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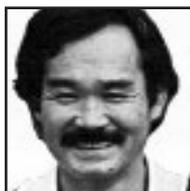
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Please send submissions
for November 2014 issue
by 31 September 2013

Chiba Sensei on the challenge of age

This article was originally published in the Summer 1988 issue of Sansho - the Aikido Journal of the USAF Western Region and precursor of Biran.

Nearly thirty years have passed since the art of Aikido was first introduced into this country.



Chiba Sensei

Many people have started training since then and continue to study and are now facing a common experience: that of aging. Whether or not this time is an encouraging one, affirmative or creative, it is a universal experience that cannot be denied, ignored or stopped. It must be accepted on its own terms.

Aikido is not a competitive art but rather a way of life which requires life-long study and commitment. It is sophisticated, complex, difficult to

learn and strongly emphasizes the spiritual and ethical aspects of human development. Aging and Aikido cannot be generalized; the various conditions comprising aging vary largely from individual to individual.

The concerns and interests of aging Aikidoists - either those who are experiencing the effects of age after many years of devotion to the art, or those who started studying the art later in life - seem to rest upon how to carry on beneficial and creative training within an already established life. A life in which it is either too late to change radically or, more likely, for which it is unnecessary to change from its basic course, but which still seeks continual and harmonious development.

Generally speaking, this is an age

when people are likely to be established in their careers, holding respectable and even influential positions in society. It is vital for these people to maintain their mental and physical fitness if they are to progress further with their lives in the face of the physical decline that comes with age.

Aikido is a noble art (considered in Japan to be a martial art for leaders), and is ideal for meeting the demands unique to

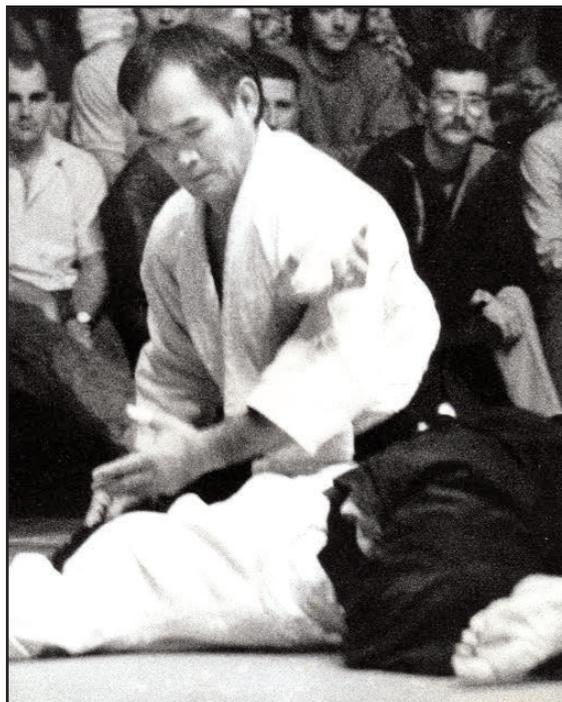


Photo: Franco Chen

Chiba Sensei, Budosai (Grand Festival of the Martial Arts), Sunderland, UK, October 1988

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Photo: Franco

Editorial

You may have noted the absence of BE Musubi in January. The decision was made to coordinate events with the publication date to give more advance publicity of events. The new publication dates will now be in May and November.

For the past three years the UK has hosted the BE Summer School. This year the mantle has been passed on to Poland where it will be held in Wroclaw with Shihan Tsuruzo Miyamoto 7th Dan from Hombu Dojo, Japan. To qualify for a reduced rate early bookings must be made by 31 May 2014. Further details are available at aikidowroclaw.com and on page nine.

Our congratulations to Shihan Joe Curran. Hombu Dojo has ratified his Birankai Shihan award with the Hombu Shihan certificate he received in April 2014. He wrote about this promotion in our January 2013 issue.

In this issue Anne Ducouret gives us an insight into the way we should use our body's centre of gravity in practice. Tim Sullivan writes a moving eulogy on Shihan Jack Arnold 7th Dan who passed away on 5 November 2013. Tim a British Birankai student spent over three years in 2009 at Arnold Sensei's Dojo.

Wellington Tsang has joined the editorial board as the new Sub-editor. Our thanks to Chris Howlin who worked with us from the first issue in July 2010. We wish him all the best in his new ventures.

Thanks to all the contributors who submitted articles and photos. ☺

Dee Chen

... Challenge of age

continued from page 1

the approach of aging. By offering an opportunity geared to meet these specific demands, Aikido can contribute to the well-being of society.

Part of the task and challenge for those who have trained in a committed fashion for many years is how to set a good example for younger generations. Being in the first generation of American Aikidoists, so as to speak, they have no role models from previous generations to use as learning material. They themselves become the ones looked up to for that role.

This is partly what makes Aikido in the United States different from Japanese Aikido. In Japan there are many fine role models from older generations still active. (I consider myself to be among the third or fourth generation of Aikidoists in Japan. I have known many people who started Aikido long before me who are still active. It is very encouraging to see them.)

Furthermore, Aikido in Japan is closely interrelated with other traditional martial arts. They are all rooted within the same tradition and culture, distinguished by being non-dualistic (regarding the physical and spiritual, subject and object) in their fundamental perspective of the world; their history is indeed a treasure house of fine role models who still inspire today's generation of Aikidoists.

In this regard I find that, generally speaking, there is a lack of respect towards the elderly and senior members of society in the United

States, which is reflected in the Dojo community. This can be seen in the relationships between seniors and juniors, older and younger members. Respect for one's elders is part of a strong Japanese tradition, particularly in artistic disciplines, and is, perhaps, an area where more attention is needed as part of education here in the US, especially if we want US Aikido (a relatively young society) to continually develop and remain healthy in the future. Any tradition must carry respect and appreciation towards the work done by previous generations, which becomes the basis of its strength.

Of course tradition is not merely a matter of total obedience, nor should it be copied blindly or ignored, but must often be challenged and surpassed by the unavoidable encounter between generations. Nevertheless, isolating ourselves from the strength of previous generations does not make our society any better or healthier.

Equality is a human being's basic right and is without a doubt one of the most profound achievements throughout the struggle of human history. However, the reality of human existence and dynamism of human relationships are often more than this basic principle can handle creatively, especially in the world of artistic discipline.

So, what is special about Aikido for older people? Although conditions vary largely from individual to individual, there seems to be a common factor that one can, more or less, come to recognize. It is the importance of internal balance, or self-contained harmony, between physical and

mental well-being. Whether one is forced to accept this by having to acknowledge the limitations of the physical fantasy of youth, or by the established fact resulting from the efforts one has accumulated over the years, it does seem to be a turning point in one's life if one wants to continue to develop.

It is a common practice in Japan that at the age of 39 through 41 one goes to a shrine to be purified. This age is considered to be a time of misfortune, during which it is seriously thought that bad things can happen. In many respects, it is a period of life when major transitions take place, and it is seemingly a period where one graduates from youth to maturity in the true sense of individuality (if one indeed succeeds in this transition). A famous statement by the ancient Chinese scholar, Confucius, says that at the age of forty, one stands on one's own feet.

It can be said then that the true study of art (or life as art) only begins at forty. Although physical ability may begin to decline at this time, the physical aspect is only a part of what is required to be a fine Aikidoist. More essential at this point are mental and psychological conditions, greater sensitivity and understanding towards the diversity of the human condition, as well as better perspective and insight towards the paradox and complexity of human potential and expectations. Most of all, there comes the establishment of one's internal balance and self-contained harmony, with insight towards true understanding of self. In other words, wisdom through age is something that youth cannot offer.

Let me repeat the words of the Founder. He used to tell us that "If you guys advance fifty steps, I will advance one hundred." These were words expressed by a man who was already in his eighties. Whatever he meant by advancement, it is certain that there are things that only grow with age; the decay of the body is one thing, but what else lies ahead for us? This is our challenge. ☯

**Shihan TK Chiba 8th Dan
Birankai Founder
San Diego, California**



Chiba Sensei with Mateusz Tomasz Waga (uke), Polish Summer Camp, August 2010

Photo: Beata Darowska



Anne Ducouret, Shidoïn and Osteopath on

Understanding the Centre of Gravity - the first pillar of training

While we constantly use our centre of gravity in Aikido and usually in all physical activities, we are not fully



Anne Ducouret

aware of its constitution and its operation. No part of our body can evade gravity. The body, while subjected to earth's gravity also uses it for positioning itself and for moving around. This directed and continuous force is the movement first pre-requisite.

A movement always appears as a transformation of one's balance and implies a change and a continuous adjustment of one's position. The position centre is the area where all opposing forces cancel each other. Its location varies according to the forces taken into account. The sense of centre enables unifying every parameter of a structure or a movement to maximize an action. The body's centre of gravity is located in the field set at the junction of the gravity line which starts at the vertex and of the inclined plane reaching the 3rd lumbar vertebra (LIII), at a point located three fingers below the navel.

The body and gravity

Fig. No.1: Gravity as a pendulum

At first, during the embryonic and fetal time, our body develops in the weightlessness of the mother's amniotic fluid. For the duration of our life we shall keep the memory of this fluid bath where, in absence of oxygen, our breathing was similar to the fish. The umbilical cord which links the fetus to the placenta is a nutrition centre as well as a stimulus and a movement centre. The umbilicus is located in front of the 3rd lumbar which, later on, will act with predominance in the relation between the body and gravity and the umbilicus will remain a main area

from where one can call upon the centre of gravity. The fetus develops itself in an antero-posterior winding which will result in the spine primary curvature, the kyphosis (from the Greek *kuphōsis*, 'curvature'), later to be identified in the skull shape, at the dorsal and the sacrum level, the posterior bone that shapes the pelvis. The limbs

tion shapes the lumbar lordosis (from the Greek *lordōsis*, 'arch') and finalizes the cervical lordosis setting. Our first steps set the relation between gravity and the ground response. Our body will react differently whether our centre of gravity is moved forward or backward of the axis connecting both acetabula.

As soon as a downward force is detected, it is counterbalanced by a support reaction automatically adjusted to the load applied to the body.

For this reaction to happen automatically in an adaptive way (hence supple), the body is provided with a flexible restraint created deep in the structure by the connective tissues³ and by the fluid suspension (we are made of 65% of water). The fibrous tissues of fascia bind all structures and are organized as chains with a central axis of symmetry. They channel the gravity downward force and form the movement skeleton. When standing, the central gravity main force line is equivalent to two downward postero-anterior lines starting at the skull base, joining at the level of the 3rd lumbar to part again and end at the feet centre arch.

If we compare the gravity action in the body to a pendulum, the skull becomes the higher pole, comparatively steady, the stretched string is the gravity force line in the fibrous tissues and the centre of gravity is the lower stylus oscillating within the structure.

The whole body acts as if its mass was fully brought to its centre of gravity, point of application of the resulting gravity forces acting on every molecule of the body. The weight action line always passes through this point. The centre of gravity must be able to move in every direction according to the needs of one's position and movement since its function is to balance all pressure/internal tension resulting from

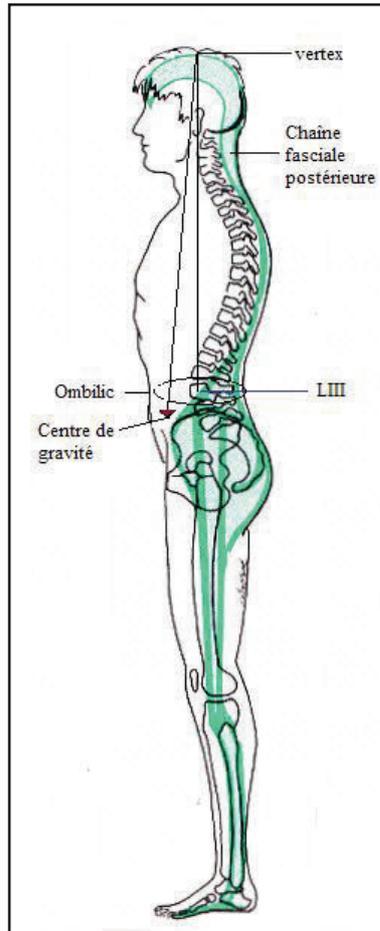


Fig. No.1: Gravity as a pendulum

will develop in gravity according to a torsion which set their extremities in opposition.

Then, the vertical position is reached through a straightening up movement around the hip (acetabulum) by the joint action of the gluteal muscles¹ and the psoas muscles². This vertical posi-

¹Gluteus maximus or gluteal muscle: iliac wing, posterior surface of the lower part of the sacrum and the side of the coccyx, external face of the sacrotuberous ligament, fascia covering the gluteus medius and aponeurosis of the erector spinae.

²Psoas muscle: originates on the side of TXII, and Li to LV bodies, transverse processes and vertebral discs and terminates on the lesser trochanter of the femur.

³The connective tissue or fascia binds some structures of the body together. It can be define as the 'physiological ensemble formed by all the body fibrous tissues'. The basic substance of these tissues is similar to a gel: its viscosity provides sliding surfaces for the structures and the organs that the tissues surround.

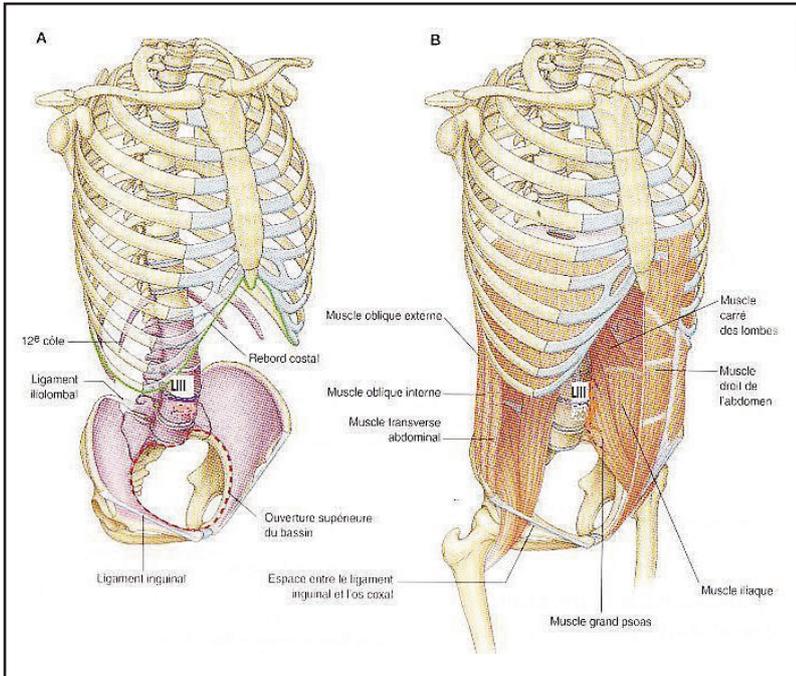


Fig. No.2: The abdomen walls and muscles

gravity and movement. It is essential that this point does not set itself permanently on a joint or a particular organ which would alter the functions concerned since the function is intrinsically connected to the movement.

The centre of gravity system

Fig. No.2: The abdomen walls and muscles

The abdominal cavity, with its soft viscera similar to a deformable and incompressible liquid mass, possesses the mechanical property necessary to the centre of gravity proper operation.

The centre of gravity is a system combining bone, muscle and membranous material connected to the viscera mechanism and to the diaphragms action. More specifically, we should emphasize **the part played by two bone elements, the third lumbar and the pelvis higher opening edge, and the action of the transverse muscle with its fibrous extensions constituting the Douglas' line, the serous membrane lining the middle part of the peritoneum (mesentery). The small intestine is the main viscera acting in the absorption of gravity**

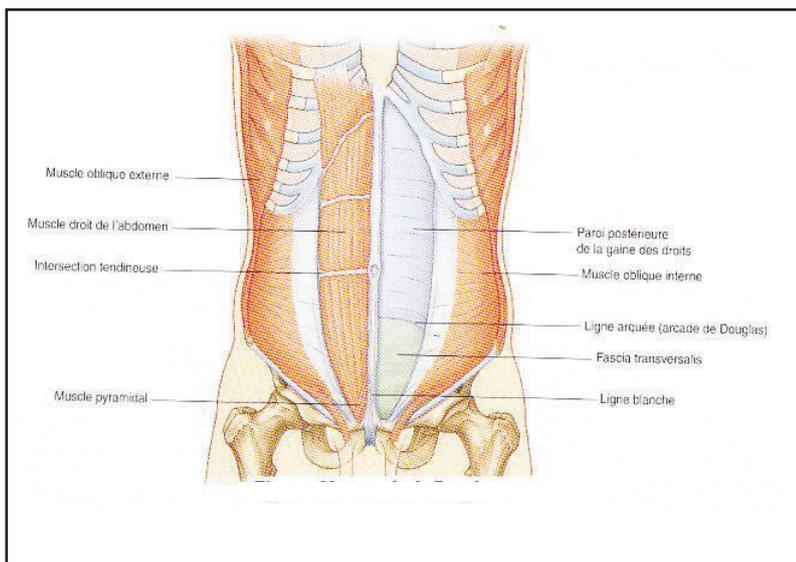


Fig. No.3: The Douglas' Line

in its centre. The system is connected with the action of the chest diaphragm and the pelvic diaphragm.

The abdominal wall skeletal elements include a deformable bone structure, the rib cage lower edge, on one side, the xyphoid process at the front, the lumbar spine in the back and a more rigid part including the pelvis bones with the iliac wing and the sacrum on the other side.

In the back, at the level of the lumbar rachis and at the top of the lumbar lordosis, stands **the 3rd lumbar vertebra (LIII)** which main function is to adjust the centre of gravity mobility. It is the only vertebra to be 'free' from the higher ribs and from the lower iliac crest, and as it includes 'few muscular insertions' compared to the other vertebrae it has some ability in adjusting the resulting gravity lines. On one part the whole upper body weight rest on it and on the other part it is used as a support for the lower body part, making it structurally the spine weakest vertebra. From LIII down, the tension is directed toward the femoral heads (fascia-iliaca).

The umbilicus being located in front of LIII, when in a standing position, owing to gravity itself the centre of gravity is set approximately three fingers under the navel.

The pelvis higher opening edge delimits the abdominal cavity with the sacrum in the back at the bottom, the pubic area symphysis at the front and the ilium arched line. **It creates a narrow part supporting the viscera and provides a hydrodynamic counter-gravity response to gravity.**

The mobilizing effect of transverse muscle on the centre of gravity

Fig. No.3: The Douglas' Line

The function of the **transverse muscle⁴**, the deepest abdominal muscle, is to compress the viscera. By so doing, it has a mobilizing effect on **the centre of gravity**, in the forward and the lateral directions. Its fibers, set horizontally, surround the abdomen sides as a belt. These extend forward

continued on page 6

⁴The transverse muscle is tied from the top to the deepest side of the lower rib cage, from the back to the lumbar vertebrae through a fibrous band and from the bottom to the iliac crest and the inguinal ligament

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toward the right and the left sides by two large fibrous areas that meet at the front in a crossing area called the white line. Half way between the umbilicus and the pubic area symphysis, all aponeurosis cross ahead of the rectus abdominus muscle⁵ and the limit between these two areas is demarcated by a fibrous arch the arcuate line or the **Douglas' line**. **This fibrous narrow part demarcates the perimeter of the centre of gravity mobility.**

Most of the digestive system organs hang in the abdomen in a sheath which most internal layer lines all the intra-peritoneal organs. This layer shows recesses and cavities which hold small quantities of fluids and fat. These ensure the lubrication of the viscera movement. **The small intestine** is the main viscera in the area of the centre of gravity. It also shows many recesses providing all the necessary sliding planes. This intestine is moving and can thus adjust all the pressure forces applied to it. It is contained in a large peritoneal recess, **the mesentery**. This fan shaped area distributes the pressure forces from the inside to the most peripheral area. It reacts to the downward oriented forces applied by the diaphragm with higher resistance and contributes to their horizontal distribution.

Abdominal cavity and mesentery

Fig. No.4: Abdominal cavity and mesentery

The centre of gravity is set **between two diaphragms**: at the top, the thoracic diaphragm, at the bottom the pelvic diaphragm created by the floor of the abdominal cavity. The thoracic diaphragm and its central fibrous core (phrenic centre) act as a piston between the thorax and the abdomen. This pumping action between the pressure applied by the diaphragm and the resistance to the pressure of the visceral mass by the support provided by the pelvis higher opening perimeter constitute an automatic answer and develop a counter-gravity force. All the main muscular groups cross each other at the diaphragm

phrenic centre which becomes the crossing of the various muscular ways where the body various parts unify their mobility.

With such a system, the centre of gravity can move, not only in the vertical direction but also from the right to the left, and from the front to the back.

The centre of gravity is directly impacted by **three functions**: the digestive function, the breathing and the movement. The digestive phase is inappropriate to intensive movements

centre of gravity will then be set at a lower position than its reference position (three fingers below the navel). On the other end, breathing out is mainly accomplished through an elastic return of the lungs. When one is standing, the gravity brings the ribs 'down' and acts for a breathing out operation. When the abdominal muscles mobilize the skeleton (spine, pelvis and mainly the ribs), they work for a breathing out operation and the centre of gravity will tend to set itself at a higher point.

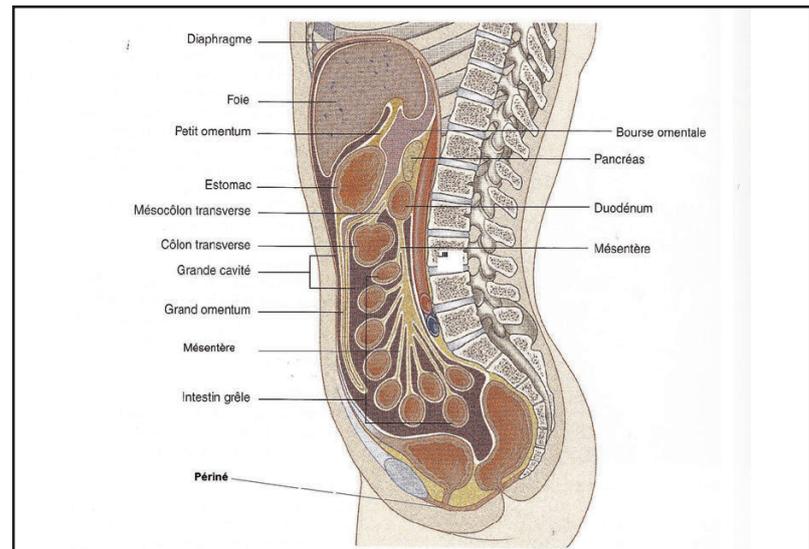


Fig. No.4: Abdominal cavity and mesentery

and it is better completed when the body is not mobilized by other functions. We all know that intensive practice right after a meal results in belly ache. Respiration plays a significant part and affects all the other functions.

Gravity and respiration

During 'normal' respiration, breathing in acts against gravity while breathing out uses gravity to return to a normal state. However, gravity acts differently according to the body position and sometimes further breathing in, sometimes breathing out. When one is standing and breathes in, the diaphragm contracts and pushes down the peritoneal sac. Gravity acts in the same direction through the abdominal mass as a water balloon. If at this point, the abdominal muscles are released, the viscera mass fall in a forward direction and drive the diaphragm which then goes passively down. The

During a forced breathing out operation when the viscera are pushed toward the top and drive the diaphragm further back in the rib cage, the centre of gravity is raised a little higher.

The centre of gravity in a spiral movement

The centre of gravity adjusts itself to the needs of our positions and our movements. When the joint action of the transverse muscle and the thoracic diaphragm mobilizes the centre of gravity, it turns into an adjustment point for the movement between the top and the bottom, the front and the back, the right and the left. It moves in a translation way and unites the upper and lower limbs coordination. Some muscles are more specifically dedicated to the relation between the centre axis and the periphery like the psoas⁶ which connects the lumbar vertebrae

⁵The rectus abdominus muscle is tied from the top to the costal cartilage of the 5th, 6th and 7th ribs and from the bottom to the crest and the pubic area symphysis.

⁶Psoas muscle: originates on the side of TXII, and Li to LV bodies, transverse processes and vertebral discs and terminates on the lesser trochanter of the femur.

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and the femur toward the lower part or like the latissimus dorsi⁷ which help connect the upper limb and the lumbar/pelvis dynamics. When the centre of gravity is set toward the top and the front, the body upper part switches around the hip joint and the whole body may then revolve around its centre of gravity. The hip joint plays a decisive part in managing weight, balance and mobility.

The movement that takes full account of the physiology uses the spiral pattern readily available from the bones torsion, the configuration of the various joints, the location of the muscle insertions, the torsion of certain tendons and the muscles course in an oblique orientation. It is supported by the 'chain' like muscle operation. This movement is referred as 'organic'. It takes its place in a spiral trajectory combining the space three dimensions around the mobile balance point or centre of gravity. When the movement and coordination patterns abide by this spiral organic principle, a maximum of kinetic energy is restored with a minimum muscle effort.

In martial arts, the central axis needs to be set in a given direction to establish a connection with the opponent centre. To do so, we synchronize the mobilization of the centre of gravity resulting from the contraction of the transverse muscle near the belt (Douglas' line) with the tension between the two extremities represented by the hand, on one side, and on the other side by the active pressure of the feet on the ground. The movement, consistent with the body's spirals, can then release the encounter's energy. By combining this unification with the breathing, the movement comes into full play and power and reaches its dynamic rhythm.

The belt or 'obi' marks the perimeter of the centre of gravity scope of action

This understanding of the centre of gravity applies in a very concrete way in our training in Aikido to the location of the belt or *obi*. To demarcate the

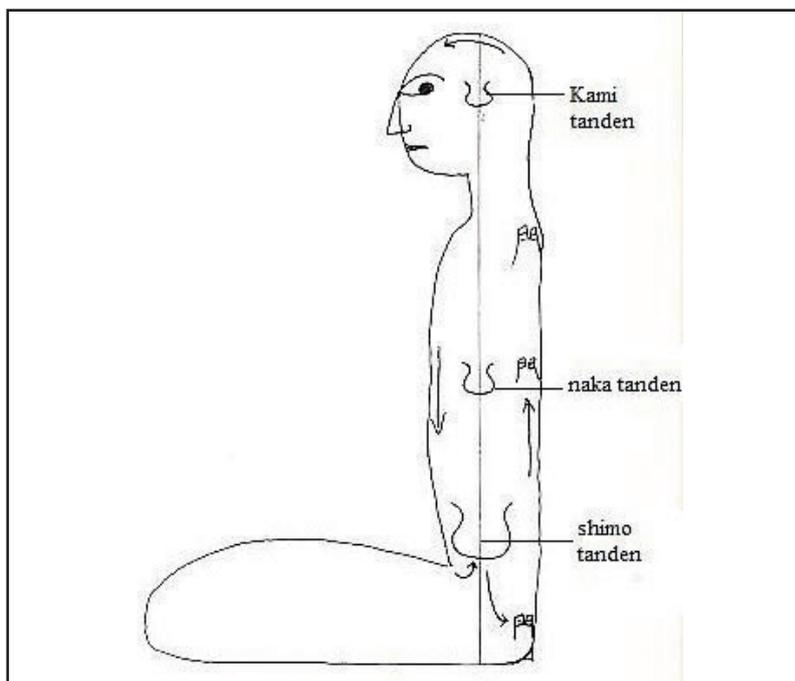


Fig. No. 5: Seika tanden

most outside perimeter of the centre of gravity, the belt must be set, at the back on the bone plane created by the 3rd lumbar, on each side under the iliac crest (each crest forming the lower insertion of the transverse muscle), at the front on the white line at the level of the Douglas' line identified by a crease three fingers down the navel. Set on non-stretchable parts, the belt is stable and does not hinder breathing. This setting helps to establish our centering which is the first pillar of our training.

The seika tanden

Fig. No. 5: Seika tanden

The centre of gravity understood as an anchoring point around which the organism gets organized is what we call the *seika tanden* in Aikido. A *tanden* or cinnabar field can be described as a cauldron which channel, concentrate and transform energy. In the Japanese tradition, this *tanden* located in the abdomen or *shimo tanden* operates for a *ki* that is intrinsically linked to matter also called *sei*. This centre of organic energy has its roots in the digestive and reproductive functions. It monitors the blood circulation and its main function is to create

active forces. Its projection point is located three fingers below the navel and is called *shita*.

The centre of gravity contributes to the acting muscular tonus when mobility and weight management are combined. It helps the posture profound vitality or *shisei*. It simultaneously provides anchoring to the ground when standing, coordination development and its expression in the space three planes. When mobilized, it unifies and integrates the opposing forces necessary to a full and well directed action.

This peculiar system of dynamic balance fluctuating around a point in continuous movement has its applications in martial training as well as in manipulative therapies as osteopaths⁸ know it as fulcrum⁹. It also provides insights on the operation of the energy centres in Eastern traditions. ☺

**Anne Ducouret 5th Dan
Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, Paris
Birankai France
Translation: Didier Boyet**

⁷Latissimus dorsi: originates on the spinous processes from TVII to LV, the sacrum, the iliac crest, the 10th and 12th ribs and terminates near the bicipital groove of the humerus.

⁸Osteopathy: manipulative therapy founded by A T Still (1828-1919) that uses the body's physiological resources to evaluate one's health status.

⁹Fulcrum: Latin term meaning 'point of support' used after 1948 by W G Sutherland founder of cranial osteopathy (1873-1954).



Bern seminar

When Florent Liardet met Sensei Jenny Flower, quietness and pure power dominate, In-Yô

As soon as I grab her she throws me to the ground, bending my arm over like she would do with a reed stem. I did not even see her move. When she applies Yonkyo, I feel my radius and my cubitus bend and a shooting pain spreads through my arm.



Florent Liardet

The pressure applied by her fingers will remain imprinted in my flesh for several days during my first international Aikido seminar in Uzès in July 2005. In spite of the power I felt from Jenny Flower Sensei, I never had the feeling of being in danger. My level as a beginner was taken into account and the power used against me was impressive but measured.

I did not meet Jenny Flower Sensei again until the Swiss Birankai seminar hosted by the Bern Sakura Dojo from 18-20 October 2013. Welcomed by Barbara Imoden Sensei, about forty students had the opportunity to discover or rediscover an Aikido as supple as powerful. I saw there the

perfect illustration of the Chinese Yin Yang known as In-Yô in Japan.

While in calligraphy "it's the balanced rhythm of downstrokes and delicate upstrokes that expresses the Yin and Yang harmony, in *budo*, the supple movement precedes and follows the strong movement" (Pascal Krieger, *Ten Jin Chi*, 2005).

Beginners – men more often than women – tend to develop their Yang propensity and struggle in moving from downstrokes to upstrokes. Strength piles up and ends in blocking.

Power and physical strength are still too often set as positive values in our modern societies. We tend to forget the presence and the importance of antagonisms: fullness and emptiness, life and death, beauty and ugliness, youth and age, etc. Aikido is here a good way to remind oneself not to seek one aspect while denying the other.

As to emphasize my point, as I was writing these notes Flower Sensei posted a video of Okamoto Yoko Sensei insisting on the alternation between strength and flexibility. Creating tension to release it

immediately results in opening a void into which *uke* will fall as pointed out by Brunner Shihan, who also attended this seminar.

The seminar in Bern was as rich as it was diverse. Many of those who took part in the seminar, even advanced students, acknowledge being impressed by this change over between quietness and pure power which Jenny Flower Sensei seemed to dominate. It was a very rewarding and inspiring training session for all of us.



Florent Liardet 2nd Dan
Ryu Seki Kai Aiki Dojo, Lausanne
Birankai Switzerland
Translation: Didier Boyet



Photo: Dannie Jost

BIRANKAI POLAND INVITES YOU TO

Birankai Europe Aikido Summer Camp 2014

26 JULY - 2 AUGUST 2014, WROCLAW, POLAND

Venue: Sportowa Hala Wielofunkcyjna AWF, ul. Paderewskiego 35, Wrocław, Poland



with Special Instructor Tsuruzo Miyamoto Shihan 7th Dan so Hombu
assisted by Birankai Europe Shihan and Shidojin

Fees

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Weekend & afternoons - 280 PLN

Weekend - 120 PLN

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Single afternoon class - 40 PLN

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Standard room - 35 PLN / pers / night

Premium room - 50 PLN / pers / night

or in another Dojo (20 min by public transport from Summer Camp Dojo)

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Early booking is available until 31 May (payment is required)

Weekend: 26-27 July

Afternoons: 26 July - 1 Aug, excluding Wednesday 30 July (rest break)

Please register online before making payment

Contact Information and online registration: <http://aikidowroclaw.com>

E-mail: europcamp2014@birankai.pl

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with **Tsuruzo Miyamoto Shihan 7th Dan so Hombu**
Shihan and Shidojin of Birankai Europe

26 July – 2 August 2014
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French Sophie Orivel is won over by 'les petits délices de l'Angleterre'

Packed up lock, stock and barrel, six members of the Ann Jyou Kan Dojo in Paris together with their teacher, Anne Ducouret, crossed 'the Channel' to take part in the British Birankai Residential Aikido Spring Course 2014 in Birmingham on March 15th and 16th. This ultimately British course turned out to be a series of joy and we are sure that you will understand why and envy them.

This is what made these two days so brilliant:



Sophie Orivel

- **Being welcome**
with great kindness and generosity by open-minded and smiling Aikido students.
- **Being warmed up**
by a wonderful British sun which shined during the whole two days, a first for the Birmingham course regulars.
- **Trying to**
sweeten the porridge to make it eatable.
- **Drinking one,**
sometimes two, even three pints of beer at the pub (some of us drank more but decency prevents us to name them)!
- **Watching the**
final moments of the France-Ireland rugby game at the local pub! (After jumping from the window to get there.)
- **Practising energetically,**
very energetically in a beautiful dojo.
- **Benefiting from**
the teaching of Tony Cassells Shihan, Davinder Bath Shidoïn and Anne Ducouret Shidoïn as well as of the Teaching Committee led by Chris Mooney Shihan, Mark Pickering Shidoïn and Ian Grubb Shidoïn.
- **Finding Sensei's**
zafu after the zazen session...
- **Enjoying authentic**
fish and chips.
- **Making our**
way back without missing our flight!

We were so happy that we all want to attend again next year, even if our dear British friends do not improve their cooking ability by then!

Sophie Orivel 3rd Kyu
Ann Jyou Kan Dojo, Paris
Birankai France

Translation: Didier Boyet

Photo: Alan Stevens



British Birankai Residential Spring Course 15-16 March 2014, Birmingham

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Photos: Alan Stevens



Beginners' Class at Cocks Moors Woods Dojo exceeds expectations

Paul Hull explains

At the start of the year Sensei

Mark Pickering decided to start an Aikido beginners' class. This was to run alongside our main Thursday night class at Cocks Moors Woods Dojo. I was asked to look after it with Sensei overseeing the teaching and structure of the class. Being honest, it has exceeded our expectations. We expected a trickle of comings and goings. However we have actually had a steady stream of people, which has resulted in five students joining the Dojo with another one at the end of the month, two students being pencilled in for their first gradings in the summer and two more later in the year and three students already intending to attend their first course at Cocks Moors Woods Dojo in April. Although these numbers fluctuate from week to week we have had up to eleven beginners on the mat at any one time.

The class is a 45-minute basic Aikido body art, then an additional 15-20 minutes where the beginners are invited to join Sensei's main class, followed by an hour of basic weapons, again a split class. This has also proved useful for some senior students who are struggling with slight injuries. Rather than not train at all they help with the beginners' class on the technical side. So far these classes have been a success and if it continues the future looks bright.

Long may it do so! ☺



Paul Hull



Anna Jigoulina (uke) and Eddie McCalla, CMW Course, April 2014



Cocks Moors Woods, Central Aikikai Course, April 2014

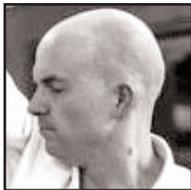
Paul Hull 1st Dan
Cocks Moors Woods, Central
Aikikai
British Birankai

Photos: Stuart Lovering

Martin Giannini reports Basic techniques and operatic harmony make Wroclaw seminar an international success



Wroclaw was excited to host Horii Sensei, who taught a 3-day seminar in four blocks from 25-27 October 2013.



Martin Giannini

This was his second visit to Wroclaw, and has established a yearly tradition that will repeat in Autumn 2014.

The seminar included Aiki Ken and Jo, Kumitachi (ken partner practice), as well as regular Aikido practice during each of the four blocks. Several of the participants remarked that Sensei's Aikido was clean and sharp and easy to understand. Sensei had a great presence on the mat, and noticed and paid attention to everyone, at whatever level they may be. He practised and even demonstrated techniques with some of the children. His focus during this visit was on



Photo Sylwia Nowak

fundamental principles such as keeping good, relaxed contact and extension, and not forcing techniques through the application of power.

The seminar received international attention and was very well attended, including visitors from Czech, UK, France, Spain, Ireland and other

Aikido organisations in Poland such as the Polish Aikido Federation (Aikikai).

We had many social occasions together with Sensei, including a long evening of food and drinks and singing. We discovered just how much he loves opera as he led several songs in Italian, Spanish, Japanese and English.

Sensei also took the opportunity of being in Poland to visit a Holocaust memorial, something he considered this duty, as it is important, he explained, to understand our collective history so that events such as WWII will not happen again. ☺



Photo Sylwia Nowak

Martin Giannini 2nd Dan
Wroclaw Aikikai
Birankai Poland

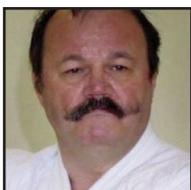


Photo: Magorzata Śmierczalska



Arthur Lockyear recalls First Summer School over 40 years ago and pays tribute to Billy Coyle, “a great Scottish warrior”

The first summer school I attended was in August of 1970, a little under a year after my first encounter with Chiba Sensei. It was held in Sunderland, and much preparation was made in terms of training and cleaning of the Dojo for this major event.



Arthur Lockyear

We were very fortunate indeed to have three Aikido Masters in attendance Masahiro Nakazono Sensei 6th Dan who was resident in France at that time and one of the founder's most senior students in Europe (at fifty-one years of age he seemed beyond ancient to me, although it has to be said that my perspective has changed somewhat since then!), a young Takeji Tomita Sensei then 4th Dan and a notable uchi-deshi of Morihiro Saito Sensei and resident in Stockholm as he still is, and Chiba Sensei of course.

So for a young and freshly 'minted' 4th Kyu like me it was an awesome prospect training under such great masters, and with a vast array of Dan and prospective Dan grades from throughout the UK. At that Summer School I met a number of now well known Aikidoka, including Billy Coyle of Glasgow (who was one of the greats of British Aikido in my view),

Mick Holloway, Margaret Hughes, Jean Hill, Steve Beecham, Andreas Theofanis, Norberto Chiesa, and Mr Marian Mucha of Lancashire Aikikai.

The first class was held late afternoon on the Saturday of everyone's arrival in 'sunny' Sunderland, with the changing room, Dojos and reception area fairly bustling with gi clad people. The atmosphere was charged with expectation, and humming with chatter in almost every accent of the UK – not being blessed with an accent myself, I was probably more acutely aware of this than most!!

The expansive area of the main Dojo soon filled with participants, and the event opened with the entry of Mr Logan who was at that time Chairman of the Aikikai of Great Britain clad in white hakama. My only recollection of this was one of the lads singing 'sotto voce' 'Angels we have heard on high!!' Not very respectful perhaps, but nonetheless, very funny at the time! The first practice was opened and led by one of my old teachers the inimitable and very martial Mr Pat Butler. Before too long Nakazono Sensei arrived and was presented to us all by Chiba Sensei. After acknowledging this introduction Nakazono Sensei commenced to make quite a long speech, during which part of the ceiling of this old building fell in. Nakazono Sensei perhaps being an old trouper as well as an old martial artist responded quickly and with good

humour exhorting us to project our 'Ki' upwards to keep the roof in place. So began my first Summer School.

Nakazono Sensei's Aikido and philosophy skimmed over the heads of most if not all of the Dan grades in attendance, so I'm afraid that it missed me by a country mile. But the gist of it in terms of actual practice was, don't just follow what everyone else is doing, move naturally.

There are two memories of that first Summer School still fresh in my mind, my first taste of being Chiba Sensei's uke for the whole of the class, and observing Tomita Sensei as he assisted Nakazono Sensei.

On what I think was the third day of the Summer School the class was split in two, with 2nd Kyu and above in the larger of the two Dojos with Nakazono Sensei, and 3rd Kyu and below with Chiba Sensei. The whole of Sensei's two-hour class was dedicated to an intense practice of Ikkyo from a variety of situations, and by the end of it I was like a rag doll, with the bloodiest pair of tatami scuffed elbows ever seen. I was though immensely proud of acting as assistant to my teacher at the rank of 4th Kyu, and with only a year of Aikido under my belt; much to the good natured amusement of some of the more experienced practitioners I might add!!

A great impression was made on me and no doubt many other young Aikidoka by Tomita Sensei who did not teach but acted as assistant to Nakazono Sensei. When Nakazono Sensei halted the class to give us an explanation, which was quite often, Tomita sat unobtrusively to one side in a perfectly postured seiza, but ready to react to any situation, and when called upon by Nakazono Sensei he gave a very correct za rei accompanied by a resounding "Hai Sensei"! After each class he returned to the Dojo with Nakazono Sensei's hakama to fold it. This excellent demonstration of etiquette made an indelible impression on me, and certainly gave shape to my future conduct as uke to Chiba Sensei and of course to my much respected local teacher Ron Myers Sensei.



Chiba Sensei with Arthur Lockyear (uke), London Aikikai Dojo, Chiswick, 1971

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Although the above is now the usual standard of protocol and custom in Aikikai Dojos it certainly was not the case in 1970, and I acknowledge Tomita Sensei's fine example in this matter. Not being of a retiring disposition I took every opportunity to speak with Tomita Sensei who was very polite and most helpful. During one of these brief conversations I asked him about the application of Nikkyo from a shoulder contact. As he applied his body weight to my wrist with a standing bow, he explained by saying:

"When you make Nikkyo you should say excuse me!" I remember thinking (as I rocketed into the tatami) what a good piece of advice it was! As well as acting as assistant to Nakazono Sensei, Tomita Sensei also trained in private with Chiba Sensei. We were astounded when Chiba Sensei thanked Tomita Sensei in front of the whole summer school for his tuition and assistance with weapons, and this caused me to wonder who Tomita Sensei was. Takeji Tomita was born in February 1942 in the Shizuoka Prefecture of the town of Hamamatsu on Honshu, and his family were all involved in Aikido, but Tomita Sensei's ambition was to be a great Karate practitioner. He joined the Aikido club at his university and it was during this period of his life that he visited the Aiki shrine at Iwama, and there he saw O-Sensei for the first time. Tomita described this event to me in 1991 as follows:

"The first time I saw O Sensei I instantly knew that I had met a unique human being. O-Sensei's appearance has been described a thousand times, but it is true he was a most extraordinary man – small and vivid, with most piercing eyes, and always elegant in his kimono and with his beard. I especially remember when he, as usual, sat in the Dojo during class, his eyes were mild and observant, then as he started to teach his eyes changed completely. They turned to an intensive brightness such as I never seen before or since. O-Sensei was in the prime of his life in the early sixties and was admired greatly by everyone. He was very much the leader of Aikido and no one would ever have questioned his authority."

What little we saw of Tomita Sensei's weapon work was very interesting and his sword work included

a number of jumping entry movements as he cut. These somewhat surprising Taisabaki were later easily identifiable by referring to old footage of O-Sensei.

Returning to Sensei Billy Coyle, a situation arose at this summer school which could have proved extremely divisive. Billy (original teacher to stalwarts Joe Curran and the late George Girvan) had received his Shodan grade from Masamichi Noro Sensei in the UK at a course in 1969, which was I was told contrary to the rules of the Aikikai Foundation, and so Billy was required to remove his hakama and black belt. Billy's students were needless to say furious at this perceived slight, and were ready to return home as a gesture of support to their teacher. When I interviewed Billy in 1994 for Terry O'Neill's 'Fighting Arts International' magazine Billy explained it so:

'Billy when did you first meet Chiba Sensei?'

That was at the 1970 summer school in Sunderland. I was the first Scottish person to go from black belt to white in one move!

Yes Billy, I remember that very well indeed ... I was quite shocked by it at the time. It is not for me to criticise Chiba or Nakazono Sensei's decision of course, but I certainly admired the spirit in which you accepted this demotion.

Well it was a good learning curve for me, and it wasn't the humiliation that you might imagine. I just wanted to learn Aikido and this man was incredible. He had what I wanted. He could have said anything he liked to me and I would still have gone back. I became one of his students, and he did grade me very shortly after that.

To 1st Dan?

No to 2nd Dan. He took away one grade and gave me two back. Prior to meeting Chiba Sensei we had a nice friendly style of practice, spirited but not really dangerous. But then Chiba Sensei came and boom! Suddenly it was sore and painful, and took a lot of stamina!

Billy told me years later that he had approached Nakazono Sensei and asked for his advice on Aikido in general, in reply this great master asked him to bring his students to the Dojo



**Billy Coyle
1939-2011**

the following morning before class commenced, and he would give him the secret of good Aikido. So Billy and company arrived at the Dojo in good time, and as there was no sign of Nakazono Sensei they began to practise in the inimitable spirited manner of the Scots. When Nakazono Sensei arrived the pace and spirit of the class notched up a couple of gears, until Billy was asked to stop. Eagerly Sensei Coyle and his students now bathed in sweat gathered around Master Nakazono with their eagerness, their anticipation building to (hopefully) a climax of enlightenment ready to receive the 'secret' of Aikido from this great master, which was:

"Practise like that every day"!!

Billy Coyle was one of a rare breed a great Aikidoka, he was a practical hands-on humanitarian in his professional life, an accomplished artist, one who saw his Aikido within the context of the wider firmament of Budo, a serious musician, great humorist, and most of all a man with the strength of character and selflessness to accept the redacting of his grade, and still commit, progress and learn with a commendable humility, and so embody the motto 'Aucto Splendore Resurgo' – I rise again with increased splendour! A true gentleman and a great Scottish Aikido warrior!

In the next issue I will recall my second summer school at London Aikikai in Chiswick in 1971; what a week that was! ☺

**Arthur Lockyear 5th Dan
North East Aikikai, Durham City
British Birankai
Aug 2013**

Shihan Jack Arnold 7th Dan 1929–2013

Early in the morning of Tuesday 5 November 2013, John Edward 'Jack' Arnold, 7th Dan Shihan, died at his home in



Tim Sullivan

Burbank, California. At his side were his wife Melinda and many of his students. He was aged 84, and he left behind a huge impact in the worlds of Aikido and music.

I first met Arnold Sensei in 2007, when I spent a couple of months in Los Angeles for work. He received me in his Dojo with great warmth and old-fashioned courtesy. Refusing to let me pay any mat fees as a visitor, he said, "I won't charge any student of Chris Mooney's to visit my Dojo. I know he'd be the same." Arnold Sensei and Mooney Sensei had first met in the early 1990s, and again in 2006 in Japan when Birankai Shihans were awarded their Shihan accreditations by Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu, and by all accounts they got on together like a house on fire. During my 2007 visit, I had the pleasure of talking with

Arnold Sensei for a few hours, and I began to get a sense of this small man's huge experience of martial arts, music, and life.

Jack's mother was a pianist, and he took an early interest in music. He made his 'professional debut' in May 1942, when he came to the rescue of a band left without any drummers by the Second World War draft - although the band's bass player had to prompt the twelve-year-old stand-in when to hit the cymbals! Jack was himself drafted into the US Army during the Korean War: however, instead of being sent to Korea, he was posted to Germany as a bandsman with the 4th Infantry Division based in Frankfurt. After his military service - filled with many musical weekends spent in Paris - he was determined not to return to small-town life. He used his musical connections from the Army to get started as a professional musician in New York City. He later said that his first order of business was to look and sound the part, and that meant losing his Ohio accent: "I didn't want them thinking I was just some rube from 'Uh-hiah!'"

It was in 1950s New York that Jack began his martial arts studies, and he earned black belt ranks in both Judo and Ju-Jitsu. In the 1960s, the music industry began to drift to Los Angeles; in 1967, Jack followed, and he began Aikido training at the Los Angeles Aiki Kai. In 1979, he founded his own Dojo, Aikido Daiwa (大和 'great harmony'). He became a student of Chiba Sensei when the latter moved to California in 1981, and upon Chiba Sensei's recommendation he received the rank of seventh dan in 2010, so becoming the most highly ranked member of Birankai after Chiba Sensei himself.

As most of us have learned through direct



experience training in Dojos, or even running them, it is very hard to keep a Dojo afloat financially. Many Aikido teachers have some outside activity that helps to make ends meet. However, Arnold Sensei's 'outside activity' was not just a job: he was a world-class master percussionist whose performances continue to be heard to this day: if you listen to recordings of The Supremes, The Jackson Five, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, or Louie Bellson, then you're listening to Jack. If it is rare to master one art, it is extraordinary that Jack was a master of two. One of his closest companions on this double journey through Aikido and music was Nobuo Iseri, 6th Dan Shihan (1936–2001): they knew each other from the Los Angeles Aiki Kai and played many of LA's jazz clubs together, with Jack on drums and Nobuo on trombone. When Arnold Sensei received word that he had been promoted to seventh Dan, he said, "My only only regret is that Nobuo's not here to see it."

Generations of Aikido students grew up under Arnold Sensei's tutelage. He and his right-hand man Toma Rosenzweig, whom we also lost in 2013, were constant presences on the Aikido map of California for decades: they were simply always there, at every event, and always had been for as long as anyone could remember. Everybody knew them, and everyone was strengthened and enriched by their unwavering support of individual students and the Art as a whole. Echoes of their influence will be felt for many decades yet to come, and there



Photo: Adam Cohen

Shihan Jack Arnold and Shihan Coryl Crane (uke), Southern California Yudansha Seminar at Aikido Daiwa Feb 2010

are hundreds of Aikidoka practising today, some of them senior teachers, who began Aikido under their wings. Until May 2013, Arnold Sensei was still actively teaching six days a week at Aikido Daiwa, and the Dojo continues in his absence.

I moved to Los Angeles on a longer-term basis in 2009. It was great to throw myself into a new job during the day, and to be thrown around at Aikido Daiwa in the evenings. By the time that I got to know Arnold Sensei, after decades of practice, his Aikido had been distilled to simple, effective technique that had no reliance on brute force. It was very difficult for us younger students to really embody what he taught, his subtle use of timing and position. (He sometimes said that perhaps Aikido's timing made sense to him because of his musical background - perhaps we should have taken the hint and picked up instruments ourselves.) His eagle-like gaze saw everything that went on in the Dojo, including our inevitable mistakes, which he usually forgave with good grace. On those rare occasions when he outright told you off, part of Arnold Sensei's magic was that his reprimands actually motivated you rather than putting you down, and you found yourself wholeheartedly wanting to do better for yourself and for him. I think that this was because his huge life experience enabled him to see the best potential in everyone. I moved away from California in 2012, having spent three-and-a-half years with my 'uncle' in the Aikido lineage. Overall, those were wonderful years, full of opportunity. I cannot imagine those

times being anything like as rewarding without Arnold Sensei and the community that he created at Aikido Daiwa.

To me, Arnold Sensei embodied a natural, unpretentious wisdom born of great experience of life, and perseverance through trials of all kinds. He kept the flame burning to the very last. Anyone who knows his story will know that he faced physical and spiritual injuries, political attacks, and of course the financial struggles that come with running a Dojo in a materialistic age - no-one would have been able to fault him for giving up after any of those blows, but he simply never quit. At one point during my second spell in LA, it looked like a rent hike was going to force us out of the premises on Victory Boulevard, home to the Dojo since 1997. The Victory Dojo was Arnold Sensei's fifth, complete with beautiful woodwork of



Chiba Sensei and Shihan Jack Arnold

master-carpenter quality; Jack and his students had built it themselves, and built it to last. In a letter to the students, advising them of the seriousness of the predicament, he wrote: "It would break my heart to have to tear it apart. But, if we have to, we'll build a sixth beautiful Dojo. We know no other way." In 2011, after a farewell class in which Arnold Sensei was seen taking ukemi for children a tenth of his age, we did just that.

On the wall of his office at the Dojo, there was a picture of a sad-looking penguin. The caption read: "I cried because I had no shoes... until I met a man who had no class." Well, no doubt about it, Arnold Sensei was one heck of a class act. By being old yet forever young at heart, being wise without being cynical, Arnold Sensei set an example for us all to follow. He will be hugely missed. ☹️



Yuuki Okuda and Tim Sullivan (uke), Aikido Daiwa, 2010

**Tim Sullivan 2nd Dan
Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai
British Birankai**

Photo: Eric Leal



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Yondan & Shidoin

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Shodan

Jun 2013

Neil Thomas Forsyth, London Aikikai

Shodan

Jun 2013

Marcel Santiko, Ei Mei Kan, Central Aikikai

Shodan

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Apr 2013

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May 2013

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May 2013

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May 2013

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Shodan

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Nidan

Feb 2013

Florent Liardet, Ryu Seki Kai Aiki Dojo, Lausanne

Nidan

Oct 2013

Florent Liardet, Ryu Seki Kai Aiki Dojo, Lausanne

Fukushidoin

Nov 2013