

Aikido Connection Monthly

Volume 1, Issue 1

September 2003

UPCOMING EVENTS

*Aikido seminar with
guest instructor*

Hiroshi Tajiri Sensei

October 10-12, 2003

Onshinkan Dojo

DON'T MISS IT!

Zen Meditation

6 week into class

Oct.4-Nov 1

Saturdays 9-10am

*Japanese Language
starting soon!*

*Happy Birthdays to:
Sensei Menning
Eric McGregor
Adele Schiessle*

TRANSLATING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF AIKIDO

When a person begins their path on the way of harmony, one of the first lessons taught has to do with the four basic principles of Aikido. Although they are called basic, because they are fundamental to the successful completion of technique, they are probably the most difficult to initially understand and put into practice. I can say this because after almost three years of training I find myself constantly trying to bring all four things together when practicing. It is easy to physically learn a certain technique, it is quite another to actually do the technique properly. I believe one does not realize how important these principles are until you are trying to throw someone twice as big as you are. Even if you are very experienced and your partner is just a beginner, if you are unable to bring it all together, you will struggle to be successful with your execution of the movement.



"Ki" - Calligraphy by F. Toyoda Shihan

With that said, let me refresh your memory on the four basic principles of Aikido:

- 1) Extend ki
- 2) Keep one point
- 3) Keep weight underside
- 4) Relax completely

I would like to cover these principles one at a time, to give you a better understanding of what it is we try to accomplish when practicing Aikido. I would like to note that

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NEWSLETTER

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INDIANA**

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New classes start at Purdue-Calumet

Sensei Menning, in addition to her usual rigorous schedule of classes, has started teaching an Aikido class at Purdue Calumet in Hammond, Indiana. The classes are held on Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, and it is accredited through the school. As of now there are 12 students enrolled in the class, and ongoing students are encouraged to come out and train (help out!) whenever possible. With the kind of hours that Sensei Menning and Sensei Landry are putting in these days, I'm sure they would appreciate all the help they could get! So if you have the opportunity, come on out and help promote the art we love to others. The more people we can get excited about Aikido, the more students we will have and ultimately, the more ukes we will have to throw around on the mat!

Translating the Four Principles of Aikido (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

these principles are not only relevant to the physical aspects of Aikido, but also to the mental and spiritual aspects as well. O'Sensei said, "Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here for no other purpose than to realize your inner divinity and manifest your innate enlightenment." This is one idea of what Aikido is.

Anyway, back to the subject at hand. I would like to begin with the first principle on the list: extend ki. First, a generic definition of what ki is. Ki is an energy that resides in all things. The universe is filled with this energy. In human beings, ki is said to be located in our hara, the center of our bodies, a point about 2" below the navel. When properly trained, we can tap into this energy to do some pretty amazing things. One of our goals when doing technique is to connect your hara with that of your partners and using all of that energy to successfully execute the movement. This is obviously easier said than done to any of us who strive to do this on a consistent basis.

The most popular example of extending ki is when we do orenate, or "unbendable arm". The ability to relax and still extend your energy completely, not just in one direction, but in all directions simultaneously. This is what we hope to accomplish when demonstrating orenate. However, we should be able to extend ki in all of our Aikido practice, not just on the mat. We have all been told repeatedly that Aikido extends far beyond what we physically do in class, and we should learn to use it in every area of our lives. Just as we are taught to step off line when engaged in potential conflict, as we learn to blend with the energy, see the problem from a different angle; so too must we learn that when a decision has been made on how to deal with the conflict, we must extend our ki fully into the resolution of the conflict. There is no point going into anything half-heartedly. We must give our all at all times. This is one example of extending ki outside of the dojo as well as in the confines of our regular practice.

So the next time you are out and about, maybe cutting the grass, driving in your car, or even just leaning on the fence and talking to the neighbor, think about how you may be able extend your ki in that situation. The more commonplace it becomes, the easier it will be to apply in your regular practice. Then you will be one step closer to bringing all four principles together at once, and what a great feeling it will be when you throw your partner with fierce joy and hardly any apparent effort on your part (but you will know better!).

Don Honeycutt, 3rd kyu

Please contribute your own stories, drawings, poetry, photos, family news, or other Aikido-related items to each of our monthly newsletters. This is your newsletter — please help make it useful and interesting!

It's Our Anniversary

I know it seems like only yesterday, but as of September we have been in our very own dojo for one year! Not everyone may remember (but some of us "old timers" do) that Sensei used to have to drive all the way from Chicago for every class, which throughout the course of time was held at whatever space was available and affordable. There were times when the weather was so severe she just could not make it. Some of the students thought it may get to be too hectic for her, and that we might lose our teacher to time constraints or traffic concerns, whatever reason there might be to just call it quits in Indiana. But Sensei Menning never gave up on us, and we never gave up on her. Because of her perseverance she was able to attract enough students to justify opening her own space, and with the addition of Sensei Landry and the help of some dedicated students, Onshinkan Dojo now has a home. It is really inspiring to train in a place that you know you had a hand in creating, and with the addition of more students, the place fills with more and more energy all of the time. So be sure to congratulate Sensei when you see her and remember to thank her for sticking it out and giving all of us Hoosiers a chance to study with her and learn the art of Aikido.

"One does not need buildings, money, power or status to practice the art of peace. Heaven is right where you are standing, and that is the place to train." —O'Sensei