

August '06

The Seidokan Communicator

Aikido for a Modern Way of Life

Gallery of Summer Camp

By Doug Wedell

Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

So maybe you just didn't make it to summer camp this year. Too bad! Or maybe you did, but need a bit of a reminder. Since several people sent in some summer camp photos, we're all in luck as we get to review the big To-Do in St. Lou.

Ok, first there was this epic battle of good and evil fought with bokkens. Now I'm not sure which side won, but the hakamas were flying!



Then after everyone mellowed, there was this square dance, sort of, where we lined up in groups of six and did this funky dance call Ude-Furi-on-Trudy or something like that. Everyone was twisting and shouting.



Then this weird spaceship landed in the middle of St. Louis. It looked like a giant arch! Totally...



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So then somebody gets out this giant canister of RAID or some kind of bug spray and uncorks the motherload on us. Somehow we made it through, but it wasn't pretty.



Then after Mrs. Kobayashi tells us all a funny story, we drew straws and the guy who ended up with the shortest one was promoted!



I'm telling you, you guys really missed something! See you next year!

What I Brought Home from Camp

By Jim Brazell, Seiwa Dojo

I camp to camp with trepidation, "Would I do well enough to honor my teachers?" I left camp with confidence, "My teachers still have much to teach me and I am ready to learn." The chief instructors blended their particular interests so well that I could see Kawakami Sensei's teaching from Zen while instructed by Wadahara Sensei in weapons.

Mrs. Kobayashi personally edified and corrected me as I learned to retain freedom and liberty for my fingers to properly blend with an ushirotori attack. I saw what Crapo Sensei and Janean Sensei had been teaching me before, but I was unready to blend it into my art until now. Thank you all very much.

As Mark and Janean Crapo Senseis were unable to attend camp, Seiwa dojo attempted to stand for two pictures, one serious, the other not. I am unsure which will be which. Anthony Dao exercised courage over wisdom when he tried to escort the Kanshu down the stairs to join our photograph. She, he, and we all laughed as she deflected his attempts.

I really enjoyed the mini-classes and the two-hour classes divided into one-hour segments. Changing instructors widened my range of knowledge and kept up my interest. Relearning the cockroach and goldfish aiki-ryoho were their own joy. I was much intrigued by the comments about the "pillars of Seidokan Aikido" and look forward to learning more in the future.

Harnack Sensei and AIMA were excellent hosts, and Washington University provided hot food and cool rooms. His 59th year birthday cake was delicious, too.

When Chris Koprowski sensei received his Yondan certificate, I was glad to be part of a community recognizing and rewarding sincere, earnest, and realistic efforts on its behalf by members.

Aikido Camp is someplace between a family reunion and end of term exams. There is always the desire to do one's best, and the comfort of a community that joins to bring out the best in you.

As I drove out of camp, I noticed my hands on the steering wheel were guiding the wheel to get off the line, and then return to center. Seidokan is truly a life in harmony with Nature.

My First Taste of Seidokan Aikido Summer Camp

By Deanna G. Reeves Cöckburn

I walked into the Wohl Center at Washington University in St. Louis, removed my shoes and scooted into a position to watch the Dan belts being tested. "Holy smokes, that's what I have to do when I get up that high in rank!"

What a great opportunity, being only a Gokyu, to attend such a well organized Aikido Camp. Things were happening all the time. We had Aiki Taiso about four times a day, before every training. There was a constant rotation of instructors, giving us a flavor of their personal styles. And the opportunity to socialize with other Seidokan enthusiasts was an eye opener. I experienced Misogi, a type of meditation training to purify the mind and body. The morning after Misogi, I got to have lunch with Michiyo Kobayashi and Mrs. Kobayashi Sensei. I learned that when you shout out the sounds you should be shouting with the mental image of expelling the bad as though you are throwing it away from you.

It was sometimes a heart pounding experience to work out with such a variety of people. One of the Udansha, Andreas, made me feel like I could really do the technique we were working on. And what an honor it was to have one of the instructors, Stephen McAdam, invite me to be his uke.

I was glad I traveled with Susan Jones and Sensei Dale Petersen. Not just because our jo's and bokken's got lost in the St. Louis Air Port (the luggage handlers had just misplaced the long tube they were in), but because on the way home Steward Chan Sensei sat and talked with us for an hour giving me a different perspective.

There was more to the world of Aikido, and myself, than I knew. This trip was definitely worth every penny and more. I took a number of photos and made a short slide show of the camp, and put it all on CD. If you would like it e-mail me with a note, Aikido CD, to my e-mail address at: ArtistDeanna@aol.com.



Thoughts on Summer Camp 2006

Darrell Ettleman, Shodan, Seiwa Dojo

I would first like to say thank you to Mrs. Kobayashi for giving us the opportunity to become better people through the teachings of Seidokan Aikido. You have been there from the beginning and without your input, energy and dedication; Seidokan would not be the wonderful art that it has become. As for the whole summer camp experience, anyone who knows me knows that I'm opposed to mornings. I think anything before 10:00 a.m. should be against the law. With that being said, I jotted down a few thoughts about a week after camp. I had mixed emotions as we left for our long drive back to Michigan. Looking forward to getting home for well needed rest, but not the long drive back. Tired from lots of mat time (and possibly from lack of sleep), but excited about sharing what I received from the wonderful instructors. And I'm already looking forward to next year in California. It was wonderful to see some of you that I hadn't seen in a couple of years. And nice to meet several of you for the first time. I would like to say thank you to all of the instructors who happily shared their knowledge with all of us. I can honestly say that I enjoyed every class, and I was able to come away with a better understanding of the many aspects and pieces that make up Aki. Misogi was awesome, the energy that filled the dojo was amazing. And I managed to remain in seiza the entire time, in spite of my knees screaming "NO! NO!". After awhile I could no longer feel my legs so it wasn't so bad after that. To everyone who attended Summer Camp 2006. Thanks for sharing your knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm. I look forward to seeing all of you next year in California. Should you wander through Battle Creek in the next year, please stop by for a visit.

Impressions from the Seidokan Saint Louis Summer Camp

By Jeffrey Lee, Nikyu

I arrived at summer camp (my 3rd) with great anticipation. I was not disappointed. The accommodations were great. Our St. Louis hosts were inviting and helpful. The classes were structured ingeniously. I never felt that choosing one class meant missing another. I am sure that is due to the willingness of instructors to teach some classes twice. The quality of teaching and the thoughtful sharing of all the instructors is a testament that the Seidokan Organization is exceptional.

I see the main benefit of attending camp is to train with instructors and students that have different approaches to Aikido. No matter what level of training you are at you still get used to the people you train with. Being exposed to other Aikidosa's techniques helps strip away the mundane and helps one to focus on the next layer of the onion. Literally every instructor I had at camp impacted my technique. Some changes were small like how I ended my position in koho tento Undo (sitting up straighter) to the far ranging (better connection with Uke).

Please accept my most sincere thank you for all your patience and efforts.

Am I ready to start training?

I am currently the rank of Nikyu. My biggest challenge is to complete my basic training. You know, correct techniques, cleaning up foot work, kata progressions, hand work etc. Buddha is attributed to have said, "The greatest prayer is patience". So, for now, I am learning to give myself time to train. I am not the sharpest tool in the shed, but I am getting it slowly. I have progressed to the point where I am better aware of "the nots". Like knowing when I am not blending, or not moving from my center.

I begin each class with "Hi I'm Jeff and I'm an over-muscler, or "and I don't move from my center" or "my best technique is Aikibutt". All joking aside, the truest statement about this stage in my training is I am learning to apply very basic skills. Skills mentioned in my first class seven years ago and just about every class since. For instance, flow from my center, blend, settle down, using a circle and becoming, one just to mention a few. It strikes me that these are more than skills. They are principles of interaction. And, just as principles in daily life, they can be applied with greater and greater skill and rewarding results. Life can be stranger than fiction. I would not have guessed how much the learning of Aikido could change the way I live. Life is truly more rewarding when our interaction promotes harmony, peace and energy.

Promotions

Yondan

Chris Koprowski 07/09/06
AIA / Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo

Sandan

Keith Larman 06/04/06
Aikido Institute of America
Sal Hernandez 06/04/06
Aikido Institute of America
Aurora Hernadez 06/04/06
Aikido Institute of America

Congratulations!

Calendar

- Fall 2006 Jogi Workshop at AIA** (Aikido Institute of America) September 8th (7-9:30 p.m.); 9th (1-4 p.m.); 10th (1-4 p.m.) Cost: \$45 for all 3 days for Seidokan members; \$20 for each day. \$65 for all 3 days for Non-Seidokan members; \$25 for each day. Please email Aikitiger1@aol.com for more info.
- Annual Thanksgiving Workshop at AIA** November 24-25, 2006. More information to be announced later.
- Bokken Shugyo Workshop at AIA.** December 31, 2006. Time: 9:00 - 11:00 a.m; Please email Aikitiger1@aol.com for more info.
- Summer Camp 2007 to be held in Los Angeles, California 2007 will be a special memorial year, observing Kobayashi Sensei's passing. Dates and location will be announced soon!! Stay tuned for more information.

Enkei Nage: From Static to Dynamic Applications

By Doug Wedell
Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

We often first learn techniques from a static attack position in order to focus on the situation, the footwork, the mechanics of the movement, and other technical detail. It is important to understand the technique from this perspective, but it is perhaps even more important to understand how the technique changes as the attack becomes more dynamic. After all, no real attacker would simply stand there and hold your wrist. Once the wrist is secured, the attacker would continue with the attack by using the other hand to strike, choke or grab. Thus, in a realistic attack situation, we must look to lead the attacker's mind before he or she grabs us and continues onto the next part of the attack.

In a 1994 seminar in South Carolina, Kobayashi Sensei provided a short lesson in taking *enkei nage* from the static situation to the dynamic situation. The pictures presented here are from a video of that short lesson. In the first sequence of pictures, Sensei demonstrated the basic form for *enkei nage* from the static *katatetori* attack. As shown,

nage's movements are quite big, stepping off the line, dropping his center and the held wrist down low, and then completing the circular movement with a rising of the one-point and a dropping down again, the basic *enkei* movement. This is a direct application of the *sayu enkei* exercise. Because it is a static attack, the movement must be fairly large. Between pictures 1 and 3, *nage's* wrist drops about 2 feet and moves forward about 2 feet. This large movement takes *uke* from a stable upright posture to an unstable bent over posture. Also note that in this situation, *nage's* wrist does not rise very high, only to about the starting height. This helps keep *uke* in a bent over position.

After Sensei demonstrated this twice, he told us that we were going to practice the movement in motion. He cautioned us not to wait for the attacker to grab, but rather begin the movement before the grab. The key point he emphasized was to feel the circular movement in our minds and make the movement from the *hara*. Sensei did not emphasize any particular movement of the wrist except to capture the attacker's energy and move it in a circular wave form. The essence of the movement remains the same, even though the physical form changes quite a bit.



1. Static Katatetori position.



2. Stepping off line and dropping.



3. Bottom of the circle.



4. Rising up as uke moves through.



5. Top of the circle and dropping.



6. Completed movement (Zanshin).

Enkei Nage (Continued)

As shown in the next series of pictures, the attacker is coming at the defender strongly. Note that in the first frame, *nage* has captured *uke*'s attention and posture as he stays on the line and leads *uke* closer. *Nage*'s posture reflects the initiating of the dynamic waveform with his center and body posture while at the same time capturing *uke*'s focus and luring him in. By frame 2, *nage* has reached the bottom of the circle and *uke* is just grasping the wrist. Note that in this particular instance, *nage* is still physically on the line of force. In a dynamic situation such as this, getting off the line of force physically may lag behind getting off the line of force spiritually. By frame 3, *nage* has risen up and *uke* has been led further into *nage*'s original space. Note how the small the *enkei* movement is, with *nage*'s wrist not dropping below his own belt level or one-point. Indeed, *nage*'s wrist rises much higher in this dynamic version, which is mostly a consequence of the dynamics of the attack. By frame 4, *nage* has reached the top of the circle and is beginning the downward movement. Note that as *uke*'s posture becomes more and more disrupted in frames 5 and 6, *nage* has become very calm and stable, finishing with *zanshin*, or the continuation of the flow of *ki*.

As Kobayashi Sensei was fond of saying, advanced techniques are just simplified basics. The most advanced version of *enkei nage* is when *nage* leads *uke* in but does not allow *uke* to grasp his wrist, but rather moves in a circular fashion somewhat ahead of *uke* and ends up dropping the elbow. This sequence is shown on the next page.

In this example of the advanced dynamic method, *nage* has stepped aside, but left his wrist as a target toward which *uke* is quickly closing. By frame 2, the wrist has moved to *nage*'s hara out of reach of *uke*. Note that *nage* has dipped his center as in the static *enkei*, but its purpose is primarily to get the right rhythm and not to physically draw *uke* down. In frames 3 and 4, *nage* continues his circular movement ahead of *uke*, and *uke* continues to follow the movement reflexively. In frame 5, *nage* has started the downward movement and found *uke*'s elbow, hooking it lightly. As *nage* completes the down calmly in frame 6, the energy is translated to the attacker into a powerful thrown with minimal effort.

In the short two minute demonstration from which these frames were extracted, Kobayashi Sensei emphasized the dynamics of the *enkei* movement or waveform and the need to practice it in motion and not just statically. Indeed, the *enkei* movement forms an integral part of many of our other movements in Seidokan Aikido, since the circular waveform is particularly effective in blending. For example in teaching *kotegaeshi*, sensei would emphasize the relationship to *enkei nage*. If you look carefully, you can see the *enkei* manifest in *kokyunage*, *hijiotoshi*, *tenchi nage*, *hanakaeshi nage*, and a host of other movements. In training we should continue to seek the essence of the forms and understand them in a dynamically changing context.



1. Dynamic Katatetori initial lead.



2. Bottom of circle.



3. Rising off the line of force.



4. Top of circle.



5. Dropping down.



6. Completed movement (Zanshin).



1. Advanced dynamic enkei initial lead.



2. Luring in.



3. Rising over uke's forearm.



4. Top of circle.



5. Connecting with elbow and dropping.



6. Completing the down.

Thoughts on the 2006 Bokken Shugyo

By Cliff Kamida, Aikido Institute of America

I always look at the annual Bokken Shugyo with equal amounts of anticipation and trepidation – anticipation because of how great I feel afterwards, and trepidation because of the mental challenge of doing one thing two thousand times.

Ironically, I found the 2000+ cuts to be more difficult this year, and afterwards I had greater muscle soreness than in years past.. The first year, as an enthusiastic white belt, I prepared for it by buying a bokken a few months in advance and swinging it hundred times a day. The second year I prepared a few months in advance as well. This year, due to an increased work schedule, both my dojo and home practice took a hit, and the bulk of my bokken time was spent practicing kengi 1 and 2 instead of doing suburi.

So on December 31, 2006, I found my shoulders starting to burn at around 50 cuts. *Fifty cuts and my shoulders are already sore - this is going to be fun*, I thought to myself. I made a point not to look at the clock, nor to calculate how many rounds it would take to pass 2000. I tried to relax, move from my one point, and let the weight of the sword make the cut. I did a checklist of all the points I remembered from various classes and seminars – elbows in, wring the handle like a towel, grip firmly with the ring and

index fingers, let your ki flow through the tip of the sword. I watch myself make a few good cuts, a lot of mediocre ones, and an embarrassing number of lousy ones. When it's my turn to count, I bark it out. I contemplate, and then dispel the urge to count in Japanese.

Eventually, discomfort sets in, and I start wishing it were over. *You're hitting the wall. Just relax and feel your body.* So I focus on my breathing, feeling the soles of my feet growing new calluses from the constant sliding. And suddenly, Crotty Sensei leads everyone in the final count.

The idea of integrating mind and body is what initially drew me to aikido. The mind/body connection has received a lot of attention over the past forty or so years (in the West, at least), but the more-often-than-not missing element of that combination, in my humble opinion, is *spirit*. Which is what shugyo is all about – building spirit. Intention that comes from the heart not the mind. The willingness and ability to break through your comfort zones (and even endure a little pain, as long there is no permanent damage). If it were something I could do with ease, it would have less meaning.

So when I hear rumors of 3000 cuts next time, my heart beats a little faster. And I smile. A little.