

The Seidokan Communicator

Aikido for a Modern Way of Life

Kokoro O Komete

*By Minoru Kobayashi
Seidokan Kanshu*

"With all your heart"... "From your heart"

Prior to coming to America, I worked at a company in Japan for ten years. It was during this period that I was fortunate enough to have had a rare opportunity to study and practice exercises in exploring "what is in your heart". This happened to be a segment of a philosophical study in "The Philosophy of Life" under my former boss, Mr. Takashima, the president of the company at the time and an expert in the field.

I have been requested by the camp committee to explain the meaning of "Kokoro O Komete": (Teaching and Learning) From Within Your Heart, the theme of this year's camp. It is not possible to share all of what I learned back then, but I will certainly try to briefly explain the meaning.

The meaning and application of "From Your Heart", stated in a simple phrase for this camp, is to harmonize and put your heart and soul into every activity. Harmonize and put your heart and soul into training with your partner, whether they be instructor or student. It is difficult to gain a meaningful understanding for yourself and for your partner, and to yield the best results, unless you give your respectable heart and mind to one another; mutual heartfelt respect from instructor to student and from student to instructor. Accordingly, with all minds harmonized, both the act of teaching and the act of learning become pleasurable and the atmosphere for everyone involved becomes one of fun and delight.

As a beginner, you are taking in everything that is being taught to you. As a teacher, not only are you learning from your instruction, but you are learning from your students and the others around you. Practicing under this harmonious atmosphere will also contribute to attaining your goals and objectives naturally, with a pleasant and thankful attitude.

I believe that the harmony of your respectful mind, and the giving of all your heart into everything you do should be your attitude all the time; not only a camp, but in your everyday lives as well. "Kokoro O Komete" is your responsibility to your position in society and will be your most important contribution to society itself.

I would like to wish everyone a successful and fun camp here at Cal State Long Beach.

Good luck to all of you.

(NOTE: This article as taken from the 2007 Summer Camp Booklet)

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Kokoro O Komete



The kanji for Koro O Komote was brushed by Mrs. Kobayashi and presented to each Dojo Chief Instructor as a reminder to share the "open heart" spirit throughout Seidokan Aikido.

My Take on Camp

by Arik Martin

I believe Kobayashi sensei would have been pleased to see the spirit and direction of the Seidokan camp this year. He was always observing, refining, testing, and questioning. And that spirit is still alive.

The theme of the camp, *Kokoro o Komete*, was right on target. Sensei operated on that level. He gave generously from the heart and genuinely loved his students. No one person could possibly replace him...and that is good...a person like that comes along once in a great while and is a gift to us. The testament to the foundations laid by Kobayashi Sensei, and all who have come before and all who came after, is that many pillars can actually continue to form the framework for Seidokan Aikido. Each instructor at the camp presented ideas through his or her own unique lens.... and it was beneficial to be able to share in those perceptions.

At the core of the camp was a current of kindness, gentleness and respect, which is definitely in keeping with Kobayashi's vision. Sensei went through lots of changes in the years leading up to his release from this plane of existence.... just as we all do. But some of the things that were most apparent in his transformation were his increasing kindness and compassion. I really think that those qualities are at the core of Aikido training. Correct training helps us drop negative ki and negative patterns and reach our potentials as humans. Egos at the camp seemed very harmonious. Most of us already know through training, and all of life, that there really is nothing to hold onto. Once you think you have gotten a hold on some technique or form, it's already gone. I got that sense from the instructors throughout the camp. Rigid, dogmatic theology and authoritarianism was not present...and that is nice!

Many of the people who knew Sensei spoke fondly, outside and inside the training areas, about the old days, when we knew that all we had to do was follow him. We knew intuitively that he was on a path that we wanted to travel down. We might, as if in a dream, believe that those were the golden years. But, we all know that this moment, this present time, is the golden era for training and understanding...and the camp reinforced that. If we trust our dojo's sensei's direction, we can follow with open listening heart and open inquisitive mind. I, for one, felt that the camp really showcased the authenticity and sincerity of Seidokan Aikidoka. Even this article seems like an indulgent reminiscence. The camp already a distant, pleasant memory!



Summer Camp 2007 Long Beach California



First Time at Aikido Kid's Camp

by Kiyon (6) and Moriah (5)

We loved kids' camp at Long Beach University. Our friend Sensei Joe Crotty taught us to use a Jo to get someone down. He also taught us a little dance with the Jo to make it easier to understand.

Sensei Larry Wadahara is our buddy and he is a crazy teacher. He was teaching us how to turn correctly in seiza while we were holding a cup of water. To make us laugh he dumped a cup of water on his head and also on another girl's head.

I (Kiyon) tried to do a diving roll for the first time and hit my head really hard. Sensei Joe and lots of hugs from Mrs. Kobayashi helped me feel much better. I (Moriah) tried rolling under the pads and kept knocking them down. It made me laugh.

After our workout we did projects like foam pictures and origami. We went to lunch and then headed to the beach. At the beach we flew kites, played in the water, dug in the sand and found a lot of shells. It was our first time at the beach and we had so much fun. While we were at the beach we saw about 5 dolphins swimming, jumping and playing.

When we returned back home to Utah, we made these seashell butterflies. It was a great way to remember Kids Camp and all of the fun that we had. Thank you to everyone that made our trip awesome.



Kids Summer Camp 2007



Aikido Beginnings

By John Robertson

So I'm sitting with my fellow Yudansha at a Borders Book Store, talking a little trash and drinking some coffee on a needed run away from the Long Beach Summer Camp. The sun had set and nobody had called us on our cell phones for help, so it was almost unanimous, let's go into town for a cool drink – Iced Coffee and Frappuccino – thank God for over inflated corporate snacks, we were dying from the heat.

Between polite sips and white Café Moca mustaches on my colleagues smiling faces, it came to me, maybe to everyone, we had all been friends for a very long time now. We all come from very different backgrounds, Sal and Aurora Hernandez, Steve Spargur, Steve Vernon and myself – still, because we had all been through the same training, in pretty much the same place, there was a glue, an unspoken unity that was present. It caused me to ask the question, to everybody, "Hey, how did Aikido come into your life?"

The responses were so awakening, so different, and added so much to my awareness of my friends that once I got back to the dormitory, I asked other people the same question. Everybody had a different story. I can't remember if it was me or Aurora Hernandez who suggested it would make a good series of articles. I think I came up with a title, Aikido Beginnings. That only left a face-to-face encounter with Sensei Wedell, this paper's editor, for an approval of an on going article of interviews with Yudansha on how, and why they came to Aikido.

His response was immediate, that's a good idea, and then laid out what ideas he wanted explored in the articles. So, with that, I figured a good place to start is at the top, I asked Senei Stewart Chan would he grant me an interview for the first article, not only did he say yes, he bought lunch!

Stewart Chan Sensei

While we waited for our waitress to take our orders, it hit me, how long had Sensei Chan been in Aikido anyway. He didn't have to think about it, he started Aikido in 1966, wow, that's forty-one years ago. I'm not young, but when I was doing high school, he was learning to roll. So after our waitress took our order, and I got to ask the question: "Sensei Chan, how did Aikido happen into your life?"

As it turns out, a young Stewart Chan had a fairly ordinary introduction to our art. He was working at TRW as an engineer at about twenty something years of age, when he read an article in the newspaper that basically invited people to come over to the gym to learn a self defense art, Aikido. Well, the article sparked his interest and he called the number listed to get more information. They told him to drop by and see for himself, of course he did.

He told me he hadn't had much of a martial arts background. He father had enrolled him in a Kung Fu classes in his youth, but it didn't take, nothing really came of it. So what drew him to the gym to observe Aikido? Pretty much the same thing that draws any young person: Stewart was pretty athletic – he played basketball, hit the pool, bowled and ran. He wasn't married at the time, so it

so it was the possibility of another way to stay in shape – something else to do – another way to play.

Once he got to the gym, he talked to the guy who wrote the article, who advised that he sit through a class. Stewart saw what they were doing, and despite the fact that they were wearing skirts, figured he could do it as well. After joining, his first reaction was the same as mine when I first started Aikido: "I couldn't do what they're doing." He found that it wasn't easy. "Easy to the eye," he said, "but hard to do." He liked the people, the atmosphere and the attitude so he continued to come. Stewart Sensei says they had good teachers, Rod Kobayashi and Sam Nagata.

Sadly, before long Sam Nagata Sensei had a heart attack - triple by pass surgery. At which point Rod Kobayashi informed Stewart that he would be teaching now. Chan Sensei was about twenty-eight at the time and a Brown Belt. He has been teaching ever since. He spoke to Sam after that, but Nagata Sensei never came back.

I wanted to talk about any transformations Aikido might have on Chan Sensei's life, To my surprise Chan Sensei said there was not much difference, he had always been a passive guy, and he found Aikido to be a passive art. When I thought about it, it shouldn't have been surprising, a great realization for me was when I started to learn the principles of Aikido and found that for the most part, I thought like that anyway. I guess that's what is meant by a good fit.

I then ventured a little into teaching style. I first asked what he expected of his students. Having had a difficult time at the start of Aikido like myself, I expected him to say something on the order of: I expect them to listen to the instructor and work hard, or something like that. "NOT", he said, "I expect them to do it better than I do! I expect them to learn it well and to carry it on to the next the guy."

I then asked if he enjoyed inventing new techniques? More "NOT" – he enjoys perfecting what was given to him – he wants to make things better. In the same breath, he did say that he was open to new ideas – "That's the only way to go... we need to share the knowledge." How about inviting teachers from other schools? Not a good idea – their style is too different from ours. Still, other schools are always asking him to come teach.



Shared Voices – Shared Ki Bokken Shuygo By David Dickinson

The mystique of the Japanese sword has spanned many centuries and its development as the ultimate martial arts weapon requiring the highest level of martial skill is well known in the modern world. At the Long Beach Summer Camp, 2007, I watched laido performed by Crotty Sensei with his powerful, controlled movements and the flashing sword. So with considerable anticipation I began preparing for the annual Bokken Shuygo held at the AIA. With the guidance from many instructors and practice at home I worked on the shomen cut, focusing on technique and as the event approached working on endurance. For the first time in my limited experience with Aikido I had the opportunity to prepare in advance. Perhaps at this event, Aikido would not play its usual tricks and jokes leaving me surprised and humbled.

The morning of December, 31st arrived clear and cool. Eighteen Aikidoka met at the dojo with a quiet calmness. Most of them were wearing hakama indicating years of experience. Crotty Sensei facing the group started off by counting out the first ten and then the count passed to Stuart Chan, Kancho and on down the two rows, each member contributing their own ten count. Stroke on stroke the count went around the room. I was in a good location sandwiched between Spargur Sensei and Wadahara Sensei with a clear view of Crotty Sensei. I tried to match their moves, and had plenty of time to think through the many tips and admonitions I had received during the month on proper technique.

As the stroke count progressed Aikido revealed its first trick as I came to realize that the Shuygo was not about the glamour of the flashing sword but about harmonizing with the group. I became aware that each individual had their own style of counting. Their voices were loud, clear, bold and rich with ki. I noticed that the more senior the rank the more ki was projected and it was the ki that drove us on through our fatigue. There was one woman in the room, Nicole LeGarreta, her voice while softer smoothed out the stroke of the entire group. The stroke became more fluid and efficient. Larman Sensei's voice led us to make powerful cuts.

Late in the count at the top of a stroke I looked up to check my grip wondering at that point if I was even holding the bokken right side up. I hit the back wall with its tip. Aikido played a joke as peels of friendly laughter filled the room and Wadhara Sensi said, "I'm glad you got that out of your system". Lesson learned, don't focus on one part, harmonize with the whole. After joining in with the laughter, I settled back into the best harmony I could muster, as the count ever progressing moved around the room.

Finally we counted out the last ten together and the Shuygo was over for 2,160 shomen cuts. I can report that I only hit the wall once and although it was close I managed to avoid hitting a chief instructor before the Shuygo started.

Not bad for a blue belt, things are looking up. Please come to the next Bokken Shuygo and if you see a humbled, but enthusiastic color belt, protect yourself. Leave a little extra space while you enjoy shared voices and shared ki.



St. Louis Aikido Workshop By Doug Wedell

Last November I once again had the distinct pleasure of journeying to St. Louis to help lead a workshop with Richard Harnack Sensei. I have been to St. Louis several times now and am very appreciative of the great job Richard has done growing and nurturing a dojo of dedicated Aikidoka. We focused the workshop on techniques involving weapons in Aikido. As Richard pointed out the first night, what is or what is not a weapon is more a state of mind rather than a part of the object itself. For example a pencil can be a writing instrument or a weapon, depending on how it is used. In Aikido, we have the jo, bokken and tanto, which we often refer to as weapons. However, these are really training instruments that enable us to better understand correct movement and blending in potential conflict situations.

Richard instructed *tanto tori* (knife taking) the first night, with the main emphasis on linking the empty handed techniques to the *tanto tori* techniques. On Saturday, I reviewed basic *aiki kengi* (1 and 2) and then introduced a *kumitachi* (swords together) form that I recently developed. When we move with swords together, we better understand the openings that allow us to enter and the timing that keeps us safe. We moved onto *jonage* (throwing with the staff), *tachi dori* (sword taking) and *jo dori* (staff taking).

In between all that we had the pleasure of administering two shodan tests (Robert "Spike" Norton & Bill Shiflett). Dan tests are an activity for the entire dojo, because it takes a dojo to train an individual. One cannot progress very far training on one's own. We need instructors, senior students and junior students to provide the guidance for learning to blend with everything around us.

The examinees did well, reflecting on the entire dojo. If you are ever in St. Louis, don't pass up the opportunity to train with this friendly and exciting group of folks.

Promotions

Shichidan

Joseph Crotty Jr. 06/23/07
Aikido Institute of America

Lawrence Wadahara 06/23/07
Aikido Institute of America

Doug Wedell 06/23/07
AIA / Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

Mark Crapo 06/23/07
AIA / Aikido Institute of Michigan, Seiwa

Rokudan

Richard Harnack 06/23/07
AIA / Aikido Institute of Mid-America

Mario Fonda-Bonardi 06/23/07
Aikido Institute of America

Yondan

Doug Leonard 06/23/07
Aikido Institute of America

Bruce Fox 06/23/07
Aikido Institute of America

Sandan

Oleg Raskin 08/25/06
Seidokan Aikido Heisei Dojo

Michelle Newsom 08/31/06
Aikido Institute of Mid-America

Earl Rogers 08/31/06
Aikido Institute of Mid-America

Mark Thomas 08/31/06
Aikido Institute of Mid-America

Shodan

Paul Dickinson 07/13/07
Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo

Yuko Kitahiro 07/13/07
Seidokan Aikido of Tokyo

Susan Jones 09/09/07
Petersen Family Dojo

Geoffrey Squier 10/06/07
Petersen Family Dojo

Congratulations!

Aikido Beginnings: Stewart Chan Sensei (continued)

Forty-One years, that's a lot of training, and a lot to pass on, which is exactly what his main concern is. I asked Sensei Chan if there was anything he wanted me to say, anything he wanted everyone to know about him? He said, just say this, "Let them know I was voted into this position." This is something I didn't know, I was glad he mentioned it. Most leaders in a martial art, are promoted into a position, Sensei Chan was made Kancho after a vote from our other Chief Instructors.

My background in martial arts, pre-Aikido, is Chinese and Korean, both of which have competitions. When I first came to Aikido I had a conversation with Stewart Sensei which ended like this, "John, we don't compete. This is good, and because of this, we don't have any 'secret techniques', **what I know, you will know.**" It was when I heard him say that, that I realized I was in the right art, **it was a good fit.** If you see Sensei Chan at a Summer Camp, or if he happens to visit your dojo, be sure to start a conversation with him, forty-one years - what he knows, you will know.

Calendar

March 7 - 9, 2008: Bokken Workshop at the Aikido Institute of America; For more information, please email info@aikidoinstitute.com.

May 2 - 4, 2008: Weekend seminar with Stephen McAdam Sensei at the Aikido Institute of America. For more information, please email info@aikidoinstitute.com.

June 19 - 22, 2008: Seidokan Summer Camp hosted by the Aikido Institute of Michigan, Seiwa Dojo at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Early registration: Checks postmarked no later than the end of March: \$250 for Seidokan members \$275 for non-members. Registration: Checks postmarked in April or May: \$275 for Seidokan members and \$300 for non-members. Late Registration: Anything coming in the month of June, including "at the door": \$300 members and \$325 non-members. (People registering in June may or may not receive this year's camp gift - depending on supply.) A non-refundable deposit of \$50 will hold your registration. Payment in full by the start of camp. For more information please contact Mark Crapo at DrMarkCrapo@hotmail.com or Janean Crapo at janeancrapo@gmail.com.

More scenes from Summer Camp...

Fingers cocked and loaded:



Mmmm... The food was good!



Once more please, with feeling!



AIKI POETRY

Yokomenuchi Makiotoshi

By: Gabriel LeGarreta (Victory Dojo)

*I swung at my target,
nothing was there*

*My aim was true,
my ki strong,
but nothing was there*

*My body followed my hand
as I fell to the floor,
because, nothing was there*

*I told my wife,
"Today, I swung at a ghost".*

Bokken Shugyo

By Nicole LeGarreta

(Age 15, Victory Dojo, Reseda)

I went to the bokken shugyo on New Year's Eve. This was the second time I attended a bokken shugyo. During the bokken shugyo we took turns going around the room, each person counting ten cuts. There were about 20 people there. The first thousand cuts were fairly easy, but after that it started to wear me down. I got confused because I lost track of how many I did and how many were left, but I know that we did more than 2,000 cuts. After awhile you go into a rhythmic trance, and can lose your focus if you're not careful. Sometimes people strike incorrectly, for example, they may hit the wall with their bokken. By the end I felt very tired and glad it was over. I was pretty sore for a day or so afterward. I think everyone should try it at least once.

Training with Giants

By David Dickinson

*"If I have seen further it is by standing on the
shoulders of giants." Isaac Newton 1676*

At summer camp I was training with giants, the giants of Seidokan Aikido. I witnessed a diverse group of people that were actively practicing the principles of Aikido on and off the mat. On the mat I witnessed the joyful spirit of training, and willing guidance given by senior belts to lower belts. Off the mat there was happy conversation, raucous laughter and always a willingness to help each other out. At Misogi and Hessing Sensei's breathing exercise, there was a true unification of many minds, bodies and spirits. I was moved when our senior members were awarded advancement in rank for their many years of contribution to Seidokan. I was most affected by their reactions to the awards; a gasp of surprise, a few held back tears and all humbly accepted their honors. Fonda-Bonardi Sensei said it was as un-expected as a lighting strike.

I am new to Aikido and I am thrilled to be part of such a wonderful organization, an organization that lives by its principles. I stand before the giants of Seidokan Aikido and simply ask that you help me grow.