

# The Aikido Eye

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**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:**

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Michael Castro Sandan  
Louis Celaya Nidan  
Jason Oxman - Nidan  
Melody Oxman - Nidan  
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Nancy Parker - Shodan  
Diane Globerman - Shodan  
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**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

## Nikyo The Second Technique.... Was first and foremost to the rescue!

I was standing at the intersection of Ave. 9 De Julio and Ave. Corrientas. This is the widest and busiest street crossing in the world. If you have been to Buenos Aires then you will recognize that this is the location of the famous landmark Obelisco. I had just finished my tango class and was returning to my hotel at 10pm.



each other putting him adjacent to the traffic and myself now behind him and in a better position.



This is early in Latin America and the streets were well lit and people were dining at the nearby outdoor cafes and restaurants. This location is on a narrow sidewalk directly across from my hotel.

Waiting for the light to turn green, I was suddenly aware of a street assailant trying to steal my backpack from my shoulders. An instinctive turning motion (Giro in Tango and Tenkan in Aikido) quickly allowed us to replace

Although the incident occurred quickly, my perspective of the event was in slow motion. He very quickly recognized the little value of his pursuit. My backpack only contained my old dancing zapatos. He then turned his attention to my gold bracelet and tried to remove it with both hands on my wrist. Morote Dori and a big mistake! A simple wrist turn (Nikyo) brought him to his knees and he made a speedy and frustrating retreat into the nearby bushes. The point of my mentioning this is to affirm that a potentially violent or deadly incident was rendered harmless to both the attacker and the defender. Appreciate, if you will, a more physical encounter in which my training engaged him in a grappling manner. Perhaps the result would have propelled us both into the deadly traffic. The consequence of this would be a disaster not only to my family and me, but also to him, his friends and their families as well. Most of these attackers work in pairs and carry knives. He was humiliated and

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## Always Beginning and Never-Ending

by Suzette Hodnett

**I** struggle with the short form. I feel like a strong wind could topple my root. My movements feel like the flickering motion of a silent movie. My breath doesn't last deep or long enough. I see a new move and it looks like a confusing mess of twisting hands and legs. My mind wanders out the dojo door. "Don't know" wants to attach to knowing. Clear mind turns to mud.

Sound like a first session beginner? No, I've trained for six years. Beginner and advancing student. Same or different?

Shouldn't I soon feel always fluid, rooted, and balanced? When do I stop being so very ordinary? When is this going to be effortless, perfect, and familiar? When is the edge going to turn into a safe and secure harbor?

The layers of the onion are endless. Six sessions, six months, six years, six decades, or six lifetimes. It seems we are always beginning and the training is never-ending. I still feel awkward and bewildered. Only now it is with what holds the form together. Perhaps my edge is not as obvious to the beginner, more clear to those further down the path -- in my breath, the movement of my waist, the quietness of my mind, and the depth of my roots.

And so we are all always beginners. True practice is filled with the spirit of beginning again. This spirit is a faith in the knowledge that growth occurs only when I am willing to go back into what I "know" and do it again and again. Moment to moment I am different. Moment to moment my relationship to the form is my teacher.

The more I train, the less I "get it." If the truth be told, I've now lost any desire to know. Wanting to know wears me out. Being empty fills me up. In fact, my tai chi practice has become about the process of unlearning -- of letting go of what I think I know, of my expectations, and my considerations. Just when I think I might "have" something, all it takes is being asked to "teach" and I am face to face with "Parting Wild Horse's Mane" once again.

So what am I left with if there is nothing to know? Only just train. Only just come to the mat with a willingness to engage the moment with everything I have -- my curiosity, spontaneity, patience, commitment, desire to keep going, sincerity and unfolding openness to the moment. And a trust that change is often happening but invisible until the moment of its arrival.

The tai chi path only requires that I set one foot after the other and continually begin again. The path may always wind, curve, and twist around obstacles, but by using the tai chi principles of yielding, bending, and flowing, I always go straight. It is the process of moving that is important. Always beginning and never-ending.

What a relief! There is really nowhere to go. Only right here, right now. What a gift! There really is nothing to get. Only just train. Frustration, bliss, confusion, anger and pure, unadulterated joy. No matter. The moment is always complete.

Perhaps when I have unlearned everything and finally know nothing, I can truly begin my training in tai chi.

## Integration Breath

By Kristina Lindgren

After I read Suzette's article on the integration breath, I wanted to shout from the rooftops about the merits of this seemingly simple move. The integration breath literally brought her back from the brink of death. Her body and spirit were healed with the power of this move. I immediately wanted to share it with the whole world, but realized that might be too ambitious. So I started at home.

While beginning my journey in Tai Chi, I certainly noticed the integration breath, but I took it for granted, worrying over the movements of the eight treasures and the short form. After all, you just raise and lower your arms; breath is in, breath is out. How simple! How easy! Ahh, the arrogance of youth! It is not easy or simple for an 85 year old woman who has been ravaged by stroke and heart disease, but this amazing lady named Della has shown me the miracle of the integration breath and allowed me to rediscover it again.

When I told her I wanted to share it



with her, she had her doubts. "But I have a bad arm," she protested. So I showed her Suzette's article, which convinced her right away. At first only her stronger right arm would cooperate. The left would trail up after it, not quite making it to her shoulder. But she continued to try it. She kept at it the whole first day, breath after breath. I fought the urge

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# Aikido of Albany, OR.

By Sensei Frank McGouirk



Most of the old timers in the dojo will remember Roger Shannon who trained at Aikido-Ai for 15 years.

Roger and his family moved to Albany, Oregon two years ago and recently invited me to teach a seminar and dedicate his new dojo, Aikido of Albany. I guess it was Yogi Bara who coined the phrase "Déjà vu all over again." I walked into Roger's dojo and was immediately reminded of the first dojo I opened in 1980 in Santa Fe Springs. Not only did the dojo look like my small converted industrial building, but it just shined with the enthusiasm, respect and reflected correctness of Roger's training.

There were adult students from other dojos of varying ranks and styles, as well as Roger's children all working together on the mat. The children were all trained by Roger and any one of them would have fit comfortably as a member of John Wong's Friday kid's class.

I believe the secret of aikido is the understanding of Ukemi. Circle falls were the order of the day and boy, were these kids good! One child was practicing along with the rest and he was completely blind. Anyone who has ever opened a dojo knows that it takes persistence, patience and plenty of dough to make it go. More

importantly than that, it takes skill, compassionate strength, and in Roger's case, a supportive and understanding wife. Thank you Nancy Shannon for being there for Roger. Thank you Roger for inviting me to your dojo and for continuing to share O' Sensei's teaching.

Yogi was right: Déjà vu all over again. I went all the way to Oregon to come home. Congratulations Roger!



*Sensei, Sensei Shannon & the Aikido of Albany Kids Class*



*Sensei teaching class at Aikido of Albany Dojo Dedication*

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retreated empty-handed and I still had my bracelet, my shoes, my dignity and my life.

My Aikido teachers taught me the art of non-violence for which I am eternally grateful. My Tango teachers taught me the art of connection and turning. My Zen teachers taught me an appreciation of compassionate Karma. This man and myself: Are they the same or different? Ki-Ai!!

OUT OF THE MUD GROWS THE LOTUS.

## Kyu Exams. Are You Preparing?



Kyu examinations are approaching. Students interested in taking examinations for Aikido or Tai Chi must submit an application for testing. If the application is posted, you have the "green light" to begin your preparation.

Prior to your examination, you must pay the testing fee and select an uke or partner.

The next Kyu examinations are scheduled for:

Saturday, June 11, 2005

# WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH OUR DOJO FAMILY?



Diane Globerman: I'm expecting my 6th grandchild!

Jason Oxman: On June 18, 2005 Oxman's Surplus is having a huge celebration for my father's 90th birthday. It will be from 11 am to 5 pm. At lunch time we will have hot dogs, cake, ice cream and sodas -- FREE! **EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO COME.** There will be games, demonstrations, videos on big screen television, and special items for sale at crazy low, low prices -- and 10 percent off everything in the store.

Mitchell Delgadillo: I've been doing Aikido for 3 years. I started 7-12-02. Now I am moving to Palm Desert. I found an Aikido class there. But I'm still going to be a member here.

Emily and Adrian Carrera: We both earned honor roll achievement for the 3rd trimester at Saint Hilary School.

Jackie Mendez: Daniel and Paul Mendez will be testing for their yellow belt in Aikido.

Mike Castro (Sandán): We have been working on some interesting things in the Aikido class and if you haven't noticed Sensei is back on the mat and teaching the first class on Saturday. GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK, SENSEI!

Marty Wilson: Suzette and I (along with ex-dojó member Carol Rogers and her partner, James Hill) are having a four person show

at the Whittier Art Gallery during the month of May. Everyone is invited to come see our work. The address is 8035 Painter Avenue.

Jose Colon: Winding down the ski season. Last trip was to Mammoth. Getting ready for my 25th college reunion. I recently transferred to Pasadena and am enjoying great lunches! Planning a hike at the Grand Canyon in May and Zion Nat'l Park in June. Looking forward to the Aikido Retreat in June.

Suzanne Brugman: It happened! First time to do it! I am now a certified oncology (cancer) nurse. Now I can get back to more important (?) things like tai chi and qigong.

Mark Scott: How House has a new, exciting web site at [howhouse.org](http://howhouse.org). I also went to an exciting workshop on lucid dreaming held by author Stephen LaBerge in Boulder, CO.

Elaine Jeche: Elaine and Harlan are proud to announce the addition of a new puppy to their household. Her name is Eve (Evil Eve). She is a Bouorer de Flandres.

Alex Granata I still enjoy the Tai Chi class at Presbyterian Hospital and the interaction with all the participants. I am pleased because I am getting better at Zen Meditation. I have begun to keep my mind clear during meditation. I highly recommend it. It is good for your soul! I am also happy to report that I played my first round of golf after what seemed like a lifetime of lessons! Golf is similar to Tai Chi - you never stop learning. Also, on June 1st, I will appear in court and ask for approval to change my name from Alexandrina Granata to Alexandria Salome Granata. Salome was my mother's maiden name and I always wanted mine to be the same. Since I never had a middle name, I felt that "now is the time". Finally, thanks to Sensei Frank and all the senior students for continuing to share their knowledge with all of us.

Louis Celaya: This past March, Louis and his wife Alisa celebrated their

daughter's Alanna's third birthday. A Scooby Doo theme party was in order, and mom and dad dressed the part. No, Louis was not Scooby Doo. Also, Louis recently received a job reclassification and now holds the title of Senior Management Analyst for the Monrovia Department of Public Works.

## Mike and Liz Tie the Knot



In the event you have not been around the dojo lately, Mike Castro and Liz Choto recently tied the knot.

An intimate ceremony and reception was celebrated at the dojo, with Sensei performing the ceremony. Family of the bride and groom, as well as the Aikido Ai family and friends attended the wonderful event.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MIKE  
AND LIZ CASTRO!



# Sifu Jonathan Russell's Tai Chi Two Person Dance Seminar

By LinSu



Sifu Jonathan Russell visited Aikido Ai in February to teach us T. T. Liangs Tai Chi Two-Person Dance. Liang studied with tai chi masters throughout China to learn their two-person forms, then combined the techniques into one lyrical dance. Sifu Russell studied with Liang for 20 years and helped document the dance in photos and text, so he is well qualified to teach it.

Sifu Russell is a warm and engaging instructor. He kept us together and moving forward despite our wide range of abilities and learning styles. We started Friday evening with exercises and demonstrations such as slow, low walking to test whether we could freeze movement at any point and still keep our balance. We did an exercise to experience floating, the unconscious rising or moving forward in anticipation of a push. One partner would stand in right hanmi, a relaxed and balanced stance, and remain passive as the other partner pushed one or both shoulders a few times. Then the partner would start to push but not make contact.

Surprise, the passive person would automatically lean forward, often quite dramatically, in anticipation. Even after many attempts, most of us found it difficult to prevent. Sifu Russell demonstrated that when an

opponent floats, he has lost his center or one point and can be moved easily.

Saturday morning Sifu Russell said we would cover as much as possible of the 140-something movements. With students focusing on either the A or B side, by Sunday we made it through about 60 of the postures. Now we have our work cut out for us, to memorize both parts while refining the subtle movements that Sifu Russell demonstrated.

During the dance we cycled through the phases of absorbing a push, neutralizing the attack, repositioning and gathering energy, then pushing back. In the dance the movements are large, but Sifu Russell demonstrated how the movements become smaller and faster with practice.

To demonstrate, he asked Michael Papero to push him hard. When Michael moved back slightly to



gather energy for a big shove, Russell flowed into the gap and pushed Michael's chest. Though it looked like Russell hardly moved, Michael went backwards a couple feet.

During Saturday evening's dinner, Sundays lunch, and all through the workshop, Russell told many

enjoyable stories about training with Liang. On the mat during the workshop, students would sit or kneel in seiza and listen respectfully. This apparently was new to Russell. But by Sunday afternoon when one more anecdote triggered the students to sit down, he laughed and blurted out, Oh, another long story; just tell me to stop!

Students enjoyed the workshop, with many coming early or lingering to practice. On Russell's suggestion, people were willing to trade partners often to experience the differences in sizes, capabilities and touch. Sifu Russell praised Sensei Frank for the warm and cooperative community our school enjoys, acknowledging that the values and attitudes of such a group are nurtured by the teacher. He said it is highly unusual for a tai chi teacher to invite another in, treat him and his family as honored guests, and give him the students for a weekend.

When we have practiced the Two-Person Dance thoroughly, Sensei will invite Sifu Russell to return to teach us the rest. Jonathan Russell is looking forward to it eagerly, and so are we.

*Comments from the Seminar Attendees*

Cynthia Krause:

*Wuchi, bow, One da, two da, One da, two da, Keeping contact, Give, take, Da Lu, block, strike, Step here, step there, step around, East, west, north, south, Lost, Beautiful? Yin, Yang? Yes, bow.*

Marie Brock:

*Fun, good energy and sharing chi.*

Marty Wilson

*I enjoyed his teaching and learning about tai chi and applications from a different school of training... different, but very compatible.*

Jim Hill

*The insights gained in Jonathan's teaching cannot be overstated. That I could experience this within the confines of our dojo only serve to make me appreciate our dojo even more.*

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# Kyu Examinations—Two Views

## Perceptions of the Process

By Jim Hill

September tests. Missed it. Rats.

December tests. Missed it. Rats.

My employer needs to understand that there are more important things in the world than selling parts for forklifts.

March test date. Might make it this time. Feeling good. Good test partners – that's a big plus. Broadsword needs lots of work – don't know. Eight-Section Brocade – %&#@!, can I ever get that one down? Which Push Hands? Partnered? Not partnered? Which of these styles is Yang? Which one is Wu? Liu Ha Ba Fa, from Stork Holds Mud in its Beak onward, needs work. Is Long Form still solid?

One month to go. Broadsword's much better. Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me. Eight-Section Brocade – can I ever get this? Doggone it, *which* Push Hands?

Two weeks to go. I might not be ready. How good does this need to be?

At the dojo six days a week. Practice with partners as much as possible. Coming early, staying late.

Three days to go. Tighten up that Eight-Section Brocade. Quit screwing up the middle of Silum Breathing! Hope my partners are pulling it together. How long ago did Linda get her blue? One year? We started at the same time...

This is not a race. It's not about the belt. People say I'm ready. I trust their opinions. Am I going to go blank under pressure like usual? I'm NOT a pressure performer.

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## My Quest for Green Belt

By Kevin McKee

Completing my quest was long and hard, but it was well worth it. I have been going to the dojo for a little over a year. I have met many great people and some powerful instructors. I wondered if someday I could be as powerful as them. The instructors and the students come in all shapes and sizes so where does the power come from? What would I need to work on to reach green belt I soon learned that I would need to learn 3 things - power, footwork and Japanese.

At first I met Big John, black belt, and Big Mike, black belt, and I thought the power came from huge arms and massive thighs. Then I met Chris, brown belt, an Don, brown belt, and they were tall and skinny, but they were just as strong and powerful with their moves. I was mystified for awhile, but I continued to practice. After a few months, I learned that the power came from your center, belt, or "obe" and causing the other person to be off balance. The black belts talked about blending, and power blended into footwork and balance.

Footwork and balance were my next challenges. My wife says I can not dance and I have 2 left feet. The blacks would move and I could not see their feet. Their wrists would twist and turn. Their attacker would fall and roll. Despite my two left feet, I learned some footwork. My wrists were weak, but I learned how to adjust. I used triangles, circles, and moving before my attacker's movement was completed. I got feeling for some of the basic moves. The movements were called various Japanese names.

I have a hard time learning new languages. I had a tough time with

Spanish in high school. The only way I learned was by repetition. Hearing the Japanese word was not enough. I had to hear the words, do the movement over and over again. I had to read the words, and match the right movement with the right words. For example, I learned that there are 3 parts to a move. The first command is your partner's move. The second command is the first part of your move, and the third command is the last part of your move. Roughly translated, katate dorie tai no henko irimi means wrist grab, feet switch and step in. Also, I add palms up and back straight to remind me what to do. This is not the exact translation, but if I practice enough, if I can see the move in my head, I can match the Japanese words to the movement I am supposed to do.

I am still average at best in power, footwork and understanding of Japanese. My assessment of what you need for green belt may be slightly wrong. My methods of learning may not work for you. But, I will say that the best thing to do is listen to all of your instructors, and do the move a thousand times and then a thousand more times. As Big Mike has said, "I have practiced and practiced and started to make a clear line in the sand." I wish to thank all of the Senseis and my training partners.



# Why a Black Belt is a Beginner

By Sensei Roger Shannon

In Aikido and other Martial Arts you often hear people saying that a black belt is an expert in the art. This is only true in the eyes of the novice. As in all things whenever you start any new experience you are a beginner. As you train in Aikido you learn new techniques and movement, and you are promoted to new levels (or Kyu ranks-below black belt). The curriculum for promotion in these ranks varies from school to school, but on the whole is very similar in many of the Aikido schools that I am familiar with.

By the time that a student reaches the brown belt levels, (2nd and 1st kyu) the student has developed a variety of ukemi skills and many technical skills as well. The student has also developed a certain amount of mind and body coordination, but is still in a very physical state of the art, with varying degrees of skill with the higher principals of Aikido, such as blending, centering, relaxation, connection and the use of Ki.

When a student has reached the level of 1st degree Black Belt (Shodan), they have begun to put all of the pieces together but lack experience in the way that all of the pieces work together.

This is why Shodan is a beginning. Shodan is the lowest rank of black belt, a serious student who is ready now to start in the process of integrating the different aspects of Aikido into a complete system of defense and life.

After the rank of Shodan a student must keep an open mind in regard to training forward and not make the mistake of thinking that they have learned it all.

Aikido is not (in my opinion) only a system of techniques to control and defeat other people whom you perceive as your enemies. Yes, it can be a very powerful tool to defend you, in physical and mental ways.

I look at Technique as only a way to practice basic principals, which after all is all that you need for defense.

Weight Down-if you are heavy and controlled no one will be able to disturb your balance.

One Point-Balance of the body and mind.

Ki extension-Only being aware and alive.

Relaxation-This is the key to tying all of the above together.

All of the above principals are alone enough to help you defend yourself without technique. The human body and mind moving together as one unified unit is far more powerful than all the muscle and size that you can have.

The balancing and tying of all of this together comes from many years of training after the rank of Shodan.

Remember, training, experience, and basics are all that is needed to get the student from a beginner to a more complete state of mind.

# Sensei Frank McGouirk Ordained As Dharma Priest



**O**n January 30, 2005 Sensei Frank McGouirk (Original Name), Jagong (Buddhist Name), was ordained as a Dharma Priest (Pop Taecho) and took the 16 precepts at the Golden Wind Center. Sensei received his certification from Ven. Jibong Sonsa, Zen Master and Guiding Teacher.

On that same day, four students from Aikido Ai - Linda Hill, Meg Rottman, George Wheeler and Suzette Hodnett - began their first level of commitment to zen practice and support by taking the first five precepts.



Aikido Ai holds weekly Zen sessions, led by Jagong (Sensei Frank), every Wednesday afternoon from 4:30-5:30. The session includes chanting, sitting and walking meditation, and a dharma reading. Everyone is welcome to participate.

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**Diane Globerman:**

*Russell was very personal and easy to understand. The whole experience was enlightening and fun.*

**Jason Oxman:**

*The Two Person Tai Chi Dance is a very long and complex set of techniques. When performed by people accomplished in the Two Person Dance it is an impressive event. However, when I do it looks like GLOBITY GOOP! The experience of learning something new is always a humbling one. But not an experience to shy away from. It was obvious Sensei Russell is a very accomplished martial artist and can teach us a lot about both Tai Chi and Aikido. The techniques, or moves of the dance, share the philosophy of Aikido. Many of the moves look like Aikido techniques. Sensei McGouirk blends Aikido and Tai Chi together, which gives him his unique and beautiful style.*

**Nancy Parker:** *The weekend with Jonathan Russell will long be remembered. It not only reinforced or taught anew some powerful, basic techniques of Tai Chi as a martial art, but gave a new meaning to "sticking" hands. Keeping continual contact with a partner created not only a challenge for many of us, but gave us a truly beautiful gift. It left us excited and eager to continue practicing what we learned and to eventually learn this incredibly beautiful dance in it's entirety.*

**Jennifer Higa:** *How refreshing to have both aikido and tai chi students on the mat as beginners.*

**Elaine Jeche:** *Jonathan Russell taught us a "new and old" tai chi dance. It was new to us but contained many old familiar moves. It was great.*

**Michael Papero:** *Sifu Russell was an excellent instructor. He pushed*

*us hard and forced us to overcome what we thought were our limitations (memory wise). It is good seeing and practicing the combative applications of tai chi. The dance is an excellent idea and we should practice it diligently.*

**Mark Scott:** *This workshop furthered my understanding of the subtleties of tai chi.*

## What is Zen? Visiting Zen Teacher Invites Your Questions

All around us, the word "Zen" is popping up in a wide range of uses – in business names, new products, fancy menus at restaurants, and on the Internet. What is Zen, anyway? Find out at a free presentation at the dojo on Tuesday, May 17, at 7:00 p.m.

The special guest speaker will be Tim Colohan, also known by his Zen Buddhist name, Kwanmyōng. Tim is a Dharma Teacher in American Zen Buddhism and has been practicing Zen for more than 19 years as a senior student of Zen Master Jibong. (Senior students will remember Jibong-sonsa as Dr. Robert Moore, who trained and taught aikido and tai chi chuan at the old dojo.)

Entertaining and easy to listen to, Tim rolls out the welcome mat for Zen beginners and advanced students alike. He brings to his talks a refreshing, down-to-earth perspective of spirituality and the everyday world. He can relate your martial arts training to the Zen concepts behind it. Find out how you've been doing "moving meditation" when your aikido or tai chi techniques have been especially effec-

tive.

Besides being a Zen practitioner, Tim has a long-standing interest in art and has worked on many Hollywood movies. He's currently the Set Decorator on the popular TV series "E.R." as well as being an accomplished artist.

Sensei Frank will be your host for the evening. Starting at 7:00 p.m., members of the dojo will perform a tai chi demonstration. At 7:30 an introductory talk will be given by Linda Hill, a dojo member who is studying tai chi, aikido and Zen. Tim Colohan will discuss the nature of Zen and his experiences in his practice. Then the audience can join in with questions. Refreshments and chat afterwards will round out the entertainment.

Large Zen cushions will be arranged on the mat for those who can sit on the floor. For guests who are floor-challenged, please come early for seating on one of the benches with cushions.

You, your family and friends and the community are invited to this free Zen talk. Come enjoy Tim's interesting stories and bring any questions about Zen that you may have. Stay for refreshments and chat afterwards. Then next time Starbucks, Borders Bookstore or a TV show refers to the Zen of something, you'll know if they're using the word right! Please sign up on the bulletin board sheet for this special event so we can plan for seating and refreshments.

## Kids in Aikido

by John F. Wong, Shodan ho



The title of this article may not be completely accurate or fair to those it is intended to honor. After all, these young people that come to this art are not your average kid!

We typically think of a new student in Aikido as being an adult. Someone who has previous martial arts experience or has looked into martial arts by reading, reaching, and seeking out those individuals who have gone before them into this seemingly mystic world on this ancient eastern path. But when we hear that they were brought in by a parent or accompanied by a guardian, we ask... how old are they?

Whether they are seven, twelve or somewhere in between, for whatever the reason, their introduction to Aikido is through that parent or guardian who wants their child to have some type of training. We're unclear in the beginning if the child's presence is out of their own interest or a wanting to please the one that brought them in. Regardless of how or why they have come to Aikido, they have and their training begins.

Like the rest of us in the beginning, they feel awkward. They come into this strange place they've never been, this cavernous building, this hall, this do-what? DOJO and don't know how to put on a gi, tie their belt or why we seem to bow all the time. To them it probably seems as if they can't do anything right, as it seems they are corrected time after time. But it is

the test of time that shows them what they can do, as they remind us of what we've so often forgot.

It is during this time that we guide them in the correct way of doing things in the dojo. How to put on a gi, tie their belt and why we bow so much. Then they see other kids doing things they think are cool, and that flame of interests starts to glow, as they want to do those things too. Now is the opportunity, now to help that flame become a fire.

Yet, in the beginning, that flame flickers as the frustration of trying sets in. The frustrated feelings of "I just can't do it". And then, the light goes on, the door opens and the first skill, that first good roll where they do it correctly and have that feeling



of "YA", "COOL", "ALL RIGHT" and they are hooked.

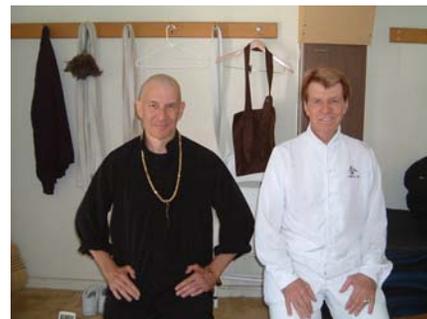
Their minds are open and their hearts are full of joy, their thirst for more runs deep and because of this they are an absolute joy to train with. They have no preconceived notions, no skepticism, no fear and, for the most part, all they want to do... is have fun!

Their parents may think their kids are being taught, but, for me, these kids do just as much teaching. They teach me about myself, they remind me of how I should look at the world and how I should treat others. They remind me of what I've forgotten.

To me, they are teachers... these Kids in Aikido.

## Dojo Family Vacation at Mt. Baldy: Have Fun at the Retreat!

by LinSu



You've felt how people at this dojo are special. Good energy here. Your training partners are comfortable, good friends. You trust them to help you learn and grow. In a way, with our similar interests, we're like family.

Now imagine a family vacation... a holiday picnic... designed to help you learn and develop the skill of being *really* connected. A skill you'll use on the mat and off.

The last weekend in May we're having a get-together in the mountains—taking walks in the woods... enjoying good food... and learning new techniques in aikido and tai chi. We've been doing it every Memorial weekend for 23 years. It's so much fun, the aikido and tai chi communities join in, too!

The dojo's Memorial Weekend Retreat at Mt. Baldy brings you the personal attention and instruction of highly respected experts in their disciplines. They consider us as part of their family. (You see, the dojo's positive energy extends far beyond those four walls!) So they chat with you during breakfast.

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# Yondan Ranking Awarded to Roger Shannon

By Louis Celaya

Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> was a special day at Aikido Ai. Yes everyday is a special day at Aikido Ai, but this particular Saturday, Sensei was please to have promoted Roger Shannon with the Aikido Ranking of Yondan (4<sup>th</sup> Degree). Yondan ranking is special because it presents the aikidoka with the official title of "Sensei." The Aikido students and Dans were especially proud to watch one of their own, and long time member, be awarded this Ranking. I was honored to have been one of many students who participated in Sensei Shannon's presentation.



Prior to the presentation, Sensei informed the Aikido Ai Family that Sensei Shannon has been training for approximately 20 years, and held the title of Assistant Chief Instructor while a member at Aikido Ai. Sensei commented on Sensei Shannon's commitment, long time support, and assistance while a member of the Aikido Ai Family, and how his dojo (Aikido of Albany, OR) is a strong and excellent reflection of his training and understanding of Aikido. Sensei also acknowledged the long time support of Nancy Shannon and her tireless and endless support of her husband's efforts and the Aikido Ai Family.

The students were treated to various demonstrations of Aikido Basics in both swari waza and tachi waza technique ken and jo dori, and randori demonstration. When all was completed, Sensei Shannon was acknowledged with a loud and strong applause from the Aikido Family, and after the break conducted the second class.

On behalf of the Yadansha, and rest of the Aikido students, we congratulate Sensei Shannon on this special award.



# Interview With Sister Marilyn Omieczynski



## When did you start Tai Chi and why?

March, 1994 marked the beginning of my love affair with Tai Chi. My Spiritual Director was helping me work through a lifetime of repressed anger. He suggested doing some sort of martial arts. The very day he made the suggestion I was in the Whittier Library and saw a brochure from Rio Hondo College. In the brochure was a description of a Tai Chi class. The first day I was so nervous I could hardly introduce myself to Sensei but by the end of those first eight weeks I was hooked for life! Practicing the Eight Treasures was almost immediately beneficial, not only for releasing all that pent up anger but also prompted the beginning of healing in every organ system. What a gift!

## Tell me about your Religious Community.

I am a member of the Union of Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We were founded in Ireland in 1775 toward the end of the Penal times in Ireland. The

Penal Times are called such because the English were occupying Ireland for several decades. The English passed a great many laws to keep the Irish people under their thumbs. One of the Laws was directed at keeping the Irish illiterate. It said that Catholic Irish children would not be allowed to go to school. If anyone was caught teaching the Catholic Irish children to read and write the punishment was death. There was a courageous woman, Nano Nagle, who secretly opened seven schools (five for girls and two for boys) in the City of Cork in southern Ireland to teach the Catholic Irish children. Fortunately she was never caught by the English. At the end of her life she founded two religious communities, the Irish Christian Brothers and the Presentation Sisters. Since her death thousands of men and women have followed her example. The Presentation Sisters are in every continent, except Antarctica. For the most part the Sisters are in Education, still working with those who are on the margins of society.

## You are a Master Level Reiki teacher. What is Reiki?

Reiki, (pronounced ray-key) meaning universal life force energy, is an ancient, natural form of healing, a gentle laying-on-of-hands to help restore balance and promote the well-being of the whole person. The word Reiki comes from two Japanese words, **Rei** and **Ki**. The **Rei** as used in this therapy refers to higher knowledge or spiritual consciousness. This is the wisdom that comes from God. It understands each person completely and knows the cause of all problems and difficulties and knows how to heal them. **Ki** is life energy (**Chi** in Chinese). This is the non-physical energy that animates all living things. It is the God-Consciousness called **Rei** that guides the life energy called **Ki** in the practice of Reiki. Because Reiki is guided by God-Consciousness, it can never do harm. It always knows what a person needs and will adjust itself to create an effect that is appropriate.

## Baseball or fishing?

I have been fishing my entire life. Some of my earliest memories are of watching both the sunrise and sunset on the pier in Newport Beach with a full day of fishing and exploring the beach in between. When I lived in Northern California my fresh water fishing equipment was always in the trunk of the car so there would be no time lost in getting ready. Without too much trouble once or twice a week, it was possible to close my office in the school, change clothes and cast a line in the water by 4:30 in the afternoon. That usually gave me at least an hour or even two before sunset. Since moving back to southern California, fresh water fishing has taken a back seat to deep sea fishing. I have a friend with whom I have been going fishing for over 30 years. We usually take the boat out of the Los Alamitos Marina. The captain and crew know us well since we try to go at least once each month.



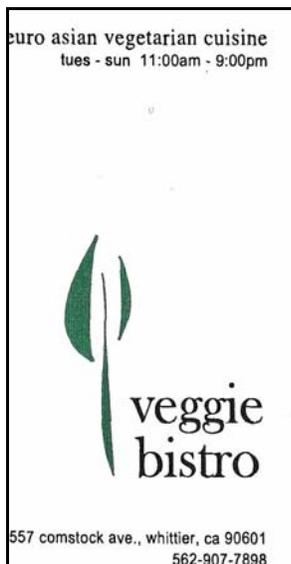
*Sister Marilyn has been training at Aikido Ai for 12 years. She currently holds the rank of Shodan and teaches the Intermediate Tai Chi class on Thursday nights.*

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Fine-tune your technique in class. Laugh with you over stories during those walks and talks. Listen to you like a good friend. Think about what you want your training to lead to. Want some perspective? This year's participants include men and women ranking from 1<sup>st</sup> dan through 6<sup>th</sup> as well as kyu ranks. Train and talk with them as your fellow students for the workshops, and discover their experiences in learning their art.

Are you ready to break free for a while? Come up for fresh air and clear your mind. Carpool with other dojo members, or make the easy drive yourself. We'll have workshops in aikido, tai chi, qigong and Zen from before breakfast till after dinner. Do whatever tickles your fancy... including trying something completely new! Just check with the instructors. The classes are small so you'll never get lost in the shuffle.

So join in for the fun and see how your practice improves. Check out the schedule and sign-up sheets on the dojo bulletin board. Sign up for one or two days. Or come spend the entire weekend with your dojo family. (We promise we'll share the popcorn during the movie on Sunday evening!)



(Continued from page 2)

to correct her breathing or her arms, but realized it wasn't my place. By the end of the first day she called me into her room. "Look!" she said in wonder, "they both go up together!" After the first few days, she felt so good she credited the integration breath for helping her walk better, breathe easier and be in a better mood. All from the first move we all learn in Tai Chi!

Suzette's article unleashed a firestorm. And I'm grateful that fire is still burning in this wonderful lady. Now it's on to the Eight Treasures.

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If we test as a group, who stands where? Who needs support?

Saturday morning. Took out the dojo trash. Started to sweep the mat; lower-rank student took over.

Mental state of wu chi. Feeling calm, empty and aware. Long Form – felt good, would have enjoyed doing the whole thing... there just wasn't time. Broadsword – not perfect but solid. Felt great. Liu Ha Ba Fa – love that form. Question-and-answer session near the end – doggone it, it's move *from* the tantien. The tantien does not move! Breakfast celebration with friends. Love these people – this is why I keep coming back.

Blue sash. Hmm. Feels funny. Implies a lot. Got to live up to that. Just a beginner again.

## NOTES FROM THE COORDINATOR

A big thanks to everyone who contributed to this newsletter edition. It was nice to see some of our newest students sharing their experiences. As we have always said, "everyone has something to share".

Before I say farewell, I wanted to also comment on the Two-Person Dance workshop. I also found Sifu Russell's workshop fascinating! The principles of relaxation and flowing with the movement are mirrored with Aikido. Interesting how many of the martial arts express the same message to its practitioners.

Have fun and safety Memorial Day Weekend, and hopefully we will see you at Mount Baldy!

## Something to Share?

Submit articles or questions to The Aikido Eye (MS Word/handwritten). Send to:

[l.celaya@att.net](mailto:l.celaya@att.net)

Thanks!

