

The Seidokan Communicator

Aikido for a Modern Way of Life

Seidokan Aikido in Israel

By Doug Wedell

I recently had the pleasure of visiting our Seidokan Aikido colleagues in Israel, who invited me out for the second time in five years to give a seminar. I certainly enjoyed their wonderful Middle Eastern brand of hospitality, from the exotic and delicious meals to the gracious companionship during sightseeing, parties, working out on the mat, and just hanging around. We are truly blessed in Seidokan to have such an exuberant, skilled, and dedicated group of Aikido practitioners half a world away. Kobayashi Sensei would be proud!

For those not that familiar with our Israeli side of the Seidokan family, let me provide a brief introduction. In the early 1980's, Robin Heifetz Sensei (who by the way was my first Aikido teacher) took up a position at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and started the ball rolling. Robin stayed in Israel for about six years and in that short time was able to train up several dedicated udansha (including Seth Sommer and Ron Havilio) who have kept the aikido flowing along with their students. There are currently three major Seidokan dojos in Israel: 1) the original Aikido Institute of Jerusalem at the Mt. Scopus campus of Hebrew University (directed by Chaim Noy while Ron Havilio is out of the country), 2) the Seidokan Aikido Heisei Dojo in Tel Aviv (founded and directed by Seth Sommer), and 3) the Aiki Dojo in Jerusalem (founded and directed by Eli Landau). There are also several branch dojos in the Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa areas. To facilitate advanced training and sharing of ideas, the dojo members from across Israel get together once a month, and various instructors show what they have been working on lately. This is an excellent model for Aikido training, and it is demonstrated, as I and other visiting instructors have seen, in the high caliber and high intensity of the Aikido found on and off the mat.

As we all know, in many ways Israel is a hard country in which to live. Since the inception of the modern state of Israel in 1948, the people there have been under enormous pressures from outside and from within that threaten their peace. These conflicts have ancient roots and so are not easily vanquished. It is heartening to see, however, that slowly progress toward peace is being made. In some small measure, those practicing Aikido (in Seidokan and in all its other forms) are helping this push toward peace by developing the principles of peace in their daily lives. As I saw Arab and Jew work together on the mat, there was indeed comradeship and a shared vision of peaceful resolution of conflict.

Also In This Issue

- **Kawakami Sensei in SC**
- **An Invitation**
- **One Person Dojo**
- **Aikido and Rafting**
- **Wedell Sensei in Israel**
- **An Aiki Journey**

The diversity on the mat in Israel is refreshing. People of many different languages, cultures, professions and religions work together to explore the principles of harmony that are the foundation of Aikido training. Their fellowship continues off the mat, as members share stories and good times over a meal. So I am happy to report that Aikido is alive and well in the state of Israel. I would like to send out a special thanks to all those who made my visit so memorable. Arigato Gozai Mashita Seidokan Israel!



Relaxing at the end of seminar party at Eli Landau's house)



An Invitation

Glenwood, New Mexico... There are not a lot of people here, but they all have opinions.

A few people think it's hot here in the summer, but a lot of people have friends and relations in Tucson or Phoenix and so have some perspective on heat. Some people would call it high in the mountains. People who come from the coast find themselves huffing up short hills, but when you live here, it just seems like the air in the low lands is extra thick. Most people would call it rural. After all, you have to go 60 miles to find a traffic signal.

A lot of people play basketball here. It's by far the most popular sport at the high school, and the teams at the school 35 miles south of here are the perennial state champs. Some people run track. It helps that track season is after basketball season, and you need a way to stay in shape. A few people practice aikido. They are dedicated.

Most people think it's pretty here. We have beautiful mountains, wonderful late season wild flowers (especially if it rains just a little). We used to have pretty good fishing, but that was before the drought. Some people hike in the wilderness, the first one ever established, in 1964. A few gather in Glenwood on Tuesday afternoon to blend in harmony with the energy around them.

A lot of people make their living from cattle ranching. Some people make their living from logging, though not nearly as many as before. Nobody makes their living practicing aikido, but that doesn't stop us.

Most people call it the Glenwood Community Center. A few of us call it the Mogollon Dojo, at least on Tuesday afternoons. It's about 70 miles north of Silver City, on US Highway 180 in west-central New Mexico. Once you get to town, anybody can direct you. There's a motel in town, and 2 cafes that are open most of the time, so there's a place to stay and you won't starve. If you come to town, let us know. We'd love to practice with you.

Promotions

Yondan

Paul Bradley 2/20/05
(AIA) Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

Sandan

Kevin Duggan 4/17/05
Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

Nidan

Phil Cornelius 4/16/05
Seidokan Aikido of South Carolina

Shodan

Remi Blank 5/27/05
Aiki Dojo, Jerusalem

Congratulations!

One Person Dojo

*** This article was a letter sent to Sensei's Mark and Janean Crapo and Mrs. Kobayashi; Permission to reprint by Jim Brazell. ***

As a "one person dojo" I refresh my study and practice of Aikido with a variety of ideas and techniques. Some are more orthodox than others, but all keep Aikido joyous in my heart. The following items are listed as they come to me. I trust they may be helpful to others.

1. When in doubt, watch the tape. Focus of attention from hands, to feet, to posture, to distance and then to flow; each perspective teaches you.
2. When possible, practice jo and ken kata outside. Wear sandals or a light pair of shoes. The uneven surface is a great teacher of foot position and balance. Shift your emphasis along the same lines as watching the tape.
3. Practice the ken kata with the jo, and the jo kata with the ken. The weapons cannot be switched without effort and adaptation; this leads to new learning, and often the giggles. Also, try the weapons kata with empty hands for new learning.
4. Posture is more important than I realize. "Ears over shoulders over hips over feet" is a good guide for me. I do not have to look down at the "manhole cover" or my hands to know that they are there; and EXHALE.
5. Similarly, when opening a door, practice "open the door." Sensei Door quickly teaches distance, balance and posture. When I let my head drop, Sensei Door complies with a logical consequence.
6. I do practice regularly with a dojo of another style. I have learned these things.
 - A. I am there to stay in shape, to learn another style, and to clarify my knowledge of Seidokan. I am junior to everyone and everyone has something to teach me.
 - B. Learning another style does not require "unlearning Seidokan." Consider it an exercise to "Step off the line;" and move self to an "empty place" that the new learning can fill. Be mindful that the body has memorized Seidokan movements. It is helpful to focus on the distinctive basics of the other style in order to train the mind and retrain the body.
 - C. What is orthodox in one style may be heretical in another. Do not correct your instructor or partner to demonstrate your 'better' way. Take this as an exercise to extend your range of effectiveness and to blend your ki.
 - D. When working with a "harder" style, or a more tense, aggressive partner, practice getting as soft as you can. This maintains the spirit of Seidokan and avoids needless retaliation (Harder against harder, escalating the anger).

I trust these prove useful to you and to other students of Seidokan, as they have been useful to me.

Blessings,
Jim Brazell
Sankyū



Doug Wedell-Sensei's Visit to Israel

By Seth Sommer and Chaim Noy

This past month, we had the great opportunity of having Doug Wedell-Sensei as our Guest of Honor in our Spring Seminar. The seminar was hosted by the Mt. Scopus (Hebrew University), Jerusalem dojo, between May 19th and 27th.

This was Doug-Sensei's second visit to Israel, and we were all looking forward eagerly to see what news and new Aiki-ideas and Aiki-waza Doug-Sensei was working on lately. We remembered him as a great teacher, as well as an excellent Aikido-ka and a very fun and pleasant person! We also remember the innovative teaching and training methods that he taught us during that visit. Sensei certainly did not disappoint us: he brought with him a whole array of new insights into the techniques, principles and training methods that we thought we knew so well! His ability to redefine and re-refine arts and principles with new and novel ideas for explanations, drills and exercises never ceases to fascinate us! These methods of action and instruction are of high importance, and are the tool kits Sensei left with/for us.

Prior to the seminar, Doug-Sensei demonstrated serious Shodo-o-Seisu as he distributed through e-mail a small booklet, which outlined in detail what he had planned for each lesson (a total of 9). In addition to serving as a syllabus, the booklet doubled as a notebook, wherein we (the students) could write what we had learned and understood. Each of the classes Doug-Sensei gave an intriguing title, and although the seminar was carefully and sensitively planned, room for blending and improvisation was left.

In the first day's lesson, entitled "Waveform Interactions," Doug-Sensei used wave physics and oscillating motions to explain the mechanisms of such techniques as Enkei-nage, Tenchi-nage, Ohnami and Zenpo-nage. We can't say that it wasn't frustrating for us when our students approached us and said: "Wow, this is

so easy – why don't we do it this way...?" Indeed, the bouncy, opening-of-the-palm movement has a nearly magical touch to it: It allows nage to let go of ego and release uke (just like you release a basketball when you throw it).

In the Friday instructors' class, entitled "Ki Flow in Weapons Training," Doug-Sensei refined our Bokken and Jo movement, while teaching us to keep ki flowing with the movements of Aiki-kengi and Aiki-jogi. Actually, Doug-Sensei successfully taught a large and heterogeneous group of Yudansha Aikidoka, including practitioners from both Israeli and Palestinian Seidokan dojos and other Yudansha friends and visitors.

The third class, entitled "Meditation in Motion," was dedicated to Doug-Sensei's Aiki-taigi: the basic movements and their applications. We learned how we can use this form both to train with a partner and alone (without a partner). During the fourth class, entitled "Yin-Yang Interplay," Doug-Sensei shared his insights on yin and yang, opposite and complementary forces, while practicing techniques such as: Tenchi-nage, Irimi-nage, Ikkyo-tenkan and Zenpo-nage. The waza Doug-Sensei taught were short, extremely powerful and effective (ukes went flying...). The techniques demonstrated how little rearrangement of the bodies of uke and nage is needed before nage can effectively lead uke to fall.

Class five, entitled "Leading and Following," was about leading one's partner and encouraging him to follow. Doug-Sensei had us practicing simple leading and following exercises, as well as technique: Kokyu-nage, Kote-gaeshi, Irimi-nage and others. He also associated these techniques to sword movements using a Kumi-tachi form.



The sixth class, entitled "Freedom of Movement," was concerned with Randori. Doug-Sensei showed the importance of moving freely, in general, and during the application of technique, in particular. We, then, applied these principles, and several quick and simple techniques, to multiple-attacker situations. For some of the students, particularly the more advanced ones, the Randori sessions taught by Doug-Sensei were a highlight. Doug had us all

(Continued Page 7)

doing Randori repeatedly, and showed us various techniques and short blending movements which, when applied correctly, allowed us to "stay free" among storming ukes. One can say he introduced us the extremely elaborate world of Randori, effectively restoring harmony and balance where previously disharmony and chaos existed.

For the seventh class, the Tel Aviv Hei-Sei dojo (where Seth Sommer acts as chief instructor), had the honor of hosting Doug-Sensei. During this class, entitled "Finding Agreement," Doug-Sensei helped us find the best way to blend and to apply technique in various situations, such that uke and nage blend in total harmony and agreement. We practiced basic techniques, such as Kokyu-nage, Kote-gaeshi and Sankyo, from open-hand "attacks" (where neither uke nor nage actually hold or grab anything), from traditional grabs and from dynamic strikes.

In class eight, entitled "Sword to Let-Live," we practiced techniques where nage is attacked while holding his sword. We then continued to Tachi-Dori techniques. For us here in Israel and Palestine, these Let-Live techniques are of crucial moral and educational importance. In our part of the world, with its affinity for violence and terror (much of which is aggravated by the media), learning how to channel and transform aggressive and killing instincts into a Let-Live

way-of-life (DO) is fundamental for survival. In one of the classes, for instance, when we were practicing Shomenuchi Ikkyo Undo, Doug-Sensei insisted that we pause, even if for a split of a second, before lowering our hands and completing the Shomenuchi undo. As one student commented: "pausing with my hands up in the air, instead of immediately cutting, was illuminating, because it gave me the opportunity to consider whether to strike or not. Because sometimes you realized you don't need to or don't want to perform a strike."

During this class, Doug-Sensei, Eli and Chaim administered a Shodan exam to Remi Blank, which was a wonderful Exam!

The seminar was everything that we had looked forward to and more: fun, exciting, informative, powerful – a real Ki infusion! We think we can sum it all up in one short sentence: Doug-Sensei, it was great, when are you coming back?

We would also like to thank Eli Landau for the many efforts and energies he put in coordinating Doug-Sensei's visit, and Chaim Noy and the Mt. Scopus (Hebrew University) Jerusalem dojo, for hosting the seminar and Doug-Sensei in such a homey manner.



Calendar of Events

1. Seminar with Larry Wadahara Sensei hosted by Ahsa Aikido (Utah). Friday, August 5 - Sunday, August 7, 2005; For more information, please contact Audrey Nelson at senseiwashi@programwise.com.
2. Annual Jo Workshop at the Aikido Institute of America; 2615 Colorado Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90041; Friday, September 9, 2005 (7:00-9:30 p.m.); Saturday, September 10th (1:00-4:00 p.m.); Sunday, September 11, 2005 (1:00 - 4:00 p.m.) For more information, please call (323) 254-3372 or email Aikitiger1@aol.com.



Whitewater Rafting and Aikido

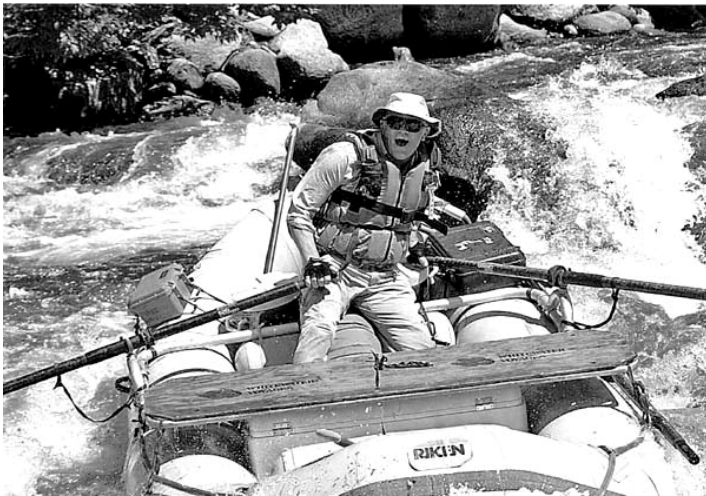
By Bruce Fox

Bruce Fox teaches aikido at the Antelope Valley Seidokan Aikido and guides the whitewater for Whitewater Voyages on the Kern River in Southern California.

For me, Aikido and whitewater rafting inform each other. Much of the aikido training I have done over the years has assisted me in learning to guide rafts through big whitewater. The realizations of the river have helped me in the dojo. Taking a look at it from the point of view of the Principles of Aikido may be the best way to illustrate this synergy.

Circular Motion

In the dojo, much of what happens is circular. Most of the arts use circular motion in one manner or another. To make the rivers, water evaporates from the ocean and travels inland in clouds that deposit snow on the mountains. It melts and flows back down the rivers to the oceans to continue the circle: The big circle. One portion of this big circle takes us down the river and provides us with all this joy, scenery, and adventure. Within this big circle, going down the river the water often circles back on itself when blocked by an obstacle. This may be in the form of a nice eddy behind a rock that will allow me to control my downstream motion, or a giant stomping hydraulic that can trap and flip my boat.



Let the Ki Flow and Attention to Flow Energy

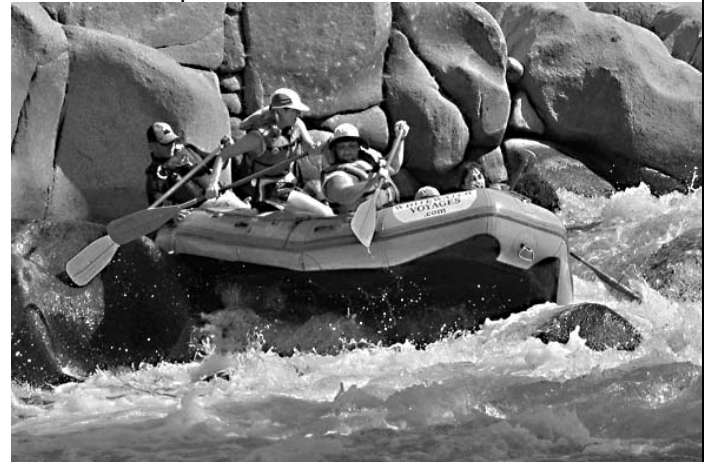
From the uke comes an attack, be it a grab or a strike. There is the ki to make a technique succeed. On the river, gravity pulls the water from the snowmelt, down the canyon to the valley. Not so simple in either case. The canyon twists, giant rocks block the flow. They build up a long placid pool behind the blockage and then the water pours over and between the rocks rushing, dropping, speeding, and nearly stopping again in a train of standing waves. The water forms holes downstream of some obstacles; many times there is a hard current going upstream. If part of your raft goes in that upstream flow and the rest stays in the mainstream, it can turn the raft around in a second. Careful

observation, looking ahead, reading the flow of energy, and split second decisions let you weave the path of your raft and crew safely down the river.

Every human being has a certain flow of energy. When you put five or six of them together in a raft and have them paddling together, the surge of power is a wonder to behold. Just as we teach letting the ki flow from the center in Aikido, proper paddling technique involves moving from the center forward to put the paddle in the water, then moving the body back from the center to draw the raft forward.

Keep One Point

Balance and centering are very important to Aikido, and stressed in beginning exercises through advanced techniques. On the river, the most basic use of the one point is to stay in the boat as it is being pushed and bounced by the water flow. When the boat is pushed sideways up against a rock, the guide and clients rush to the high side of the boat to push it back down into the river and prevent it from wrapping around the rock. Everyone is moving to one side to keep the boat's collective one point.



Shodo O Seisu

Proper preparations and extension of ki allow you to "touch uke before he touches you" and control the first move. On the river, preparation extends way back, proper raft, carefully selected gear, meticulous rigging, training the crew, meals planned, spare paddles, and so on. Once on the river, the guide stands up in the back of the raft in the pool just above the rapid, just trying to get that last look down the rapid before commitment. His attention reaches out to the rapid before he is there. For the major rapids, the guide may beach her raft above the rapid, get out and scout it before running it.

Chudo

The middle path is important in aikido. Not too much, not too little, just enough. On the river, the middle path is essential. The clients want an exciting ride, but how much excitement? The raft may dump-truck and spill the whole crew and guide into the rapid. Client swims, maybe through the whole rapid, to be fished out at the

(Continued Page 6)

downstream end by the trip leader setting safety at the bottom of the rapid. Now that was exciting (gag, cough, spit).). Many clients enjoy being flushed down a moderate rapid; but how many times? Other clients are just not mentally prepared for the upset of a sudden swim in cold water, and never want to do it again. The middle path: try not to let the raft turn over. It might anyway. For those who want to swim, there are the flat places in the river, even a few light duty rapids that can be swum safely. Often enough, in moderate water, a little bump on a rock will pitch a crew member (or even the guide) out of the raft without notice or anticipation.

Often the middle path on the river is graphically obvious. In many rapids, as the flow enters the rapid it will form a smooth down stream pointing tongue. This is where to be, the middle path at the start. Much of the rest may be to one side of the river or the other. You are always on the edge of some excitement, but the guide doesn't need to add any. Follow the middle path and the river will provide.

With the Moment

When you come up to the pour-over at the top of a major rapid there is no room for anything else in your mind except for the flow. This is a similar feeling to a randori, when you hear "hajime", the gray stuff and the whole body is focused on the ukes and your plan for the first move and self admonitions to breath this time through.



Randomness

Even after you have been through a given rapid several times, there are no certainties. The flow is different, a rock has moved, a branch that those beavers have been working on for weeks has fallen into the river, or the raft that was ahead of you doing very nicely is suddenly trapped sideways between the two rocks you had planned on zipping between. Well, life and aikido are that way too. You may have done many randori's, some even with the same four people facing you this moment, but every one is different.

And then there is the experience of pandemonium. One moment you are charging through the rapid upright and having a great time in the sunlight and spray, and the next moment the whole world is green and bubbles. You are

having an "out of boat experience". Your life vest brings you to the surface in seconds, and there you are, moving rapidly down the river. Often a feeling of panic starts to well up. That is the feeling of pandemonium. Don't fight it, make friends with it. You can tell yourself that this is the feeling they told me about. And it is okay to feel that way a bit. Now, what to do? Some of the safety talk you suffered through at put-in comes back to you. Hold on to the paddle, feet up and down stream. That's better. Oooo, you can feel your brain almost starting to work again. What's that shouting? Look behind, and there is your raft, coming for you, your crewmates paddling hard to catch up. What did they say? And so it goes for another routine river rescue. You are back in the raft paddling down stream. The experience of the pandemonium of bumps and dumps, flips and wraps, and swimming more than a few rapids, getting the brain back in gear each time, has helped me in the dojo as the unexpected occurs even in my own carefully controlled classes, let alone the real world.



Humility

Every time I think I have the Aikido teaching thing really dialed in, I'm really on top of it, just then there is something to bring a bit of humility. Recently there has been this really big guy who shows up, watches class, and then doesn't sign up. He once showed up in a gi, black belt, tabis, and shin guards. A few weeks later (my confidence was clearly too high that night) there he is in a white shirt, tie, slacks and combat boots. Once again, big talk, but he didn't sign up to train. If he does come in, I know it will be max effort to keep him from hurting the other students. It brings a bit of humility just to see a problem that will really tax me. On the river, it is not much different. I can be navigating a big class four rapid, on a good line, the raft going where I want it, and a good plan for the next move. Then all of a sudden the whole right side of the raft just stops paddling. No warning, no reason, they're not even responding to my shouting. The nice line I was following through the rapid is toast; the plan is history, and the raft comes up against a rock and starts to wrap. Humility again. Now I am getting

(Continued page 7)

the crew to high-side and hoping I can get this all sorted out in less than a half hour. Or, I know the rapid well, feel good about it, running it well, and there is a rock I swear I hadn't seen before. And there I am, hung up on a rock again. Be humble on the river. Even if you aren't naturally humble, pretend you are. It goes a long way on the river, and in the dojo.



Loving Protection for All Things

While we practice Aikido, we are mindful of our ukes, to keep from injuring them with a harmful application of technique. On the river, the guides are mindful of preserving all of nature, and especially the beautiful rivers we raft. My fellow guides don't even notice it when they naturally pick a bottle or piece of debris out of the river and stuff it in the mesh bag for disposal later. River cleanup is that natural a thing to them. Protection of the clients and fellow guides, the mutual support practiced on the river comes naturally to those who share the danger of whitewater.



Teaching Style at the Whitewater School

The teaching style practiced at the whitewater guide school run by Whitewater Voyages is the most friendly and supportive I have ever seen. There are continuous lectures in all of the techniques of running the river. Even on the bus to the river there is time for a seminar. Then teachers and students put boats in the river, and the lessons come home. No need for quizzes and tests, the river is the test. If you are still there at the end of the school, you pass.

Training

After a large number of years doing aikido, there is no longer that delightful amazement when I do a technique correctly. I get my delight and amazement when a student excels in a technique and sends me to the mat. Likewise on the river, while I am jazzed upon the passage through each class 4 rapid, occasionally I am tasked to teach a guide how to row a gear boat. I more delighted when a beginning rowing student gets a good path through a simple class 3 rapid than I am with my own nearly perfect passage through a knarly class 4.

An Aiki Journey

This letter is from Corky Quakenbush to the A.I.A. dojo. Mr. Quakenbush agreed to share the letter in the Communicator. Corky began studying Aikido in 1983 under Megan Reisel Sensei at a dojo affiliated with Saotome Sense. In 1989 he became a student of Don O'Bell, who was a student of Kobayashi Sensei and Tohei Sensei. He left the late O'Bell Sensei's dojo (now under the guidance of Larry Novick Sensei) eighteen months ago and began teaching a morning class five days a week at a dojo called Mixed Martial Arts Center in Culver City.

Dear Mrs. Kobayashi, Senseis, and students of Aikido Institute of America:

Wow, I have just gotten my first new dues envelope! This means that I have been a member of Aikido Institute of America for a full year. In some ways it seems like so much longer than a year; in other ways it seems impossible that it could have been so much time.

At this juncture it seems appropriate to me to look back at the year and reflect. To me it has been a year of great learning. I feel much gratitude for the welcome I've received at the Aikido Institute of America and for the open-hearted attitudes of everyone in the dojo.

But, I must say that I was not surprised by the warmth and supportive atmosphere of the dojo. I would imagine that Kobayashi Sensei would be proud of his legacy. I also hope that Master Kobayashi Sensei, if he were still with us, would consider me a sincere student. When I was first informed of the existence of Seidokan by Chris Savitas, and I checked out the website, I felt that I had found a place to continue my exploration of non-violent conflict resolution.

It was all in the first few paragraphs on the Seidokan World Headquarters web page - the notion that aikido is an ever evolving art rooted in sound principles; that its evolution is a function of realistic, sincere and earnest examination of our techniques and our philosophy. It seems so obvious that this critical evaluation is essential to development of our art, as we can only progress to the level of our inability to see our own flaws.

The other day I glanced at the printout that hangs in the window of the dojo by the entrance. The words that jumped off that flyer to my eye were about how aikido is not a way of defeating an opponent, but a way to bring the world into harmony. This is such an important part of why I feel at home at Seidokan, and why I am so grateful to our dojo.

(Continued page 8)

Since I have pledged myself to the practice of ahimsa, it has become my biggest challenge to find the path of aikido which is not only effective as a way of avoiding destruction of my body from an attacker, but truly does not inflict injury, pain, or force of even the smallest degree on that attacker. Seidokan provides me with a sound foundation for exploration of this practice, and for that I am truly grateful.

In my pursuit of this ideal, the first principle listed on the web page, expressed as "true victory is victory over oneself," has profound meaning for me, so it was fitting that that declaration was heralded as the theme of the year that I joined Seidokan. On the web page the credo seems to reflect more on the physical manifestation of "victory over oneself" (physical balance and control over one's movement), but on a deeper level the "fundamental truth" of what it means to express the "loving protection of all things" means to me that this "victory over oneself" is victory over my "separate self," my ego, the part of me that wants to prove to the person who attacks me that he is wrong for attacking and/or to punish him while avoiding my own injury. I owe much to our dojo for providing me with many opportunities for self-examination in this regard.

This year's theme, "calmness in action" reminds me that trust is the ultimate moral principle to guide my life and my actions, for only with trust in the omnipotent power of benevolence can there be courage to meet aggression with love, and only with courage can there be calmness in action. To develop this trust, this courage, this calmness in action through our practice at Seidokan I strive to embody the spirit of "the loving protection of all things."

The instructors, students, and philosophy of Seidokan Aikido have been invaluable to my progress in the last twelve months, and I thank you all with much heartfelt appreciation! Thank you!

Sincerely,
Corky Quakenbush

Kawakami Sensei South Carolina Visit

By Suzanne Burgess & Phil Cornelius

Seidokan of SC hosted its spring seminar April 15-17 and was very pleased to welcome Dan Kawakami as the visiting instructor. Kawakami Sensei's soft-spoken and pithy instruction always gives us something to chew on for the summer months. Over the course of the weekend, Kawakami Sensei emphasized three elements that has formed the basis of his aikido: proper breathing, proper posture, and the right distribution of tension and relaxation.

The seminar started off with seated meditation and breathing exercises. Kawakami also had us practice walking with ki – a seemingly simple activity. It is amazing how the introduction of a hand on one's shoulder can disrupt one's posture. Kawakami Sensei expanded on these concepts through variations on Katate Tori Ikkyo.

Another concept Kawakami Sensei emphasized over the course of the weekend was maintaining a safe position while applying techniques. This concept was "punctuated" while practicing tanto dori. Instead of a single technique, uke was given the freedom to vary the direction and angles of the attacks. Nage was charged with maintaining a safe connection with Uke and establishing a safe position before attempting any technique. We quickly discovered that our performance vastly improved if we remained calm and concentrated on staying safe and connected, rather than attempting to throw or disarm uke.

Kawakami Sensei also emphasized the importance of extending ki in all activities. The normally soft-spoken Kawakami showed that he is able project his voice quite loudly, as he gave an introduction to kiai. Our kiai training no doubt gave pause to the folks in the adjoining gyms.

Training with Kawakami Sensei is always a pleasure. He brings a calmness and serenity to training that is ultimately invigorating. At the end of a long weekend that included two dan tests and a raucous potluck dinner, we found ourselves exhausted but refreshed, and with some new perspectives on Seidokan Aikido's techniques and principles.

Domo Arigato Gozai Mashita
Kawakami Sensei!



**Please help us welcome
the following new dojos
to the Seidokan family:**

*Subarashi Aiki Dojo
c/o Yaacov (Yaki) Singer
Jerusalem, Israel*

*Aikido Institute of Michigan,
Southside Dojo
c/o Bronson Diffin
Portage, Michigan*