

The Aikido Eye

A Publication of Aikido Ai of
Southern California

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Volume I
Issue 3

Aikido-Ai Vision Statement:

“Quality Students–

Quality Instruction”

Aikido-Ai will provide quality instruction
to students seeking personal security,
physical well being and enlightenment
through the disciplines of
Aikido, Tai Chi, Qi Gong and
Zen Meditation

Aikido Teaching Committee:

Frank McGouirk Sensei
Joann Garner - Sandan
Michael Castro Sandan
Louis Celaya Nidan
Jason Oxman - Nidan
Melody Oxman - Nidan
John Wong - Nidan

Tai Chi Teaching committee:

Frank Mc Gouirk - Sensei
Nancy O'Brien - Shodan
Nancy Parker - Shodan
Diane Globerman - Shodan
Marilyn Omieczynski Shodan
Akiko Heurich - Shodan

Chi-Lel Qi Gong:

Nancy Parker - Second Level
Frank Mc Gouirk - First level

Zen:

Robert Moore- Zen Master -Tai Chi Sifu
Frank Mc Gouirk Abbot

Doshu By Chris Johnson



Morihei Ueshiba taught that constant, sincere training results in enlightenment. According to him, “The way of a warrior is to manifest divine love, a spirit that embraces and nurtures all things”. This has been the essence of budo since ancient times, and will continue as long as there are dedicated students and teachers.

Our leaders within the Northern California Aikido Association are our direct link to the tradition of the founder. Hosting the current Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba was confirmation that the Aikido we practice is true to the source, and in line with O-Sensei’s intention. Aikido is for the entire world.

For two days in March, approximately five hundred Aikidoka came together in the spirit that embraces and nurtures all things. This would be no different than any other seminar on any dojo mat

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AS I SEE IT

By Sensei McGouirk

Looking back on the past several newsletters of the Aikido Eye, it is apparent that our dojo is progressing in a positive direction. This brings to mind my travels as a young man driving across America and encountering heavy construction sites in the state of Arkansas. Being young and in a hurry, slowing down to accommodate the equipment and work crews was a detriment to my progress. At that time my destination was more important than the progress I was making. "Arkansas in Action" was the state theme displayed on billboards along the pathway.

"Aikido-Ai in Action" is a good theme to keep in mind as we see ourselves in a hurry to achieve our desired goal. The many bumps in the road and glitches in our way are necessary for our careful negotiation and navigation. Cloud hands, Kaiten Nage, memorizing the Heart Sutra, etc., are the detours and curves in the bend on our journey down the road.

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A Few Thoughts On Tai Chi

By Carroll Patterson

Everyone has different reasons for wanting to learn Tai Chi Chuan.

Improvement of one's health, relaxation, stress reduction, gentle exercise or maybe just the challenge of learning the forms -- but quite often what we were seeking is surpassed by other far reaching benefits. This has been my experience since I began the practice of Tai Chi almost two years ago.

Learning the forms hasn't come easily for me and the phrase "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" keeps coming to mind! One of the most important things that Sensei tells us when testing is to just keep going -- don't stop. I have found how very important that is not only on the mat, but everyday in whatever situation I may find myself.

In order to progress from one level to another, as you already know, we must be able to demonstrate our ability of the various forms before Sensei and fellow members of the Dojo. It can be a very nerve racking experience for some of us -- heart pounding and mind everywhere but present - just when we felt so confident. This was my experience when testing the Long Form. My "clear mind" completely left me half way into the 2nd set, but rather than stop, I simply kept going until I could regain my place and eventually make it through. I was awarded my Green Sash and promoted, but I felt keenly disappointment in my performance. I felt embarrassed and angry too, that we had to go through this ordeal. I thought Tai Chi was supposed to relieve stress but instead I had been so tense that I couldn't enjoy it. I was really torn about whether or not to continue my training at the Dojo and

so I decided to take a break and think things over. It was probably one of the best decisions I have ever made.

"The benefits are endless if you are just open to receive them."

One of the things I discovered about myself was that I was busy comparing myself with others -- a sure way to make oneself miserable! I was determined to master the form within a certain period of time, and by forcing things it simply didn't work. I am learning how important it is to be your own person and travel at your own speed. A favorite fable of mine is that of the "Tortoise and the Hare." We all know who won that race -- slower is better. I keep reminding myself of that regularly.

Tai Chi has so much to teach each one of us -- there isn't one class I attend that I don't receive something, whether it be from Sensei, a senior student or one of my fellow students. The benefits are endless if you are just open to receive them. For me now, it isn't as much about mastering the forms, but rather learning to master myself.

Tai Chi Class Schedule

Monday — 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday — Combat Tai Chi
6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Tai Chi Advanced
7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Tai Chi Senior Students
8:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday — 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Thursday — Tai Chi Advanced
10:00 am to 11:00 a.m.

Tai Chi Beginning
11:00 a.m. To 12:00 noon

Friday — No Classes

Saturday — 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.



INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL CASTRO, SANDAN– AIKIDO



When did you start Aikido, and what is your background?

I started Aikido in 1989. I had been impressed by three martial arts: Aikido, Haw Rang Do and Hopkido. The closest school to me at the time was Haw Rang Do, so I began my training in this Korean art. After many years, I realized I wasn't really in need of such a violent art (weren't no one to kill).

Judging by your background in martial arts, was it easy to learn Aikido?

Aikido was a whole different ball game. My God, I was a bull moose trying to learn ballet. The first time Sensei McGouirk asked me up, I ran into his nose. Sensei cleared himself, took a boken and had me grab the end of it. He proceeded to take me into the world of Aikido at boken's length.

What aspect of your training do you enjoy the most?

Aikido fascinates me in so many ways that it's hard to narrow down. However, if I had

to pick one I would say invisibility. The ability to move ahead of an attacker and totally misdirect his energy is an invaluable quality. It's akin to leaning on a door expecting it to hold your weight. Suddenly it opens and you find yourself lying on the floor, unhurt but a bit confused.

Aikido is often called a nonviolent martial art -- isn't that a contradiction of terms?

Aikido is a choice. On one hand, it has the potential to completely destroy an attacker. On the other hand, the hand that I chose, it quickly takes an attacker to a peaceful resting place where he has time to reflect on the futility of attacking you.

What advice do you have for the beginner?

Don't give up! Sensei McGouirk used to always say just come back and train. Learning Aikido is like filling a sink with water. The water (Aikido) is pure and invigorating. The sink (beginning student) seems to have trouble with its drain and the water builds up. The obstacle (fear, pride, expectations, etc.) keeps you from enjoying one of life's greatest experiences. Don't be discouraged! The water never becomes stale, and one day the obstacle is no more and the drain flows freely... for the moment! We are creatures of many obstacles.

How about the Senseis (teachers)?

I have been privileged and blessed to have experienced

some of the world's greatest teachers, starting with my first and only Sensei Frank McGouirk, whose river of gifts are continually flowing.

Mike Castro teaches every second and fourth Saturday of the month and on Sunday mornings. Stop by and experience his Aikido flavor.



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH OUR DOJO FAMILY?

Michael Castro: Just started the Atkinson diet, so hopefully you will be seeing less of him around!



Tina Romo: A new member of the dojo who started Tai Chi at the Kaiser Hospital outreach class. She was just in a bowling tournament. Although she didn't win any money for her bowling skills, she did win \$68 bucks by picking the mystery number!

Mark Scott: Mark is the director of H.O.W. House, a recovery home for chemically dependent adult men. Everyone is now very excited because they are soon moving to a bigger facility with an acre lot in a quiet neighborhood in South Whittier.

Emily Carrerra: Received an honor roll certificate for getting A's and B's on her report card.

Chris Johnson: Was just formally inducted into the Whittier Host Lion's Club, a local service club that raises money for and donates time to various community organizations.

Carroll Patterson: Is attending her 50th Grammar School Reunion on April 23rd in Oak Park, Illinois. She says..." This is really too much! The surprise guest is going to be the nun who taught us!"

Cynthia Krause: Was awarded an Honorary Service Award from Ocean View Elementary School. Contributions were made to the Cal. State PTA for scholarships for high school seniors, teachers and nurses. She is very proud of her son who just turned 12 and completed his trumpet solo at

school.

Berta Leon: Is practicing her arm movements for Tai Chi while recuperating from a sprained ankle.

Suzanne Brugman: Has returned to the mat after surgery and is almost up to full strength. She just bought a new car so she can enjoy her six weeks off work (due to surgery).

Kate Waterfall: Says that in many ways tai chi has prepared her to channel her very recent unexpected job layoff in a more positive way... "Take in, move aside, and redirect!! Thank you!!!"

Bonnie Wright-Scott: Is very excited about building her new business in private franchising.

Lisa Brugman-McKee: Recently got a new dog named Luc (named after her favorite hockey player, Luc Robitaille). Luc is a terrier-lab mix and full of fun!

Phyllis Zepeda: Is going to visit her timeshare in Kauai for one week in May and will greatly miss her time on the mat doing tai chi.

Chris Castillo: Will be leaving her job at Transamerica after 31 years. In April she turn 51 years old.

Marty Wilson: Is hanging a new painting exhibit at the Green Arbor Tea Room in conjunction with the Whittier Art Association. Go in, have lunch and see the show.

Cathy Harvey: Will be walking on April 17th, along with a handful of other tai chi members, in the Women's and Children's Crisis Shelter Walk-A-Thon.

Linda Hill: Turned 51 on April 1st. She says it is easy to remember: April Fool's Day. "The fool" she says, "is always a beginner and so appropriate for tai chi. Always beginning!"

Suzette Hodnett: Was chosen as the artist to provide original fine art for the walls of the Tulsa Boy's Home

(a state of the art lock up facility for high risk youth) through an innovative grant from the Reynold's Foundation.

Jennifer Redona: Is a new tai chi member from the Kaiser Hospital Tai Chi Class. She is enjoying this new "empty nest" phase of her life.

George Wheeler: Just returned from Korea. "As a saxophonist for the Liquid Skin Ensemble, we performed in Seoul, Korea at the LG Arts Center. I was a great experience that allowed us to grow. The Food was terrific. On our day off I had the opportunity to sample a piece of this beautiful city, which is by far one of the cleanest. Some of the group went to sightsee tourist attractions, but fortunately, I went with the group that visited the Gyungbokgung Palace and the Chogyesa Buddhist Temple, which was most inspiring. Liquid Skin hopes to return to Seoul."

Louis Celaya—Recently has taken over the responsibilities of administrating the City of Monrovia's Solid Waste Programs.

AIKIDO AI STORE OPEN!!

Starting your training in weapons and need a jo, boken, broad or narrow blade sword?

Wonder where to buy an Aikido or Tai Chi gi? Is your Aikido Ai t-shirt starting to wear and tear? Like to practice at home to the same tai music we play at the dojo?

Desire to read more about Aikido or Tai Chi? Want to be "pinned" with a yin-yang symbol? Need a cap to shade your face during these upcoming summer months? No problem!!

The Aikido Ai Dojo Store is now open for all your martial arts needs! See Suzette or Michael to make a purchase.

A Visit To The Aikido Ai Dojo

by Mark Scott



Community Services Department. The medical doctor, who is also the doctor for Mark and Bonnie, stated that she has often thought about joining a Tai Chi class to help her with her posture and balance. She is also interested in getting her husband involved due to her concern for his diabetes and weight problem.

All of us were very pleased with this class and thank Sensei, Suzette and Chris for their generosity and kindness.

On Sunday, March 7th at noon, five men from H.O.W. House (a residential program for chemically dependent adult men), a medical doctor, two ESL students from Japan, their friend - a Rio Hondo student, an employee of Uptown Whittier's Starbucks, and Bonnie and Mark Scott came to the Dojo for a one hour demonstration and discussion of the principals of Tai Chi.

Suzette and Chris assisted Sensei Frank in this introductory class. Sensei explained the history and derivation of Tai Chi. He then led the group in the first treasure of the Eight Treasures and the first two moves of the Tai Chi Short Form (Commencement and Parting the Wild Horses Mane).

To the delight of the group, he showed the application of some of the Tai Chi moves to actual combat, gave a demonstration of some of the more advanced Tai Chi exercises, and then gave a demonstration of combat with sticks. One of the participants was particularly interested in the latter.

The response from the group was very positive. Several indicated to Mark afterwards that they intended to come at some point for the five week beginners class offered via the

Training... Always On-going

By Louis Celaya

Several weeks ago I experienced a minor injury during my Aikido training... jammed my shoulder. After tending to my injury, I returned to the mat. Shortly after that I had to sit out the remainder of class.

After class, many of my fellow Aikidoka reminded me to make sure I applied ice when traveling home. Looking in our refrigerator I did not find any and knew I would have to stop. Not looking forward to it, I mentioned to my siempi (Mike Castro) I could not find ice. Being the alert Sandan, Mike quickly found a trash bag, filled with it with ice, and presented it to me. Why did I not find ice? Louis was looking for the completely prepared package that said

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Show Your Colors (Belt, Sash & Hakama Etiquette)

By Jason Oxman

Here is the official Aikido Ai etiquette on wearing colored belts, colored sash, and Hakama for adults and children:

Once Sensei McGouirk has given you rank and/or permission to wear a Hakama - that is your rank. In our dojo that is your uniform.

When you train here at Aikido Ai, **wear your colored belt.**

When we invite other Senseis to come and teach at Aikido Ai, **wear your colored belt.**

When we host a seminar, **wear your colored belt.**

When you travel to an Aikido Ai hosted seminar (Mt. Baldy Retreat), **wear your colored belt.**

When you travel to another dojo that is a member of our association (CAA - California Aikido Association), **wear your colored belt.**

When you travel to dojo outside of CAA find out if they use the colored belt system. If so, **wear your colored belt.**

When you travel with Sensei McGouirk to another dojo or seminar check with him ahead of time to find out what the proper etiquette is.

**SHOW YOUR COLORS !!!
WEAR YOUR COLORED BELT.**

When you travel to a dojo outside of CAA be prepared to wear a white belt. Travel with a white belt and your col-

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Brea Tai Chi 6-Week Session Ends with New Sashes



It was a special “double feature” night at the Brea Community Center on Thursday, February 26 as two students demonstrated the Short Form to earn their yellow sashes. Louis Tasselli and Hasan Muhammad had enrolled in two or three of the Community Center’s six -week series of classes and tested on the last night of the January -February session.

Louis Tasselli enrolled at Brea in November 2003. He began learning the tai chi Short Form during the holiday season’s several interruptions. He practiced solo between sessions and often came early to train with senior students before the 6:00 class started.

For a while it looked like Louis wasn’t going to make it for his test date but he rushed in just as class started, still in his work clothes. His job kept him late but he didn’t want to miss his big moment!

Hasan Muhammad joined the Brea group in December 2003 and fell in love with the tai chi studies. He rearranged his work schedule so he could attend the Thursday night classes. He and Karen Villanueva signed up at the same time and they would practice diligently between classes.

Hasan hadn’t planned to test on the last night of the session. But after an hour of intense training, he accepted Sensei’s offer to try. Hasan was steady and sure through most of the Short Form and only needed a couple hints to complete the test, provided by an angel in the class.

As always, the decision for pass or fail rested on all the senior students who have gone through this trial themselves. Both Louis and Hasan earned their yellow sashes with applause from their fellow classmates. Sensei presented a yellow sash to Louis and promised to bring another one for Hasan at the start of the next session.

Then beginners and advanced students joined after classes for a dinner to celebrate the all the new sashes. This included a salute to Chris O’Sullivan who had earned his yellow sash six weeks earlier. Chris’ job became unbelievably demanding when the grocery strike began and yet he kept up with the tai chi classes and practice. Chris started with the Brea tai chi group in October 2003 and tested successfully for his yellow sash on January 22.

Congratulations again to all the new sashes!

DOJO CLEANING REMINDER

Thanks to everyone who has come to the dojo’s monthly cleaning party. Brand new members to black belts have been working together to make the dojo shine! Laughter, music and good intention abound.

Guacamole, cookies, chip, and salsa have graciously appeared and been devoured with great appreciation.

Mark your calendar for the following dates to join in keeping Aikido Ai dusted, polished, vacuumed, scrubbed and shining bright!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Thursday, April 29

Thursday, May 20

Thursday, June 17

Thursday, July 21

Time: 8:00 pm

See you there!



Boost Your Training at the Memorial Weekend Mt. Baldy Retreat

Friday, May 28 - Monday, May 31



in aikido, tai chi, qigong or Zen that interest you. This weekend is for you: there is no limitation on your exploration and discoveries.

The retreat is held at the Mt. Baldy Zen Center, a rustic cluster of cabins,

dining hall, zendo and winding paths through the pines. Training areas for aikido and tai chi are outdoors in the fresh air as well as indoors. If you attend all four days, your breakfasts, lunches and dinners at the Zen Center dining hall are included in your registration. If you attend a day retreat, your lunch is included.

Participants for the full weekend will have the rare opportunity to join the Mt. Baldy Zen Center's monks in morning chanting in the zendo. They will also enjoy sharing the breakfasts and dinners in conversation with the visiting Senseis - as well as a movie on Saturday night and chicken dinner on Sunday night.

Need a ride? Join one of the car pools. Sign-up sheets are posted at the dojo. Saturday and Sunday car pools will leave from Aikido Ai for day retreat participants. (Day retreats start at 9:00 a.m. on the mountain and end at 5:00.) It's 39

miles from Aikido Ai to the Mt. Baldy Zen Center, or an hour of drive time. Maps are available for those who want to drive.

So if you'd like to get excited about your martial art training again, then reserve your place at the Memorial Weekend Mt. Baldy Retreat.

Sign-up forms are available at the dojo or at the Aikido Ai web site, www.aikidoai.com. Space is limited to 40 full-retreat guests and 20 day retreat guests, so sign up now.

New Promotions



Tai-Chi

William Smith	4th Kyu
Jim Hill	5th Kyu
Chris Johnson	5th Kyu
Dawn Solves	5th Kyu
Suzanne Brugman	6th Kyu
Mark Scott	6th Kyu
Sharon Koga	6th Kyu
George Wheeler	6th Kyu

Ready for a real pick-me-up for your practice? Then plan to attend part of all of the annual Aikido Ai Memorial Day Weekend Mount Baldy Retreat.

Whether you come for one day or for all four, you'll enjoy workshops that will give you improvements and insight into your training and yourself.

Aikido Ai's annual Mt. Baldy retreat has earned its wide reputation for excellence thanks to more than 20 years of development and refinement by Sensei Frank and his top-notch guest instructors. You will be joining participants from all over California and out of state to train with these experts whose knowledge includes a spectrum of martial arts.

The Mt. Baldy retreat is designed so that you will benefit from every workshop, whether you are a beginner or advanced student. What's more, you as a retreat participant may join in any activities

Tai Chi Kyu Exams

by Sister Marilyn Omieczyski



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were it not for the presence of the Doshu. It was not that he did anything spectacular-- we trained in ikkyo, nikkyo, sankyo, yonkyo, kote-gaeshi, shihonage... the basics. But somehow the spirit of the Ueshiba family permeated our bodies and minds, generating heat and light. The experience was much like returning home to the people you love -- totally comfortable and empowering.

Are You Preparing for the Next Kyu & Sash Examination?

Our lives are full of contradicting values, urges and pressures both from within and without. We are driven to "be a success" in every undertaking whether it be work or play. Even those things we supposedly do for re-creation turn into work because there must be a winner and a loser. "I can out last, out jump, out shoot, out hit, out run, out throw, out kick, out talk, out drink, etc., all comers."

The study of Tai Chi quietly yet efficiently massages and polishes our body and spirit so that we are free to seek a proper balance in our lives, not only while doing the forms inside the Dojo but also throughout the day in everything we do. If we are patient to stay at it long enough we discover moments of pure balance within and without that can only be described as "delight."

I experienced such a moment on Saturday, March 6, 2004 when Sensei Frank gave me the humbling privilege and awesome responsibility of sitting next to him for the Tai Chi Quarterly Testing Day. Five Tai Chi students tested for the next level of instruction at the Dojo - Bill Smith for 4th Kyu, Chris Johnson, Dawn

Solves, and Jim Hill for 5th Kyu, and Suzanne Brugman for 6th Kyu. It was clearly evident that each of them had spent many, many practice hours learning the various forms from the Short Form to the Liu Ha Ba Fa. As always, each person brought a unique translation of the forms derived from their particular life style and personality. Yet, each one demonstrated that he/she also has a growing understanding of the depth of meaning, history and tradition embedded in the forms.

Thank you, Sensei Frank, for not only teaching but embodying the spirit of Tai Chi. For me it was an honor to be present with you as you he congratulated and coached each student on their sincerity and integrity. This experience was also a deeper realization of my responsibility to pass on both the form and the essence of Tai Chi to the new students.

The next round of Kyu and Sash examinations are scheduled for June 2004. Keep an eye out for the date.

How do you prepare? Simple. Go over your examination requirements multiple times. Practice as if you are taking the examination. Knowing the requirements is the key.

How do I request to test? Check to make sure you have enough training hours to satisfy the exam requirements. If yes, fill out an examination card and submit it to one of the members of the teaching committee. All requests are given to Sensei for review. If your card is posted, great! Time to prepare. If not, then wait until the next exam.

Prior to your examination, please make sure your dues are up to date and you have submitted your testing fee. Also, for Aikido examinations, please select an uke prior to your exam. Uke must be someone of equal or higher rank.

Good luck in your preparation.

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This is a care woven path designed by those who traveled before us. It is being improved and maintained by us now, and a careful acceptance of its condition will secure the travels of those who follow.

Thank you to all who contributed to our spring newsletter and remember: **"Out of the Mud grows the lotus."**

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"Ice for Your Shoulder."

Yes, ice was in our frigid, but I could not see beyond my narrow vision. What is the lesson here? "Training is Always On-going" and we must remember it extends beyond our time on the mat.

For Louis, it means must keep training....This is why I love this art with a passion!

合氣道

Girl Scouts Attend Self-Defense Workshops

By Linda Hill

Aikido Ai teachers and volunteers quickly covered their ears as nearly 100 young girls screamed "No!" at the top of their lungs. The startling, unnerving shout was one of the first techniques demonstrated at the self-defense workshop for 400 Whittier area Girl Scouts and their leaders, held on Sunday, February 22 at the Aikido Ai dojo. Joanne Garner, 3rd dan aikido instructor, began by telling all the girls to trust their instinctive fear when potentially threatening conditions or people appeared. Even without another self-defense technique, they already had a strong voice and the ability to run for safety.

The Girl Scout self-defense workshops were spearheaded by Lisa Brugman, a tai chi student of Aikido Ai and the Events Director for the Girl Scout Campo Verde Neighborhood in East Whittier. She worked for months to get approval by the regional Spanish Trails Girl Scout Council to use Aikido Ai's dojo and instructors for these important, timely workshops.

Many Aikido Ai instructors and students volunteered to help at the four workshops. Also on the mat with Joanne Garner were Michael Castro, 3rd dan; John Wong; 2nd dan; Michael Papero, 1st dan; Jose Colon, brown belt (wearing his black belt from karate); Chris Johnson, brown belt; Emily Carrera, blue belt; and Noah Avirom; blue belt. Sensei Frank oversaw all the workshops. Helping off the mat with logistics and guests' needs were volunteers Debbie Wong; Nancy Parker, black sash; Suzette Hodnett, brown sash, Jennifer Higa, blue sash; and Cathy Harvey, blue sash.

Lisa Brugman and several Girl Scout leaders coordinated the arrival and staging for all the Girl Scout troupes so that back-to-back workshops ran smoothly from 12:00 till 4:00. The



instructors had only three- or four-minute breaks as troupes filed in and out. Pizza and other snacks were provided on the training deck for the volunteers and Girl Scouts.

The workshops focused on awareness as the first step in self-defense. Recognizing and avoiding suspicious situations is better than having to fight to get away from them. The instructors also demonstrated valuable techniques such as breaking away from wrist holds, prying an attacker's fingers to break a bear hug, and using surprise to take an attacker off balance. The girls were told to escape by screaming, drawing attention, and running back to the safety of the nearest busy public place such as the store or school.

To entertain as well as teach, the instructors also demonstrated Aikido techniques. The girls squealed, then laughed when Michael Castro first threw Michael Papero to the mat with a resounding whack. Emily Carrera, Noah Avirom, John Wong and Michael Castro were nage in randori demonstrations that were roundly applauded by all the visitors.

The *Whittier Daily News* sent a photographer and reporter to cover the event and the article came out in the Monday paper. Future workshops will be part of an ongoing community outreach program of the dojo, emphasizing our concern for public safety.

Sifu DeMoulin's Tai Chi Workshops: Attention to Detail Redefined

By Joanne Plummer



On February 7th, I had the pleasure of attending both the morning and afternoon Tai Chi workshops led by Sifu Toni Demoulin. Up until Feb. 7th, I considered myself a detail oriented person with a firm grasp on perceiving and projecting nuances. Sifu Toni and her two assistants, Matthew and Ken, via a near microscopic dissection of the forms, showed me otherwise.

The morning workshop at Penn Park, with approximately 30 Tai Chi students and Sensei Frank, began with warm-ups led by Sifu Toni. Sifu Toni then began teaching the Eight Gates kata. The first four movements are similar to 'Grasping the Bird's Tail' from the Short Form. Peng, lui, gi, and an are performed as a unit then repeated facing the three other compass points. An explanation and demonstration of each part was given, including its possible martial arts application. The collective energy and flow of chi was a moving experience when we ran through all four as a group. Amazing the progress in about an hour!

Next we worked on the last four movements: chi, lieh, jo, kao. These movements have a charged and striking energy. They were shown in a lively and perfunctory manner. Sifu Toni read a description of these movements from a book written by her master. By adding these four movements onto the grasping the bird's tail sequence we created an eight directions, Eight Gates kata.

As always, time ran short and stomachs were growling. A number of attendees headed off to a local Chinese buffet before returning to the dojo for the afternoon workshop.

The afternoon workshop began with a partnered demo of A & B sides by Michael and Suzette. I first experienced this form at last year's Mt. Baldy retreat and had really liked it. Both in private practice and with Sensei's refresher workshop, I became comfortable walking through both sides. However, under the auspices of Sifu Toni, Matthew, and Ken, the fine elements of each move were practiced until I felt comfortable with the move alone and in connection with a partner. I was intrigued again by how much the chi of a movement such as Repulse Monkey can be altered by doing it with a partner.

I strongly admired watching all the Tai Chi practitioners that had been teaching me the past 11 months being willing students themselves. No one was too busy to answer a question or help fine tune a movement.

We wrapped up the workshop with rounds of thank yous to all, a promise from Sifu Toni to return again, and well wishes to her on her travels to Thailand. I left feeling pleasantly tired yet energized and more aware and appreciative of the movements and their impact. Time well spent and attention to detail definitely redefined!

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ored belt. Some dojos do not use colored belts to show rank. In these dojos wear a white belt.

If Sensei McGouirk has given you permission to wear a Hakama all the same etiquette apply. If it is appropriate to wear a colored belt, wear your Hakama. If you are not a black belt and you are worried someone might assume you are make sure the ends of your colored belt stick out of your Hakama a little bit so the color can be seen.

Also make sure you are tying your belt correctly. Just look down at it once in a while... if it is different than everyone else's, it is not correct. All our belts should be tied the same.

Aikido Ai Teaching Committee

Bodu

By Chris Johnson



national and world karate champion), when asked how martial training affects the mind and body said, "There is nothing your body cannot do if your mind truly believes it. Express what you feel through your technique and teaching." This can also be called enlightened action.

Training, regardless of the name affixed, is the way! At the Doshu seminar there was a woman on the mat in a wheelchair --still practicing. Do the best you can with what you have. Never stop moving. This is the essence of physical medicine, of psychology, and of budo. As we move through infinite levels of satori it becomes obvious that budo and life are the same. Approach everything you do with this attitude -- as if all actions are performed for the good of yourself and others, however pedestrian they may seem.

Recognize that the grand design of heaven and earth reflects the yin and yang (positive and negative), then unify this into your expression towards the world and you will be a true master -- healer, banker, lawyer, carpenter, student... warrior. Hajime!

Chris Johnson is a Doctor of Chiropractics working in the Whittier area. He holds a Yellow Sash in Tai Chi and the rank of First Kyu (Brown Belt) in Aikido.

T rue health comes from a sincere commitment -- a resolution to be healthy, to change bad habits, and to do the footwork. Notice that the prerequisite is a shift in mentality.

Chiropractic focuses on the muscles and joints, but treating patients requires a little bit of psychology too. People do not get well until they decide to. Holding back, denying there is a problem, blaming others --or relying on others -- yields limited results. Sure, your pain may subside, but invariably it returns. Take charge! Analyze your expectations! Then take action, and you will improve.

O Sensei believed, "Training in budo builds a true spiritual path leading to enlightened action. Furthermore, those sincerely training in other forms of budo manifest teachings that reflect the grand design of heaven and earth and lead to enlightenment." Illustrating this point, a recent Discovery Channel program, titled XMA (extreme martial arts) took an in-depth look at the budo of some talented martial artists from schools with a very different approach than Aikido. One of them, Matthew Mullins (multiple





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**NOTE FROM THE
COORDINATOR**

Well, after some thinking, I decided that I have really taken liberty with the use of the word Editor. Since I have never considered myself an editor and would never attempt to compare myself to those professionals, I will call this little section "Note from the Coordinator."

There are so many people who help behind the scenes, and I am just the vehicle that coordinates this effort. So, from this issue forward, this "Note from the Coordinator" is born.

Thanks again to all who submitted articles

Louis Celaya

Something to Share?

If you have something you would like to share regarding an experience in your training, a seminar you attended, questions to ask, or simply something to share, please submit your articles or questions to The Aikido Eye. Send to them to:

l.celaya@worldnet.att.net

Articles and other submittals can be in MS Word, via email text, or handwritten.

Thanks!