the two hamstring tendon on either side of the back of the knee, then this could be all sort of things and you should see an expert after immediate rest, ice, compression and elevation (+/- arnica/

acupuncture/anti-inflammatories).

Sometimes you can feel a lump behind the knee (often close to the hamstring tendons) - this is likely to be a Baker's cyst. This is where the normal capsule inside the knee joint which is full of lubricating fluid has extended out. Much the same as a balloon will have an outpocketing between your fingers if you squeeze it hard enough. A small Baker's cyst that doesn't cause any problems is probably best left alone but if it is large or interferes with the knee function you should see a specialist. Occasionally, a large Baker's cyst can rupture leading to intense pain and swelling in the calf muscle. This is very distressing at the time but shouldn't lead to long term problems (I've never seen this happen in Aikidoka!).

Deep knee pain -

Pain exactly on the joint line or felt deep inside the knee joint, especially if it is caused by or worsened by twisting is likely to be cartilage damage (meniscus etc). Another worrying sign is if the joint locks. In these cases it is best to seek an expert opinion fairly quickly. If keyhole surgery is needed, the outcome is better when it is performed early.

Suwariwaza (this is where I might get a bit controversial – it is all personal opinion, not accepted medical knowledge).

Personally, I believe that suwariwaza is generally good for the knees!! But only if the students do it regularly. In

dojos where they do very little suwariwaza (or bunny hops) now and then and then do loads – I think I have seen more knee problems. In dojos where suwariwaza is a regular part of the training and people get used to it gradually, I think there are less knee problems.

Ukemi, taisabaki and knee problems

Just as a footnote, I suspect that bad ukemi may be the cause of knee problems over time (much more so than suwariwaza practice). I often cringe when I see beginners repeatedly slamming their knee into the mat because they're scared of forward rolls. I think that as soon as they can, one should teach them to avoid any knee contact with the mat during forward rolls.

Backward ukemi is less obvious but a bigger problem because if you have the bad habit of falling down onto your bended knee (again causing impact) it may not be noticed and corrected and over years can cause strain on the inner workings of the knee because the knee is slightly twisted at the moment of impact. It should be emphasized early on that there should be no impact on any one part of the leg during backward ukemi but instead there should be a smooth transfer of contact starting at the foot, then the ankle and up to the hip (just as you do with the arm in forward rolls).

The quality of the training surface is vital to prevent twisting injuries of the knee and ankles. If the surface is too sticky, the foot can get stuck while the body turns, putting all the strain on the joints. Again, the teacher should emphasize early on that turning happens on the ball of the foot and not with the heel or the flat foot so that the foot can move freely and not get stuck. ☯

Matt Teale 5th Dan
Aikido at Kolonos
Hellenic Birankai

(After medical training in England and New Zealand, Matt Teal has been practising in Athens for 12 years in General Practice and acupuncture for musculo-skeletal problems. He also graduated from the International Academy of Classical Homeopathy in 2006 and has been practising homeopathy since that time.)

Photo: Giannis Papagiannakis



Matt Teale, Aikido at Kolonos, May 2011

Shihan Mike Flynn is convinced that

Spatial Awareness and Understanding between Nage and Uke can reduce Injuries on the Mat



During my years of practice I have come to appreciate the cause and effect relationship between Lack of Martial Awareness and resultant sustaining of injury.



Shihan Mike Flynn

While much has been written about Martial Awareness, in particular by our teacher, I will not belabour to discuss this topic in any great detail outside the context of spatial awareness and relation to injury.

The injuries I have observed and experienced throughout my study are generally due to a lack of comprehension of space or an inability to understand and follow the movement. These injuries generally occur in three general areas.

It has often amazed me how some practitioners can be so unaware of their surrounding space, but rather seems to be limited to only the area occupied by their own two feet. During warm-up exercises and resultant ukemi, many students fail to observe proper spatial discipline, which often can result in collisions between each other. The most serious of these has been a broken neck sustained by

a student while practising backwards ukemi when another student fell backwards onto her. This type of situation can be easily avoided by the observation of spatial discipline and increased awareness by the student.

During the conduct of class whilst the students are practising and within the encounter, proper practice is predicated on a committed attack by the uke as well as a trust established by uke towards nage. These two dynamics go a long way toward making the encounter meaningful. Of course the implication here is that as uke places his or her trust in nage that nage will control the surrounding space and move in such a manner to protect uke. How often are partners thrown on top of or close enough to strike another student? This often can exacerbate an injury because the subjects are caught completely unawares, and is by definition a breakdown of martial awareness by nage. Within the practice environment, nage must always protect uke from harm. After all, nage creates the situation of imbalance by taking uke's centre, and as such establishes control over uke. Nage has a responsibility within this framework to protect uke from harm from outside influences, namely neighbouring students. This lack of awareness of the immediate

space results in many injuries which could easily be prevented.

Within the encounter between each other, uke and nage are both required to exercise sensitivity within the execution of the technique. Nage must manage the amount of strength and sensitivity based on many factors, including the commitment of attack, uke's experience, etc. Overapplication of strength by nage has been the cause of many injuries. Uke must be able to respond properly and blend with the execution of the technique by nage, rather than doing what they wish. The inability of uke to blend with nage's execution of technique demonstrates a lack of awareness that is responsible for many injuries on the mat. In my experience the most typical of these situations involve uke pulling away from nage within a technique, which creates an unsustainable force on wrist, elbow or shoulder, and results in ligament injury to one of those joints.

I strongly believe that a great majority of the injuries which we experience during our practice can be prevented by an increased martial awareness. Martial awareness can be cultivated anywhere, not just in the dojo environment. However, within the dojo, I would strongly encourage all students to work hard on expanding their consciousness beyond the space that they occupy, and work toward the development of greater sensitivity of their spatial awareness. ☯



Photo: Beata Darowska

Polish Summer School, Wroclaw, August 2009

Shihan Mike Flynn 6th Dan
Thistle Aikikai, Scotland
British Birankai
June 2011

Injury - Fear, Caution and Self Perseverance led Sarah Piquet to Recovery

At the end of January 2009, and after nine months of Aikido practice, I broke my collarbone. I could hardly believe it when it happened. I thought that that could never happen to me, even less so at the beginning of my practice. During my recovery it never occurred to me that I would stop, that I would not return to the tatami. I was counting the days when I would be back. About three months after the accident I started slowly with weapons practice; it was at this moment that I began to perceive the difficulties that I was going to face. Until then I had naively thought that after the delay recommended by the doctor, everything would go on from the point where I had left it, that once my bones were healed the accident would be ancient history. The first problem was to recuperate the use of my left arm until



Sarah Piquet

then immobilized for two months. Pain and weak muscles handicapped me.

Frustration set in, greatly increased when the doctor strongly advised me to wait three more months before taking up practice. When I came back to take class around the middle of July I was very happy, but this time fear was with me. I had to start almost from the beginning and I did not take ukemi for several classes. I re-learned to fall, progressively and softly. I was also apprehensive about immobilizations. Fortunately my practice partners were very careful with me.

It was at the start of this resumption of practice that the frustration having to deal with the injury and the pain made me very much regret the accident.

In time this subsided and I regained confidence in moving with my altered body. The fear of falling on my left side that I strongly felt is almost gone, but it took me a lot of work to manage the falls without using my other hand. After several months now, I feel that this difficult period is gone and that I can

continue to make progress with the help of the other students.

I had only a few months of practice when the accident occurred. When I was back, things were not the same on the tatami. I learned things differently as a result of the injury, I was more aware of my body, feeling the movements that I do, less in the mind and more in the body. I have the impression that this helps the integration of both. I also learned to be more vigilant, paying attention to myself and counting only on myself, as well as anticipating my physical limitations; I prefer to preserve myself rather than to push too far in effort and fatigue. ☯

Sarah Piquet 4th Kyu
Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne
Birankai CH (Switzerland)
May 2011

Translation: Norberto Chiesa

Photos: MPR Vered



Sheli Hagag practising Ukemi
at Shihan Chris Mooney course

A Mon Kan Dojo, Tel Aviv Aikikai

March 2008

Injuries: A Path for Growth that involves the 'Willingness to Receive'

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Christophe Peytier shares his experiences

At first it is not an easy feeling to try to remember injuries and it appears difficult to write articles on this topic.



Christophe Peytier

Overall, it is an experience that one would rather put behind.

However, if one forces oneself to reopen that closed box, to look back at it with eyes devoid of emotions, one will usually admit that there was a positive aspect to it.

In my 25 years of Aikido, and about ten years of Judo before that, I was fortunate to have only two injuries as direct consequence of practice. Ironically, both occurred exactly with Chiba Sensei watching over me! The first one occurred in March 1995 at a seminar in El Cerrito, at Lizzy Lynn Sensei's Dojo. I was practising with Bobby, one of the 'big guys' in California, and we usually had a spirited practice to say the least. Chiba Sensei had just corrected my ukemi, since I had a tendency to collapse the

wrong leg and hence losing the connection with my nage. So, I was trying the way that Sensei was recommending but, of course, my ego prevented me from telling Bobby 'easy, while I am adjusting my body'. You must be joking! On my dead body I would never have told Bobby, 'Easy with me.' That would have been as embarrassing as coming on to the mat naked! As a result of such an ego-driven behaviour, after being projected three times I just heard a big 'crack' on my shoulder, and ended up with a separated collar bone. Sensei was on me right away. It didn't take him more than a few seconds to tell me 'off the mat' and here I went for ice, tape, etc. From that moment, a new world started for me: Learning to be diminished and weakened. I could not even drive my car back home, as I could not shift gear (probably the only time in my life where the sports-car addict that I am would have been happy to drive an automatic transmission!). So, one of my dojo mates drove the car for me back to Alameda and I sat in the passenger seat, learning the feeling

of having to depend on someone for something so simple.

This was just the beginning: the next day I had my right arm snugly tight in a sort of armrest that would impede any shoulder and arm movement for the next three weeks. I could use my fingers, OK, but I could not extend my arm to grab anything, so fingers were quasi useless anyway. 'Not too bad,' I thought, 'at least it's my weak arm.' (I am left-handed). I quickly learned two main lessons during those first few days: first, I became conscious of how many things we do with our hands on a daily basis that we are not even aware of in normal circumstances; and second, I was very surprised about how many things I did with my right hand, as a left-handed person. What we call our 'weak hand' is so useful, beyond our normal perception. This was a doubly humbling exercise. So after a few days of struggling and being grumpy about all that I could not do anymore, my state of mind started to change. I surrendered to the situation. I actually started to enjoy it. This new-found awareness of what I could *not* do anymore created a state of mind that, progressively, allowed me to become equally conscious of what I *could* do. Being a very busy professional, I was forced to slow down for a few days, and thus I began to appreciate every routine action in my daily life. I was amazed both at how I could still grab a toothbrush, and at how impressed I was by the mere fact of being able to do it!

The second reason of my enjoyment was that I started to appreciate the help that my wife was giving me, instead of being ashamed of the burden I had become. It came in an instant: I just pictured myself at her place, and realized that if it had been the contrary, I would have been very happy to help her. So I asked, 'Am I a burden?' and she replied 'No, I am happy to be useful to you.' From that moment I became happy: I was exercising my willingness to receive, and thus providing to someone the oppor-



Photo: Ana Shorter

Christophe Peytier, BB 40th anniversary course, London, Oct 2006

continued on page 10



Injuries: A Path for Growth. . . *continued from page 9*

tunity to give, which in turn is creating in that person the joy to receive, by being rewarded. This moment has profoundly altered my perception of the giving-receiving dynamic, and many years later, when I started to pay attention to the *Kaballah*, the Jewish ancient wisdom, I was not surprised to see that the basic foundation of this tradition is built upon that dynamic: the *willingness to receive* is viewed as the fundamental driver of the universe. In fact, the Hebrew meaning of *Kaballah* is 'reception'. We can also study this give-take dynamic in our Aikido practice, and the more we try to refine our perception of who 'gives' or 'takes' what and when, the more subtle our practice can become.

Then, after that phase of joyful surrender came another, more frustrating, phase. The ego took over again and started to demand to the body 'now you must heal quickly'. It started to expect progresses, improvements, became overtly ambitious, and of

course frustrated by that body that wouldn't heal as fast as it should. Here also, there is a lesson to learn: patience, yet remain determined. To not resist, but to not give up. It is a fine mix, not an obvious state of mind to bear, initially, but everyone has to learn that. After 3 weeks, I was able to move my arm at about 80% of its range of motion. After a couple more weeks I started to come back on the mat, with no problem at asking to my partner 'easy on me'. Lesson learned. Ego crushed. Now, I recovered so well that when I try to remember which shoulder it was, I need to think about my gear shift challenge so that I can recall it was indeed the right arm. But the lessons learned are still in me.

The second injury happened a few years later, at an Iaido seminar in San Diego. I just want to mention it because of my encounter with the nurse at the hospital since this is the part I remember the best! The second class on Friday was getting really

packed, and since I was practising with a live blade, my movements were getting a bit more contracted, fearing I could cut some ears around me. We were practising katate-uchi, a movement where one has to draw and cut in a vertical motion with one hand. My movement was getting so narrow that I ended up catching the sleeve of my gi, and the blade, instead of going up, went directly into my left arm, creating a two inch-long opening. I didn't feel much, and just hoped no one had seen it, until I looked down and saw what appeared as a lake of blood strikingly red on the white canvas mat. So much for discretion. I heard Sensei saying 'oh ho!' and within a second I had someone holding my arm upwards. Instinctively, I wiggled my fingers and closed my fist. Feeling that I could do that, I relaxed and thought 'should be superficial, nerves and ligaments are intact'. A senior instructor came to me and joked 'If you ever wondered if your katana could cut, now you know...' OK, but nothing is superficial with a katana, and I was immediately sent to the San Diego hospital, where indeed it looked like I was going to have nine stitches put on. But the real moment that makes the experience memorable was my conversation with the nurse: A middle-aged Mexican lady who was happy to see a *gringo* that could speak Spanish and, of course, asked me the circumstances of the accident. When I described to her what happened, and that we were training with real samurai swords, she had this very pragmatic question, which for me remains a true pearl of wisdom. She asked: 'Shouldn't you guys practise with plastic swords until you become good?' I would probably have burst in laughter if it had not been for the prospect of the nine stitches to come, and in fact I seriously answered her 'yes, I think you are right, we should do that'. Now, every time I clean my blade and I reach the kissaki, the tip that I now know intimately in my flesh, I cannot refrain from thinking about the Mexican nurse, and smile... ☺

Christophe Peytier 4th Dan
Sanjukan - Lisbon
Birankai Portugal



Photo: Melina Kremakova

Stevie Boyle practising Iai Batto-Ho, BB Weapons Course, Coventry, Oct 08

Some Reflections on Life with Injuries and How Pain can Affect our Personality

by Dr Amnon Tzechovoy

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Injuries are part and parcel of intensive physical activity. They are also inseparable from the lives of those



Amnon Tzechovoy

who practise martial arts. When Chiba Sensei refers to the Way of Aikido, he says 'The pursuit of the Way and its realization demand devotion, sacrifice, patience, courage, and understanding of the purpose of Aikido'. I believe that elements such as devotion or sacrifice, and of course patience and courage – are all linked to injuries.

Following many years of training I have seen how teachers as well as their students struggle not only with injuries, but also with their consequences. There is no shortage of instances to recount as to how injuries occur. Indeed, the consequences are at times rather dire.

In this article I will try to show the complex relations between pain and injury. While we tend to identify injury with pain, there is no obvious correlation between the two. I therefore wish to deconstruct these relations, to show how the physical element can unite or be disengaged from the mind, and how personal growth is connected to all this.

The Manifestations of Pain

Pain has a role in the maintenance of the body, and as such it is beneficial. 'Good' pain tells 'you should rest' or 'you have exhausted yourself to the limit'. It will have a relatively short duration. This kind of pain is a signal indicating that we should stop action, divert attention or rethink behavior. In this sense it is 'good'. 'Bad' pain means that injury has already occurred. We are advised to acquire proficiency that will enable us to make proper distinction between the two types of pain. We badly need this proficiency, if we are in the business of continual physical activity.

Both 'good' and 'bad' pain can limit our movement. Only when pain

persists can we consider it a criterion for injury, that is, that an injury has occurred (and also assess the severity of this injury). It is important nevertheless to reemphasize that even experts have no clear-cut distinction between 'good' and 'bad' pain. 'Bad' pain, however, is more likely to endure for a longer period.

So, the conjunction of injury with immediate pain is complicated. We might find accumulative injury where pain appears after a certain threshold has been crossed (eg cartilage erosion). Yet another type of damage is a result of being excited to the point where the body fails to produce that alerting sign of 'something has gone wrong'. The consequence of this last mechanism might last days after it happens. We cannot move the part of the body that has been hurt.

I have had many opportunities to notice how people respond to pain. Some people over-react to pain, even when minor injury occurs. They might refrain altogether from training. Other people just 'get over it' and carry on, as if nothing significant has taken place. I remember all too well the period when I began my career as a teacher. I had broken my wrist in the

middle of a lesson and yet continued to practise to its end. Only then did I approach the hospital for help.

In the world of martial arts in general and in the world of Aikido in particular, those who practise week after week, year after year, need to develop certain skills. Years of physical strain, along some repeated injuries, eventually take their toll. It is no surprise that some of the top teachers, as well as longtime students, struggle with chronic injuries. The cost is pain, at times excruciating pain. I suggest that the only way to cope with that phenomenon is to develop a mature and integrated mind whose conducive achievement is that we would be better able to tell 'which is which', to allocate each pain its true status or role.

The Acquisition of a Mature Mind

Our image of our body tells us where each part of it is positioned, what each part is capable of doing. Unfortunately, seldom does this image guide us to conduct ourselves with perfect movement accompanied by adequate effort. One of the more common experiences of trainees of Aikido is the gap

continued on page 12



Photo: Ken Pearson

Miyamoto Sensei and Joel Bertrand (uke) BB Summer School 2010, Worcester



Some Reflections on... *continued from page 11*

between 'seeing what the teacher does', and the ability to follow the instructions exactly. A few seconds after the Sensei has completed a demonstration the truth unfolds, exemplifying how difficult it is to follow even simple instructions. The gap between the image in one's mind and the movements that follow represents a split, as I have just described. If the body is able to perform what the mind has just registered, the physical will unite with the mental so that the outcome represents a psychophysical unity.

I wish to illustrate how psychophysical split actually 'works'. I once arrived in Japan to train at the Hombu Dojo, especially with Miyamoto Sensei. The flight took some sixteen hours, and my body was fairly stiff. When I had finally reached the hotel I realized that I could still manage to participate in a lesson with Miyamoto Sensei, and soon set myself to walk to the dojo. Miyamoto was very glad to see me, as any teacher would be glad to see a student who made a huge effort to come, and soon invited me to take ukemi. Sensei threw me to the floor in full gusto, as he often does, yet my body was incapable of responding. I ignored my body despite its poor state. All of

a sudden I felt a sharp sensation of pain. As I was trying to stand on my two feet, I could not move my shoulder. In fact, any movement appeared to cause serious pain. I did not realize what had exactly happened, but assumed the injury was rather severe.

Folly can hurt as much as physical pain. At that moment I could not avoid thinking how futile was this effort, which led me to leave my family as well as my patients (I am a clinical psychologist by profession) and my students. It was extremely frustrating to become almost paralyzed after only a few hours in Japan. It took me some time to understand how I became a victim of my own mental condition of excitement. I have come to realize that when strong ambition does not meet a correspondingly coordinated, strong body, a harmful outcome is quite likely. However, I had failed to realize that no harm would have been caused if I had only waited until the following day. Had I been attentive to the body, more sensitive to its condition, I would have avoided problems. Such prudence would have provided me with a vital safeguard. In other words, we need a mature mind, something that is quite hard to attain.

Young men in particular badly need to acquire mature minds. They are at the peak of their strength, but lack the ability to match their aspirations with their efforts. Their superior bodily condition misleads them to believe that the body is immune or almost so. This lack of judgment inevitably leads to injuries. The root of these injuries also suggests that body and mind are not quite one. They might move in separate ways, unable to support or 'inform' each other. My main argument draws on this separation, to suggest that behind physical injuries lies a psychophysical split. This split and its complementary term, psychophysical unity relate to the coexistence of mind and body.

Towards Psychophysical Unity

One can thus imagine the kind of development that moulds our mind as years go by. The process begins when we reside in a rather strong and able body. At this stage our awareness is not as yet as developed so as to safeguard the body, which sends signals of potency without limits. Of course this is all an illusion. Nevertheless, if we are lucky, injuries might not leave a lasting

impact. As we grow older, the body gradually weakens and repeated injuries inflict greater damage. Healing takes so much longer. Being alert, attentive to any alarming sign, is now needed – more than ever before. However, maturity now comes to our aid.

At this stage sacrifice and patience, alongside devotion, are also much needed. I dare say that courage is in demand too. It needs courage to continue practising once we are so much more aware of dangers. With far reaching experi-



Photo: Vered Mpr

Amnon Tzechovoy (right) and Ian Grubb (uke), A Mon Kan, Tel Aviv, June 2009

ence we assess our ability much better. The match between ambition and ability could now manifest itself in perfect harmony.

My view is that, as we become older, our ability as Aikido artists reaches a much more meaningful plateau. Performance improves with time, despite the process of aging. This ability is the outcome of long years of training which gradually result in close cooperation between body and mind. I am in fact describing a process that results in a certain type of unity, but begins with a gap between the real ability of the body and the perception of this ability. Realization takes time. It is a rather lengthy process. Chiba Sensei once said that injuries are like medals worn by soldiers, suggesting that they might be a source of pride. To the best of my understanding medals can also serve as metaphor for personal growth, for transformation. The pain is thus a carrier of the memory of endless efforts of the trainee through the years. Pain provides a sense of physical continuity. Memory and continuity are intertwined with our identity. Pain is absorbed in the body, in its sensoric memory, to become later a major component of our innermost intimate self.

In the process I have portrayed here, lack of coherence between the consciousness and the body (psychophysical split) can lead to injuries. At the same time, injuries and pain endanger our mental harmony.

The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty holds the view that the body bridges between the inside and the outside. There is an objective body, a biological entity, and then – a certain awareness of the body. As long as harmony between the inside and the outside persists, we pay no attention to how the body performs, as if the body were invisible. Pain creates a schism in this harmony by drawing our attention to it. The body now needs ‘special treatment’, it can no longer be ignored. Yet the source of this vital transformation is precisely this situation that creates the need for regaining harmony. For example: after many years of training with wooden swords and using the sword as part of *lai-Batto-Ho* training, I began to suffer from ‘tennis elbow’ in my two arms. Strong pain accompanied whatever movement I made. I was first

‘Chiba Sensei once said that injuries are like medals worn by soldiers, suggesting that they might be a source of pride. To the best of my understanding medals can also serve as metaphor for personal growth, for transformation.’

paralyzed, and then tried many medications that promised healing. Gradually I learned to move without pain. All of a sudden I understood the ‘language’ in which my body was trying to communicate: my technique has improved immensely. I gave up the more strenuous movement of the hands, and adopted softer movements that have eventually proved to be much more powerful. I still suffer from chronic infection but the pain has ceased and the body has again become ‘invisible’.

I have clearly undergone a personal transformation, through a process in which pain had a vital role. Pain has had a major impact on my personality. It has caused me to give up certain rigidity. I still remember myself as being both mentally rigid as well as quite aggressive in my movement. Looking back at the past, I feel that pain gave me the opportunity to decipher what lies behind the motivation to train in martial art. This motivation, so I now realize, was deeply rooted in a sense of omnipotence accompanied by denial. I have spent many years in denial, not recognizing how fragile my body can be. I have come to recognize that the body is not an extension of my intellect; that it has its own needs and demands.

The psychologist Kurt Lewin coined the term approach-avoidance to describe a conflict, a situation of ambivalence when a person desires things which contain both negative and positive aspects. We want something yet fear the consequences. I truly believe that approach-avoidance reflects what happens to a person

training in Aikido. Such situations are not rare at all and are found whenever ambivalence is ignored, with injuries that follow.

Kurt Lewin claims that the source of the problem is fear that creates patterns of avoidance. A session of training begins; the trainee is being attacked but his body somehow resists. There is a possibility to overcome this resistance, and the outcome will be positive (approaching). If fear takes a leading role, the body will not respond efficiently (avoiding). The avoidance might take two forms: it will respond in some exaggerated manner or surrender altogether, in total denial of fear. Injuries are bound to follow, when bodily response is either out of proportion – to the magnitude of the stimulus, or stop the motion altogether (collapse).

Final Note

O-Sensei emphasized harmony as a crucial element in our martial art. Harmony can of course mean different things on different occasions. Nevertheless, I am now quite certain that harmony is first and foremost related to being able to interpret reality in a very precise manner. This is no trivial thing, to gain that ability, that precision. O-Sensei had figured it all out at a very early stage of his career. I hope to have understood what O-Sensei really meant upon emphasizing harmony. ☺

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Chiba Sensei on Aikido and Zen

‘This gives Aikido a deeply existential character that is applicable to our life today.’

Excerpt from an article by Chiba Sensei on ‘Aikido and Zen’ in Sansho Fall 2000

The significance of Aikido as a martial art, which was a fighting art in its origin, is found within an affirmative/negative proposition reflected in the relationship of oneself to others — namely to live or die, or, in the ultimate situation, to kill or be killed. However, we don't necessarily have to take the original martial expression solely as it was originally intended; we can shift our perspective to more practical terms that make sense in contemporary life. After all, the relationship of oneself to others can be interpreted as (or replaced by) a contrast between subject and object. Similarly, in philosophical terms, to kill or be killed can be represented by subject and object as well as by affirmative and negative. Therefore it is possible to define the significance of martial arts as a way to deal with one's subjectivity in relation to others. This gives Aikido a deeply existential character that is applicable to our life today.

Zen, on the other hand, is a profound discipline that brings about a confrontation with one's own true nature and humanity's fundamental principle of living, better known in

Japanese as *honrai no memboku*, through engaging in the most direct, simple and primordial physical act of sitting.

When Aikido, as a martial art, is defined as a way to deal with one's subjectivity in relation to others, Zen can be viewed as a premise or precondition for martial discipline, and this is where one can find a strong connection between the two. Thus Aikido can be called ‘moving Zen’.

As martial artists we are familiar with the term ‘martial’ and are much accustomed to using it frequently. However, I doubt that we really understand its original meaning, particularly because our understanding is based on the conditions and environments we have created by training in a dojo. In my view, however hard and intense our training may be, we are still very far from the essential concept of ‘martial’ and are barely scratching the surface... ☯

Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan
San Diego
Birankai International

Photo: Milena Kremakova

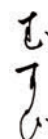


Chiba Sensei, BB Weapons Course, Coventry, Oct 2008

Sansho Aikido Newsletter of the San Diego Aikikai, was first published in April 1983 and became the Aikido Journal of the USAF Western Region in 1987. It was renamed Biran in Spring 2002 to reflect the creation of Birankai International.

'Aikido is a Man Standing on a Rainbow'

Andrew Stones Remembering Sensei Mick Holloway at the British School of Osteopathy Dojo, 1981-1984



I was touched at seeing photos of my old Aikido teacher Sensei Mick Holloway in the last issue of BE Musubi. I trained with Mick intensively for three years whilst I was studying at the British School of Osteopathy (BSO) in London, where he was also studying in the early 80s. I was deeply impacted by Mick's energy and spirit and have always felt that one day I would like to write down my memories of the man, who sadly passed away some years ago now. The photos in BE Musubi nudged me to put pen to paper. So here are my memories of the man whom Chiba Sensei once described as 'My best student ever'.

I met Mick in 1981 when I began attending the BSO in Suffolk Street, just around the corner from Trafalgar Square in London. Mick was a third year student at the Osteopathy school and ran the school's Aikido club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Training took place in the squash court, with tatami snug up to the walls. White walls and a deep blue shiny canvas - it gave a striking bright energy to the venue. Training was intimate and intense. There were rarely more than half a dozen of us in attendance. Then afterwards to the college bar for a Guinness, and time to sit round and listen to Mick's stories of his own training and path. I was captivated, and soon began attending Tenpukan dojo



Shihan Holloway with Chiba Sensei, London Aikikai, Chiswick c1973

in Earl's Court on Friday evenings where Mick also taught. Rather than try and recall my memories in any kind of chronological order, I shall talk of Mick in terms of four aspects that particularly touched me: Aikido teaching, single-pointedness, vision and love.

Aikido Teaching

First and foremost, I recall Mick as a wonderful Aikido teacher. For me, his Aikido was a joy to behold, and a joy to experience. His Aikido had such a flow to it. He would always demonstrate a technique at full speed first of all. And Mick's full speed was... very fast! You could hardly see what was happening. Then afterwards he would break the technique down into component aspects and go through it slowly. I remember him telling me he always liked to do it this way - full speed first, because first and foremost he wanted to communicate the feeling of the technique - its spirit or energy. It was as if he wanted to first imprint the full power and signature-spirit of Iriminage, for example, into the ki-field of the dojo. Then, after that spirit had been impeded, the technicalities could be filled in. Mick's impulse was always to transmit the principles of Aikido first and foremost. Tenkan was never just 'turn', always the principle of harmonization - harmonizing with the ki of your partner. 'Irimi' not just stepping in, but entering, penetrating your partner's centre. As we were taught by Mick, just as in the Chinese symbol of yin and yang, every irimi technique must contain within it a kernel of tenkan, harmonizing, otherwise it turns into pure force-against-force. Similarly any tenkan technique must have within it a quality of irimi also, otherwise it becomes purely surrender and defeat. Mick would speak regularly of ki. 'Suck out your opponent's ki' he would often say, 'then enter! ...Baaat!' Speaking of ki in this way made it very real for me, 'Extend your ki!... ex-PANSION!' he would always say. Many times it was as if you could almost see the ki, and certainly feel it. Mick was the first



Shihan Mick Holloway, Shinmei-kan Dojo (formerly Tenpukan Dojo), London 2002

truly internal martial arts master I had experienced at close quarters. I experienced that literally the harder I attacked him, the easier it was for him to throw me, and the less I could feel what he was doing! Here is a verse I wrote about the experience of being thrown by him at the time:

Attacking with vicious ferocity, I am caught on the wind of the master's breath,

My stance is gone; I try to focus, but grasp at the air,

Teetering for a moment; sublime in desperation,

Then crashing to the ground in pain, the impact following deep into my heart...

And yet I must sit upright at the end of the session...

There is no despair at seeing the completed circle.

I was wowed by the experience. Relax, keep your centre, extend your ki, harmonize, and enter. These were principles he taught us. In speaking of irimi and tenkan as the yang and yin of Aikido, he would also talk of how all Aikido students will have a natural tendency to be either more irimi

continued on page 16

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'Aikido is a Man Standing...'
continued from page 15

orientated, or more tenkan orientated. I was more irimi, so needed to learn to relax and harmonize more. Similarly the sword or bokken carries more the spirit of irimi, the jo more tenkan.

All students must master both.

Mick was also an excellent instructor of ukemi, breakfalls. Even Kanetsuka Sensei, who famously did not get on well with Mick, none the less would always acknowledge that it was Mick who taught him how to breakfall. Backwards, forwards, 8 directions, reverse arm, forward arm, koshinage ukemi, it seemed the variations were endless. And then my favourite, an exercise I remembered from my Judo days - having several people crouch down on the mat, and then taking a run up, leaping over them to roll on the other side. Mick had in fact been a black belt Judo before taking up Aikido, and although he no longer held Judo in any particular high regard, Judo techniques would occasionally find their way into his Aikido classes. In teaching a class it was as if he would be following a creative train of thought, an expression of principle, which would seem to gain its own momentum as the class progressed. A principle would express itself in one way, then transform itself into another way and yet another, and low and behold we'd be doing a Judo technique or a technique Mick had just created on the spot. As long as it was done with Aiki principles, as an expression of Aiki principles, it was valid. Recording these techniques in

the dojo roku (record book) afterwards was sometimes a task in itself! I also found Mick to be, in many ways, the gentlest of teachers. Intense, yes. Serious, yes. But always humane; very human, very normal. I always chuckle to myself when I hear some British martial arts instructors insisting on putting on a thick Japanese accent when they teach martial arts. Never Mick; he was always just Mick, British Mick. Similarly, although he was certainly one of Chiba Sensei's most dedicated students, I never saw him try and emulate Chiba Sensei. He never put on a Chiba voice, or a Chiba posture, and curiously enough (and something which I always thought interesting) his Aikido, to me, didn't even look much like Chiba Sensei's. Whilst he always held his own teacher in the highest regard as being, in his opinion, the finest Aikido teacher in the world bar none, Mick also was true to his own instincts of how he himself wanted to express himself through his Aikido. He was also influenced by other teachers, particularly, I think, Kitaura Sensei of Spain. Chiba Sensei used to invite many famous Shihans to teach summer schools in England during the 1970s when Mick was training, so he had gotten to be uke for many of the big names. Most of these he dismissed to me as being nowhere near as good



Photo: Franco

Kitaura Sensei and John Ferris (uke), Shinmei-kan, London, Jan 1987

as Chiba Sensei, but there were two that I recall he never had a bad word to say about; these were Kitaura Sensei of Spain, and Sekiya Sensei, Chiba Sensei's father-in-law, the latter whom he remembered as being deeply spiritual. I was thrilled just recently when I saw clips of Kitaura Sensei demonstrating on youtube.com. It so reminded me of Mick! - that sense of super-fast speed, combined with effortless flow, and joy.

Single-pointedness

To say that Sensei Mick Holloway was a man of single-pointedness is an understatement. He was undoubtedly one of the most single-pointed, perhaps the most single-pointed individual I have ever met. In fact he could be single-pointed to the point of

really appearing quite odd. I recall the British School of Osteopathy common room as being a miserable place; dingy, poorly decorated; no-one much went in there; but every lunch time, there would be Mick, sitting alone, eating his packed lunch. It was as if he felt that he was at the school for a specific reason; just to study osteopathy; and he was not interested in socializing. He was not against socializing, just single-pointed. And he could also be painfully serious. Chiba Sensei had spoken of a principle which I must say I find rather bizarre; the idea



Chiba Sensei and Shihan Holloway (uke), London Aikikai, Chiswick, c1973

that it is frivolous to smile more than about once every three days. None the less, Mick seemed to take to that way of being quite naturally. When, on occasion, I would pass Mick in a corridor at the school, I would initially smile and say 'Hi Mick', as one would do normally. Mick however would simply lower his head, glower at me intensely, and then from the depths of his tanden emit a single syllable, 'eh!' as we passed. After a while I quite got into this, and would similarly glower back and go 'eh!' whenever we encountered each other. It felt quite good. The glowering was not in any way aggressive, it was just deeply serious and affirming.

The one time that Mick was always happy to socialize was after an Aikido class. At these times, gathered around our pints of Guinness, I learnt some of the history of this odd and intense character, and became enthralled by his tales of hardship and endeavor. Mick had begun his martial arts career with Judo in the 60s and attained dan grade level without any problem. His main interest was his martial arts training and his day job in an office paid for this. He was successful in his job and held the position of office manager. Things started to change drastically however in 1970 when he met Chiba Sensei. He was immediately drawn to Chiba Sensei and to Aikido and stopped his Judo to concentrate 100% on Aiki. Whilst Judo had been his intense interest, soon Aikido became his whole life. The intensity and realism of Chiba Sensei's Aikido

combined with a true sensing of Budo as a spiritual path propelled Mick into levels of intensity and commitment that are rare indeed. 'What was it like, when you met Aikido for the first time?' I asked him, 'Heaven!' he replied. 'For that first year of training with Chiba Sensei it was like I was in heaven!' 'And after that?' 'The next five years? Hell' Mick trained for six years with Chiba Sensei in the 1970s, until Chiba's return to Japan. He progressed very quickly in his first year, and soon became Chiba's primary uke for demonstration. This was a job that few envied. Chiba Sensei has been described as being 'a bit of a bruiser' at that time, and Mick was not spared the bruises. Bruises were, in fact, the least of his worries. Chronic joint injuries, chronic exhaustion, and sheer pain became his constant companions. Although he did not live with Chiba Sensei, Mick was very much the equivalent of an Uchideshi in these years. An intense, exhausting and pulverizing Aikido class would be followed by a long post-training Guinness-drinking session, late into the night (and a good uchideshi should always keep up with his Sensei, in terms of intake-of-substances). Then, after driving Chiba Sensei home, Mick would stay up even later doing the books and Aikido secretarial work, for which he was also responsible. Then on weekends he would drive Sensei to some far-flung



Sekiya Sensei, Shinmei-kan, London, June 1986

Photo: Franco

dojo, perhaps in the Midlands or the North, to lead a weekend course. During the journey, Mick and Chiba would chain smoke; Sensei each time lighting up two cigarettes, one for himself and handing the other to Mick. By the time they arrived for training, not only would Mick be exhausted (his usual ongoing state), but also further debilitated by lungs full of garbage. 'Didn't you ever think of saying "no thanks" when Chiba Sensei offered you a cigarette?' I asked. 'No' he replied.

'Looking back now, don't you ever feel resentful of what Chiba Sensei put you through?' I asked him once. Mick thought for a moment. 'Well, very occasionally, when I'm lying in bed at night, unable to sleep because of the pain of old injuries that have still never healed... there's a twinge of 'why?'... but other than that, no. I accepted then that that was the way he needed to teach. And I accept it now.'

The stories were not all painful. Some were funny. 'Did I ever tell you of the time me and Chiba Sensei got arrested?' he asked me once. 'No!' I said, my ears pricking up. 'After we were released, Chiba Sensei said to me "That policeman tried to put Sankyo on me! But I leant towards him and he fell over!"' I laughed, 'Why were you arrested?' 'I'll tell you another time' said Mick. He never did tell me.

I was also interested to learn of Mick's life and how he had found his way to studying osteopathy. During the 70s, whilst his commitment to Aikido and his utter physical exhaustion both steadily increased, his performance at his work started to suffer. Many times he would be found sleeping at his

continued on page 18



Photo: Franco

Shihan Holloway, Shinmei-kan, London, Feb 1983

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'Aikido is a Man Standing...'
continued from page 17

desk. His behaviour as office manager also started to become a little weird. One day, he decided that all the secretaries working under him in his office were behaving much too frivolously and lackadaisically. To remedy this situation he decided to alter everyone's seating arrangements. From being normal rows of desks, he turned all the desks and chairs around so that each secretary was now facing the wall, around the edges of the room, just like in a Rinzai zendo. There were complaints, and he soon found himself no longer office manager. I remember him laughing as he described to me that whilst he was steadily being promoted in Aikido, he was steadily being demoted at work. His day job was not important to him at that time; just a means to finance his Aikido training and living expenses. Chiba Sensei left for Japan in 1976 leaving Mick and others to integrate what they had been taught, and at last get some rest. He also left Minoru Kanetsuka Sensei in charge of the British Aikido Federation (BAF). I shall not make any comment regarding this latter decision, other than to recall the analogy that Mick gave me: 'It was like King Richard the Lion-Heart had left for the crusades, leaving Prince John in command'. Suffice it to say, all was not harmonious in the BAF at that time. Mick, exhausted, depleted, wondering how he was going to fit in to the new Kanetsuka-led BAF, now found himself also with a bad back. One visit to an osteopath however, sorted this out. Mick was impressed. It got him thinking. He could not, and did not want to try to re-create a student-Sensei relationship with anyone other than Chiba Sensei. Chiba was his Sensei, wherever he might be in the world. So what to do now? Try and put



Photo: Franco

Chiba Sensei officiates at opening of Shihan Holloway's Dojo, I ShiIn Juku, Tatenhill, Burton-on-Trent, Aug 1987

more energy into salvaging his career in his boring office job? What about osteopathy? There are certainly some transferable skills Aikido-to-Osteopathy: physical sensitivity, awareness of joint ranges-of-motion, strength, balance, ki, to name but a few. How might it be to spend his days doing a job which he actually enjoyed, and in which he got to be his own boss? The idea seemed attractive. He knew however that if he was to do this, to study osteopathy, he would have to do it seriously. He would have to put in a similar commitment to this work as he had previously put into Aikido, and this would inevitably take him away from Aikido for a bit, at least while he was studying. There was only one thing for it: he needed to put the idea forwards to Chiba Sensei, and ask his permission. Chiba Sensei on

hearing this idea, was unequivocal. 'You must do this!' he told Mick. It was as if he perceived the path opening for him: the 'do', the 'tao' of osteopathy. And so it was. And so it became, that Mick now had two passions: Aikido and Osteopathy. And this is where he was when I met him.

Vision: Osteopathy and Aikido

'It feels good.' He told me one day. 'It feels right to have these two things now – Aikido and Osteopathy, in my life. It's as if, previously, when I just had Aikido, all I had to offer the world was violence. Now, I have something else too.' Of course we both knew that Aikido is not just violence, but at the same time I knew what he meant. The resonance, the balance, and the parallels between martial arts and healing arts are an ancient tradition that has existed in the Far East for thousands of years. In China, your Tai Chi instructor might well also be your acupuncturist. Mick was delighted when I even found a parallel in the western tradition – in a little book written, I think, in the 17th century entitled 'The Art of the Bone-Setter'. I'd bought the book as an osteopathic curio. In the introduction the author, a famous bone-setter, tells of a journey he had taken late one night to visit a



Photo: Franco

Chiba Sensei, Shihan Holloway and his wife Mandy, Tatenhill, Aug 1987

patient. On the road he was accosted by a highwayman demanding 'Your money or your life!' As far as I recall, the author wrote '...without delay I dislocated both the brigand's shoulders, and sent him on his way. I then carried on my journey to my patient, unperturbed.' An early example of the affinity of bone-setting and jujitsu in merry England! I photocopied the paragraph and used it on a poster I was making for the BSO Aikido club. For Mick, the affinities of Aikido and Osteopathy ran much deeper however, than a mere similarity of joint-adjusting techniques. There was a spiritual affinity as well. For example, just as Aikido has its Tenkan and Irimi principles, Osteopathy has two fundamental methods to correct a joint: either by exaggerating the lesion (the magical technique of taking a mal-positioned bone where it wants to go, ie out of place even further, before it spontaneously corrects itself) and countering the lesion (forcefully putting the bone back in its place). Exaggerating and countering are like the Tenkan and Irimi of Osteopathy. Curious.

It seemed to me as if Mick's Aikido and Osteopathy were starting to blend, almost becoming as one. His Aikido, the Way of Harmonizing-Energy, was becoming like a healing art, and his Osteopathy becoming an embodiment of the Way-of-harmonizing energy. Occasionally in an Aikido class he would, without thinking, tell us to 'harmonize with your patient's ki' rather than 'harmonize with your partner's ki'. We would all smile when he did this. Partner and patient were becoming

interchangeable for him.

He was an excellent osteopath. Even as a student his speed and accuracy in osteopathic thrust work (the techniques where you get a pop out of a joint) were spoken of with awe and admiration by his fellow students. And of course, he applied his single-mindedness to his Osteopathy with equal intensity as he had done to his Aikido. I remember distinctly, watching him in the BSO library at the end of the summer term of his final year at the school. I was watching him closely because I was curious as to what he was doing. The fourth year's final exams were all completed, and I knew that he'd passed. Why wasn't he downstairs in the bar with his fellow graduates celebrating? Day after day I noticed him in that library, continuing to study as if his life depended on it. Eventually my curiosity got the better of me. 'Mick, what are you doing! The exams are over! Take a break!' Without looking up from his studies he simply replied, 'I've found it.' 'Found what?' 'Osteopathy' 'How do you mean?' 'Here in these files'. To cut a long story short, Mick had discovered, hidden in the depths of the BSO library, a whole series of dusty handwritten files written in old style copper plate by an early student at the college in the 1930s. These files contained the essence of the original Osteopathy of the founder, Andrew Still, and his direct student John Littlejohn, who had founded the BSO in 1917. The original Osteopathy was a different kettle of fish from the modern version – much more holistic and whole-body

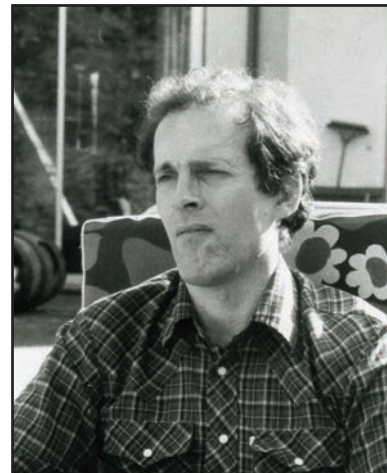


Photo: Franco

Shihan Holloway relaxing in London, July 1987

orientated, and indeed even included an understanding of what Littlejohn termed 'Bioplasm', which was really the Osteopathic term for Ki. This was a far cry from the modern version which had become more like a simplified form of physiotherapy. Mick was now on the trail of this original Osteopathy. In later years his pursuit of it took him beyond the walls of the BSO, and to the doors of the Maidstone College of Osteopathy where a certain Mr John Wernham, a thorny octogenarian who had studied with Littlejohn before the war, still taught the original version, strong and true. If ever there was anything resembling an osteopathic 10th dan, it was Mr Wernham. Mick promptly became his student. In later years Mick taught Osteopathy at Mr Wernham's college; I imagine his Osteopathy lessons were just as inspirational as his Aikido classes.

Mick saw Osteopathy and Aikido as being different manifestations of similar principles, and found the two arts to be extremely mutually beneficial, as complementary avenues of study and practice. It was a dream of his to one day create a centre where the two arts could be studied, practised and explored together, perhaps like a Chinese Chi Kung centre where Tai Chi and energy exercises are practised alongside Chinese medicine. Aikido and Osteopathy: two ways of harmonizing energy.

Love

O-Sensei spoke regularly of 'The Spirit of Loving-Protection'. Certainly Sensei Mick could be fiercely

continued on page 20



Photo: Franco

Shihan Holloway and Chris Reid (uke), Shinmei-kan, London, July 1987

1
2
3

'Aikido is a Man Standing...'
continued from page 19

protective of his students. As I became more and more enamored by Aikido, I extended my training beyond Tuesday, Thursday and Friday with Mick. I explored other dojos in London, with other teachers: Ryushinkan in Camden on a Saturday morning, John Ferris's dojo in South East London on Saturday afternoons, and University College on Wednesday lunchtimes. One Monday evening I visited a new dojo I'd just discovered in Richmond. The teacher there was a man named Theophanis Andrews who had been a fellow student of Chiba Sensei with Mick in the 70s. He seemed a colourful character and comported himself with something of a swagger. I enjoyed the session, although I sustained a slight elbow injury from the teacher. The next night when training with Mick at the BSO he noticed me wincing during Shihonage practice. When he asked me what had happened and I explained, Mick was furious. 'There was no need for him to injure you like that! Absolutely no need!' he said of Theophanis. Although Mick had himself sustained many injuries from Chiba Sensei during his own training, he did not like it when he heard of any teachers injuring his own students, and he himself had a policy of never purposefully injuring students. 'Chiba Sensei's way was Chiba Sensei's way' he would tell me. 'He trained us as he did at that time because there was no other way for him to transmit what he needed to transmit. But for me, here and now, I do not feel I have the right to smash up other peoples' bodies in the name of Aikido practice.'

Beyond the Spirit of Loving Protection, there is of course, romantic love, and in the spring of 1984, Mick

did me the great honor of inviting me to be best man at his wedding to Mandy. Mick and Mandy had met at the college – I think they were both in the same clinic team, and had fallen deeply in love. This odd antisocial old bugger and this gorgeous young woman; who'd have imagined it? And what an honor to be invited to be best man! I was chuffed. Before the wedding, myself and my girlfriend at the time, and Mick and Mandy all went out to the pub together to celebrate. Just the four of us. That night, Mick and Mandy's love was a joy to behold. It was as if they were bathed in golden light. Me and my girlfriend felt deeply touched, and honoured, to be witness to it. Me and Mick both drank nine pints of Guinness each that night. It's my record, which I have neither beaten nor matched since.

I'll just say a couple more things to conclude this piece. Firstly, I'd like to apologize to Mick. I never did do a proper speech at his wedding – I just followed the terse mono-syllabic tradition that both of us shared at that time. Sorry, Mick. Here's my speech. 27 years late. I hope it does you some small justice.

Mick loved Aikido with all his heart. He was a man of integrity, simplicity and honour. Not an intellectual, an instincts-man. I've emphasized his seriousness, but he could also be incredibly funny, often without realizing it. He had a knack of directly perceiving the essence of a person or situation, and then characterizing it perfectly with a voice, a mimic, or an analogy, in a way that often had me in stitches. He seemed to always be drawn to that which was pure and strong, spiritual and true. Modern western culture with its devious intricacies

and clever quick-fix solutions seemed not to appeal to him at all. Indeed it seemed to repulse him. Sometimes I felt he might have been more at home living in medieval Japan rather than the modern West. He once took us all out on a dojo outing to the cinema to see Kurosawa's 'Seven Samurai'. Afterwards he

confided to me, 'Those farmers... those samurai... that way of life... simple, true, honest... so close to my heart...' Although his relationship with Chiba Sensei might be characterized by many westerners as being outrageously masochistic, it was part and parcel of who he was and I do not believe he regretted a single minute of it. Indeed, he once admitted to me that he occasionally felt nostalgic for those years with Chiba Sensei, despite the agony they entailed.

Perhaps there are ways to grow other than through pain. However, I think so many people are seeking to grow in a half-hearted way: instead of being awake to the path they have chosen, painful or otherwise, they numb themselves and go to sleep. I believe Mick and Chiba kept themselves as fully awake as they could in their relationship, and went for it 100%, matching each other in will, determination, and perseverance. One cannot help but be touched by such spirit.

Beyond his relationship with Chiba Sensei, Sensei Mick was of course his own man with his own path. The years ahead brought fatherhood, his establishment of I Shin Juku dojo, his developing osteopathic career and I'm sure the unfolding of many other and adventures to which I was not privy, and which others can recount. Although Mick and I went our own separate ways, I always held him fondly in my heart, and will forever do so. This man of Aikido, this man of single-pointedness, vision, and love was I'm sure a great beacon for British Birankai for many years, and I'm sure is sorely missed, not only by his family, but by all who knew him. It is my prayer that in passing over to the worlds beyond, his soul has at last found that deep peace for which it yearned.

The title of this piece is a quote from Sensei Mick's second favourite Aikido teacher, Kitaura Sensei. This was something Kitaura Sensei had once said to Mick, which he told me had always stayed with him, and touched him deeply, in a mysterious way: 'Aikido is a man standing on a Rainbow.' Mick, thank you so much for all you taught and shared with me, and with everyone. I see you standing on that rainbow now. ☺

Andrew Stones

Photo: Franco



BSO students at Summer School, Lancaster 1983
Andrew Stones second from right

Farah Dawood reports

University of Warwick Aikido Course raises £500 for Japan Tsunami Fund



The University of Warwick Aikido Club (Gen Sen Jyuku) hosted a one-day course on 26 March 2011. It had been in the



Farah Dawood

works since the start of the academic year as we had not hosted one since October 2008, when Chiba Sensei led the British Birankai Autumn Weapons Course at the university and gave our dojo its name.

Initially, it was a simple, straightforward course. As many of the senior students at the university dojo had barely started Aikido when the previous event took place, it was a chance for them to be host to one before leaving university in a few months time. All the invited teachers had a connection with the club: Chris Mooney Shihan, who is, and has been for many years, the teacher of our dojo; Richard Edmunds Sensei and Iona Mooney Sensei who have taken many classes at Warwick and of course, Ian Grubb Sensei who started the club when he was a student here.

However, two weeks before the course was due to take place, the

devastating earthquake and tsunami struck in Japan. In light of this, the decision was made to turn the course into an opportunity to raise much needed funds to donate towards earthquake and tsunami relief. The invited teachers generously donated their time and to encourage participation, and the course was opened to students of all organizations. Any teachers who wanted to come and donate teaching time were very welcome to do so. Therefore, Tony Cassells Shihan and Andy McLean Sensei of Kai Shin Kai also took an hour's class on the day, to the great delight of students who had come to course expecting four teachers, not six, including two Shihans.

The training was long and hard, but incredibly helpful, with each teacher adding emphasis on different parts of Aikido. The students ranged from 6th kyu to yudansha and it was great to see old faces on the mats again, with the course bringing many ex-Warwick students back to their first dojo after quite some time, some of them as shodans. There was a welcome new face as well, with Dillon Mooney at eight months old adding his presence to the course and to the group photo.

Overall, we made over £500 in profit which was then donated to the Japanese Red Cross, the same organization that the Warwick Japan Society took with their fundraising efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to all the teachers who kindly donated their time and experience to teach at the course; to all the members of Gen Sen Jyuku who used up every ounce of their energy in setting up and organizing the course along with the day's training; to Eddie Hodgson for his patience and help when the event page for the course on the Birankai website went through seemingly endless changes to details and the poster; to Terry Monnington, Heather Battersby and Carolyn McQuinny at Warwick Sport for their aid and support in allowing the course to be held on campus. Last but not least, I would like to thank Chris Mooney Shihan for being our teacher at Gen Sen Jyuku and all that we have learned by being his students. ☯

Farah Dawood 4th Kyu
President
Gen Sen Jyuku (Warwick Aikido)
British Birankai

Photo: Kelvin Choi



Shihan Etsuji Horii (Japan), 7th Dan so Hombu to join Shihan TK Chiba at Birankai Europe Aikido Summer School 2011, Worcester, England 30 July - 5 August 2011

Shihan Etsuji Horii entered Hombu Dojo in Tokyo, Japan in 1985, initially as an uchideshi, then becoming a Hombu Instructor. After more than 10 years at Hombu Dojo, he moved back to his native Kansai region in 1996 to establish the Aikido Kobe Sanda Dojo. Shihan Horii has taught extensively in Asia, USA and Europe.

Summer School organised by British Birankai www.britishbirankai.com





NOTICE-BOARD

PROMOTIONS 2010-2011

COUNTRY	PROMOTION	DATE
BRITISH BIRANKAI		
Gina Urazan Razzini, Shinmei-kan, London Aikikai,	Shodan	Aug 2010
Scott Oldham, London East Aikikai,	Shodan	Aug 2010
Miroslav Brejla, Shinmei-kan, London Aikikai,	Nidan	Aug 2010
Paul Goatman 3rd Dan, Thistle Aikikai, Scotland	Yondan & Shidoin	Aug 2010
Alan Stevens 3rd Dan, Meishokan, Eastern Aikikai	Fukushidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Steve Branagan 2nd Dan, Ji Myo Kan, Central Aikikai	Fukushidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Andrew Colcough 2nd Dan, Cocks Moors Wood, Central Aikikai	Fukushidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Elizabeth McPhee 2nd Dan, SakuYou Kan, Scotland Aikikai	Fukushidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Mark Pickering 5th Dan, Cocks Moors Wood, Central Aikikai	Shidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Ian Grubb 5th Dan, Mei Jyu Kan, Central Aikikai	Shidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Stevie Boyle 5th Dan, SakuYou Kan, Scotland Aikikai	Shidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Richard Edmunds 4th Dan, I Shin Juku, Central Aikikai	Shidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
Paul Robinson 5th Dan, GenPu Kan, Central Aikikai	Shidoin Re-certification	Aug 2010
BIRANKAI FRANCE		
Lebrun Jérôme, Ann Jyou Kan, Paris	Shodan	Nov 2010
Peron Ivan, Ann Jyou Kan, Paris	Shodan	Nov 2010
Patrick Barthélémy, Dai Jyo Kan, Bagnols	Shihan	July 2010
Mahieux Fabrice 3rd Dan, Gen Rei Kan, Uzès	Fukushidoin Re-certification	May 2011
Moulinet Thierry 4th Dan, Dai Jyo Kan, Bagnols	Fukushidoin Re-certification	May 2011
Jean-Luc Busmey 3rd Dan, Dai Jyo Kan, Bagnols	Fukushidoin Re-certification	May 2011
Moulinet Thierry, Dai Jyo Kan, Bagnols	Fukushidoin Re-certification	May 2011
Jean-Luc Busmey, Dai Jyo Kan, Bagnols	Fukushidoin Re-certification	May 2011
HELLENIC BIRANKAI		
Theodoros Tempos, Athens Aikido, Athens	Nidan	Oct 2010
Vasilis Mantis, Athens Aikido, Athens	Nidan	Oct 2010
Matt Teale, Kolonos Aikikai, Athens	Godan	Jan 2011
Jenny Flower, Athens Aikido, Athens	Godan	Jan 2011
BIRANKAI ISRAEL		
Ofer Aviv, A Mon Kan Tel Aviv	Shodan	July 2010
Dan Libon, A Mon Kan Tel Aviv	Shodan	Jan 2011
Kobi Kreminze, A Mon Kan Tel Aviv	Shodan	Feb 2011
Amnon Tzechovoy, A Mon Kan Tel Aviv	Shidoin	July 2010
	Godan	Feb 2011
BIRANKAI POLSKA (POLAND)		
Chyla Marcin, Wroclaw Aikikai, Wroclaw	Shodan	Nov 2010
Gryniewicz Urszula, Wroclaw Aikikai, Wroclaw	Shodan	Nov 2010
Karbowski Michał, Wroclaw Aikikai, Wroclaw	Shodan	Nov 2010
Mateusz Szafrański, Wroclaw Aikido Club	Shodan	June 2011
Sarnatowicz Tomasz, Gdansk Aikido, Gdansk	Nidan	Nov 2010
Łukasz Łabędzki, Wroclaw Aikikai, Wroclaw	Nidan	June 2011
Kochaniec Jacek, Wroclaw Aikikai, Wroclaw	Yondan and Shidoin	Aug 2010
Dariusz Machalski 3rd Dan, Sen Nen Sugi Aiki Dojo, Wroclaw	Fukushidoin	June 2011
BIRANKAI CH (SWITZERLAND)		
Anthamatten Beatrice, Sakura Dojo, Berne	Shodan	Oct 2010
Florent Liardet, Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne	Shodan	May 2011
Sonderegg Ivo, Sakura Dojo, Berne	Nidan	Oct 2010
Pierre Cambrosio, Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne	Nidan	May 2011
Christophe Brunner, Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne	Yondan	May 2011
Carl Schmitt 4th Dan, Ryu Seki Kai, Lausanne	Fukushidoin	May 2011