

合氣道光氣会 AIKIDO KOKIKAI Australia

AKA News

The newsletter of Aikido Kokikai Australia

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Editor: Glen Davison

Spring Camp

Glen Davison

Spring is sprung, the grass is ris.
I wonder where the birdies is?

Yes, that's right, it's spring. And you know what that means: Spring Camp. Maruyama Sensei is on his way! Very soon, the big man himself will be here, to inspire us and amaze us and mess with our heads.

Aside from the inspiration you gain from Sensei's aikido, camp is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends from AKA, and to make new ones. Please go out of your way to train and talk with people from other dojos. If you are from a small dojo in particular, make as much use as you can of the new, unfamiliar ukes.

Camp will also see brown and black belt candidates tested by Sensei. This year we have a great number – twenty two, I believe.

Incidentally, when I went looking on the web for that poem at the start, I found a debate about attribution. There were a number of possible authors, such as e.e. cummings, Ogden Nash, Spike Milligan,

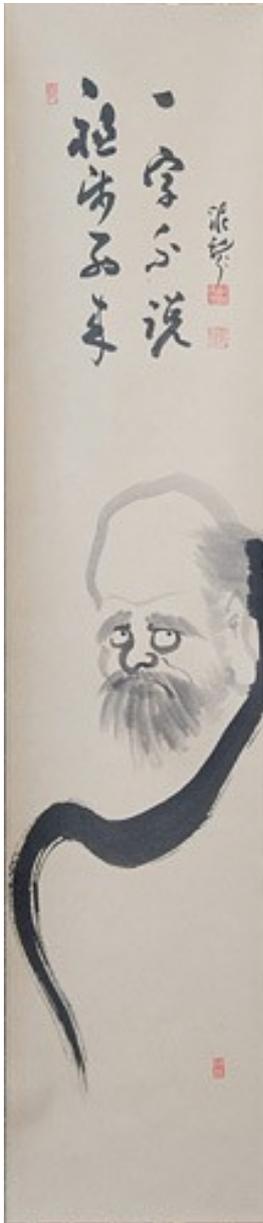
etc and no obvious winner; so I am going to attribute it to the only source I am certain of: my Dad, Eric Davison.



Kokikai Australia continues to grow. We have had no new dojos open recently, but it seems as though many of our dojos are growing individually, the level of our students rises, and we are maturing as an organisation.

Seven times down, eight times up

Mike Sinagra



Anyone who has had some contact with Japan and the Japanese culture will know of the Daruma Doll. It is a hollow papier-mâché head modelled on Chinese Zen master Bodai Daruma.

These days people will buy a Daruma, paint an eye on it, and make a wish, or start a new endeavour. When the wish comes true or they have success in their endeavour, they will paint the second eye on and display the Daruma in celebration.

The Daruma, however, has a much deeper significance for students of martial arts. The Daruma has a low centre of gravity, and although it can be knocked over it very quickly rights itself and stands back up.

Its message is simple: no matter how often you are knocked over by failure, get up and try again. This is essential in Kokikai Aikido, and in Budo in general. We often find ourselves struggling to capture the correct feeling. It's frustrating and it would be easy to just leave it at that. But the Daruma teaches us to get up and have another go, and another, and another. And the frustrating thing for Kokikai Aikido students is, when we have finally captured

that feeling, there will be other things to bowl us over. This is a great lesson for the dojo, and an even greater lesson for life. So just get back up!



Daruma Doll by Deiryu an outstanding Zen monk of the twentieth century.

Bullockhead Creek dojo, Brisbane

Myriam Raymond

It's been another fantastic year for us! While our dojo is getting bigger, it's also quite a bit prettier with recent renovations, all thanks to our student-volunteers and generous landlord. The Darra Community group has always been pro-active, and this year secured some flood-recovery funding to transform park lands and building spaces immediately surrounding our dojo.

With an increasingly comfortable and welcoming space to train in, we were proud to hold our very first Bullockhead Creek Open Day in July. It was a great success! We opened our doors for most of the day, inviting people to come on into the dojo space, take a seat and watch a group of dedicated Kokikai students train their art. Apart from being a great day of free training for us, we also had new students turning up to the very next lesson!

July was a big month for our dojo, with six of us attending the North-East Regional seminar that I helped to organise for Lismore. Attendance was far greater than

expected, with up to 25 people on the mats at any one time - a hugely successful turnout! Our students do not often get to meet others from AKA, and gained a lot from this experience.

Four students will make camp this year, and more will come the following year also, and will likely take part in senior gradings. In March and July we saw some students' progression through kyu ranks and we were very proud of their achievements. Our students are training regularly, with a tremendously co-operative attitude, continuing to grow in both their technique and their Kokikai spirit.

This year we designed and applied a student satisfaction survey through Survey Monkey, hoping to gain insights into ways we can make training even more rewarding. A surprise result was that most students look forward to becoming instructors one day, a great indication of long-term commitment to Kokikai, which is very exciting for our dojo. It will certainly help with kids classes that we plan to start in 2013, filling out an already busy timetable, with adult classes already running on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays. Felix Myers has taken on board the responsibilities of Friday night classes, and he has demonstrated enormous growth in his teaching since then, with some very positive response from students. Well done Felix. And well done all students who have helped the dojo to grow this year - I couldn't have done it without you!

Footwork

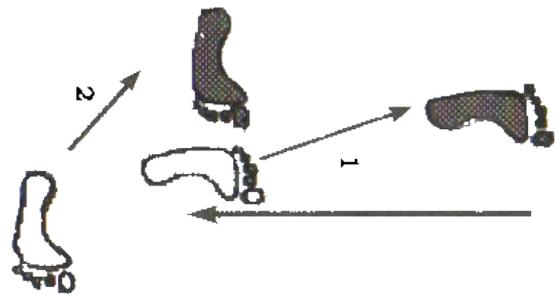
Allen Iu 17/8

When teaching, after the stretches I always do 'tai sabaki'; this is a general term

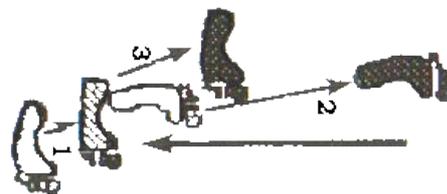
for body movement. We always do this because it builds the basics, builds a strong foundation and provides us with a common language to discuss 'foot work':

1. Standing in hanmi - Basic stance with your feet in the shape of a 'T'. Weight distribution: 60% on the front foot and the rest on the back.

2. Okuri-ashi ("sending step") - Foot work to cover short distances. Front foot leads, followed by back foot. Must finish on-balance.

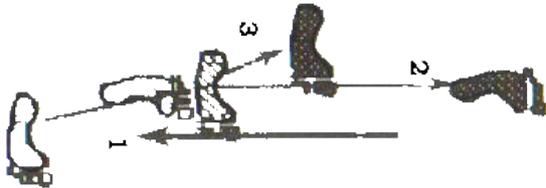


3. Tsugi-ashi ("joining step") - Foot work to cover middle distances. Back foot leads and meets the front foot, followed by front foot moving forward. Must finish on-balance and must cover greater distance than okuri-ashi.



4. Ayumi-ashi ("walking step") - Foot work to cover large distances. Back foot leads and crosses over the front foot, followed by front foot moving forward. Must finish on-balance and also must cover greater

distance than tsugi-ashi. At UNSW I get my students to cover the width of the dojo in two steps. This footwork is used often in ikkyo movement.



5. Kaiten - Foot work just to change direction. Often people turn on their heels; this is wrong because they will fall over; get them to turn on the balls of their feet. Also, they must turn with their hips. This is where the power will come from.

6. Tenkan - Don't need to explain here.

The helpful pictures above came from <https://sites.google.com/site/fingerlakesaikido/basics-of-aikido> (but note that they use a different naming scheme.)

Eat, Pray, Aikido

Mike Sinagra

In May, Julian Pryde and I went to Indonesia to research the possibility of holding an aikido retreat in the mountains of Bali, in Ubud. We chose Ubud because of its natural beauty. The combination of jungles and wild rivers, natural organic food, massages, yoga, outdoor activities, closeness to nature and dedicated time for the soul seemed to be the perfect place to reconnect with the universe, with a focus on aikido.

We tried a different hotel each day,

sampled a spa package or massage each day, took a guided walk through the rice fields, mountain biked down a volcano through tiny villages, all in search of finding the right balance of things to make up our aikido retreat. Most of our time, though was spent in search of suitable mats, and for the perfect venue to do the aikido.



With most of our plans intact we headed for the capital, to Robin Sensei of Denpasar Aikido. We practiced at the main dojo in Denpasar, and went out for a drink after practice. We have forged a friendship that resulted in solving our final problem of securing mats for our retreat.



So with all the plans in place it just requires us to get the people together, then put the plan into action. We hope that you are as excited by the prospect of an aikido retreat as we were putting it together. Watch out for more details soon.

Centre

Glen Davison

Maruyama Sensei continuously emphasises the Four Principles in his teaching.

One of the harder principles to master is keeping one point. Like most of the others, this has multiple aspects. In a physical sense, it is about being stable and balanced. Internally, it is about simplifying your concentration. Rather than thinking about one thing while doing something else with your body, you are far more potent if your mind is on what you are doing. The more extraneous thoughts you have in your head, the less effective you are.

The longer version of this principle is “Keep one point to develop calmness.” If your mind is filled with fewer of these extra thoughts, you have more space to deal with the now. That's the place where someone is trying to hit you or grab you, and it's the only important place for a martial artist. Attacks you have dealt with in the past are over and done; whatever happened has already happened and cannot be changed. Thinking about attacks in the future is not very effective; mostly you focus on emotional aspects, rather than on the practical. Fear dominates, and prevents you from acting effectively.

Ozeki Sensei likes to draw an analogy with a pool of water. If your thoughts are scattered, the pool is disturbed; small waves intersect and create a chaotic pattern

of reflections. If you are calm, the pool is still, and the surface acts like a mirror; you can see a single clear image in that reflection, and react simply and effectively. The most common issue mentioned generally is fear, but it is not the only one.

A number of articles I have read lately seem to be saying the same thing about self defence in modern western society. Unprovoked attacks on the street, for muggings or even just for the hell of it, increasingly frequently do not involve a “manly” squaring off to see who is tougher. Instead, the aggressor will try to king hit his victim from surprise. Often he will start a conversation, so that the victim lowers his guard, then attack suddenly.

Being centred and calm is about being able to act or react always, not just in a fearful situation – even when there is no apparent threat. You do not need to psych yourself up to the moment. It's about all of the emotional traps – fear, uncertainty, misplaced trust, relief, embarrassment, and so on.

This is the difference between a sport such as judo, when you know you have to perform during the event and you can relax completely afterward, and a martial art for self defence, when there is no safe time. The martial artist is always ready, very much like a body guard - you are your own body guard.

Sensei makes this point again and again. Usually he has one of the women at camp walk the length of the dojo, and he grabs her from behind; if she is ready, walking relaxed, with good posture and keeping one point, she should be able to simply keep walking and piggy-back Sensei. Most times she will fail, and it's not because of fear, but embarrassment.

Top 10 reasons to try Aikido

Stephen Herborn

10. You can wear your pyjamas
9. You will learn lots of new party tricks, including rolls, flips and dips
8. Feel a bit more like Chuck Norris
7. Learn to harness your energy for good
6. You've always wanted to feel what it would be like to be a pretzel
5. Your little siblings won't know what to do with your new "strong man grip"

4. Didn't you need a new colourful belt for your wardrobe?

3. Explore the different restaurants around Kingsford during one of the group lunches

2. Sword fighting is not only for knights in suits of armour

1. Because being able to kick above your head is also good for the dance floor