

The JAA(USA)



AIKIDO TIMES



A TOMIKI AIKIDO QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Shodokan Spirit: we don't train to compete, we compete to train!

Those who were unable to attend the recent 2006 "Non-Arnold Ohio Tournament & Clinic" missed a lot of fun and a great training opportunity. The clinics were attended by about 50 enthusiastic students of all ranks and sizes, so there were lots of new faces to meet and train with. The tournament competition was thoroughly entertaining — there were participants of all shapes and sizes and strengths, and even some of the newest and smallest kids participated in events for the first time, with great results.

Success can be measured in many ways. It's not just the medals won, or the final scores on the board. It's measured by the smiles and the friendships and the newfound sense of achievement in attempting something for the first time in front of a cheering crowd. It's measured in the added knowledge of the principles of movement and how their correct application can work better than strength. It's measured in the revolution that comes when the competitors suddenly realize that they're actually just applying the principles taught at the clinics—centering, kuzushi, relaxation!!

One of the beauties of these smaller tournaments is that participants rarely come to compete "for the glory". Good will and camaraderie abound—nobody needs to be afraid to ask how the competi-

tion works or what they could be doing better. Referees pitch in with advice to go along with the scoring calls. Even the spectators can get involved in the good-natured repartee. It's a good time for the women to take on the men in toshu or tanto randori and the shortest of kids to take on those 2-3 times their size—it's all in the spirit of the event, challenging every student to get better and grow together. That's competition.



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An Open Letter to Black Belts

My thoughts by Wade Current



I believe that each of us, at some point after reaching Dan ranks, must leave the safe harbor of our sensei's club and attempt to open our own. Now that seems like a pretty bold statement, and you might be thinking "How can I think of beginning my own club when I still do not understand all that my sensei seems to?" Or maybe, "Where would I find space and money for mats?" Or any of a thousand other reasons why not.

These are good questions and valid concerns. However, I feel that the potential benefits, both personal and to the Aikido community at large, weigh heavily on the plus side of the equation. The first benefit of such a move would be to help grow our membership base, which helps the entire organization. Another, which I think is much more important, is that if we wish to continue our personal growth, and realize our true potential, we HAVE to teach others. You learn, understand, and appreciate so much more when it is up to you to help someone else along on their journey.

As an example, practically from my second week in class, my Sensei made sure that I was always instructing students who were newer than I. She was diligent about not only putting me in front of other students to share what I knew, but in coaching me on how to teach. Not just what to say, but how to say it. How to stand and present myself, how to articulate what I was doing as I was demonstrating, and how to lead them through it so they could feel and understand the techniques.

Many times, she would pull me aside after I had demonstrated a technique and say "That was good, but what could you have done better?" "Did they see it from different angles?" "Did you communicate what your hands were doing?" "Or your feet?" "Or your hips?" "Did you draw attention to the principles?" "Did you break it down to their level of understanding?"

She talked about the three ways that we all learn, by seeing, by hearing, and by doing. She explained how each of us has one of those three ways that is dominant. She worked with me on observing while teaching so I could learn to recognize which way each person learns best in order that I could tailor my instruction to them.

However, even after years of this, after visiting and teaching in many local clubs, even after attaining my 3rd Dan, there was no sense of responsibility when I was teaching in someone else's class. I always knew, even if only in the back of my mind, that when the sensei next looked at whomever I had been instructing, that they would correct anything that was slightly off, or not in line with what they wanted to see.

It wasn't until I finally took the plunge and started my own classes that this really hit me.



These people, these students of MINE, would only ever understand, and be as accomplished as I could make them. It was all on me. This caused me to really look at, and examine, what and how I was teaching. Suddenly all the input that my sensei and others had given me took on a new importance. Gradually I came to realize that the responsibility and need to examine what works, what does not, and why, was making MY aikido better.

I have been extremely fortunate in the opportunities I have had to study with and under the accomplished and dedicated instructors that I have. I think that if I had remained a student forever, I would be a very good martial artist. But I know beyond a doubt, that without my own club, I would not have grown to the level of understanding and appreciation of the art that I have today.

For this reason I feel a personal club should almost be **REQUIRED** to earn higher rank. It adds so much more to your personal understanding and to the organization. Not only in better instructors, but in more potential students who will get better, more personalized instruction. Ask yourself “What have I really given back?”

Now, there is a valid argument that not everyone is cut out to be an instructor. For some it may be reasons of personality or temperament, or simply location and lack of means to start a club. There will even be some who never **WANT** to be on their own.

We certainly do not wish to exclude anyone from the contributions that they **CAN** make. There are other valid and necessary responsibilities that do not involve running a club. Most students will eventually make effective assistant instructors who can run classes when the club leader cannot. But they should understand that without the additional personal commitment, there will be a point beyond which their understanding and insight to the art can not grow.

In the final analysis, you have to ask yourself “What commitment have I made? What have I given back to myself, to my club or my organization, to justify the hours my teachers have spent on me?” Ask yourself “What have I done, besides show up for class most of the time, and learn a couple dozen moves, to justify my rank?” If you can find good answers to these questions then you probably already have the reward of that labor. If you can not ... look around, get busy, and find a way to give back.



*Photos taken at the recent clinic/tournament hosted by Wade at his dojo in Ohio.
Calligraphy by Sensei Michael Gelum*

Reviews & Previews —

The March 2006 Ohio Clinic & Tournament

(photos courtesy of Michael Gelum)

During the weekend of March 11th and 12th, 2006, I had the opportunity to attend an Aikido clinic at Wade Current's dojo in Conover, Ohio. My apprehension in attending this clinic was overwhelming. I've been a police officer for 33 years, and most of my encounters with people have not always been pleasant. For this reason I'm not comfortable meeting new people and tend to stay with my small circle of friends. Also, in addition to this, I have been studying Karate for over 30 years and my experience in a martial art clinic is limited to that of a striking art.

I must say that all my misgivings were unfounded. This was the most enjoyable experience of my martial arts career. Not once did I hear "Wrong", "Not enough power", "Not enough focus", etc. etc. Instead, I heard words of encouragement. Even when my technique was completely wrong, I heard "Good, but try it this way — it might be easier". I've never been around so many friendly people, or seen so much smiling at a martial art event. The most amazing thing about this was that it was sincere. Everyone from the highest black belt to the newest white belt made me feel welcome.

I came away with a greater appreciation for this wondrous art, and the wonderful people that practice and teach it. All I can say is "Thank You". Without trying or knowing, you made a convert of me. There is truly life after karate.



Sensei Michael Gelum

Oh, yeah, my karate students also thank you. Because of all of you, I've learned after 30 years in the martial arts that you really do learn better

with positive reinforcement, instead of negative reinforcement.

Finally, I would like to thank my Sensei, Mr. Michael Gelum, for his patience, and for encouraging me to take a chance and attend this clinic.

James R. Phillips

In late 2004 Sifu Jim Phillips, from Wu Lun Kenpo Karate School, asked several of us if we would be interested in studying Aikido. Our group had been together since the late 70's and we felt it would be interesting to learn another style of martial art. Jim contacted his good friend Sensei Mickey Gelum about the prospect of teaching us aikido. Fortunately for us he said OK. Shizuka Na Arashi Dojo ("Silent Storm Aikido School") was born.



Mark Pawcio & Sensei Michael Gelum

In the summer of 2005 we were honored with a visit from Senseis Moe Stevens, Wade Current, Jeff Davidson, and Mike Barr. Even though we were a small group they brought with them a lot of enthusiasm and worked openly with us, showing us many things. They left us with very good feelings about the new journey we had recently undertaken.

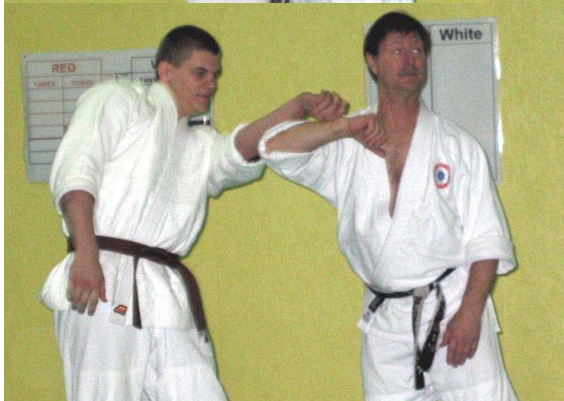
We are very happy we have started this new journey and we hope it will be a long one.

*Mary & Mark Pawcio
Warren, Ohio*



More Reviews & Previews — The March 2006 Ohio Clinic & Tournament

Revisiting principles from the Ohio Clinics —
Breaking balance, Relaxing, Body mechanics, Centering,
Pushing with the arms/elbows, Pulling with the legs —



Photos shown from Ohio clinics with Senior Instructor Sensei Dave Nettles, using Wade Current, Sean Flynn, & Josh Ramey as his ukes



Sensei Carol Apple of KCW Aikido with her Jo Kata competitors at the recent Ohio tournament.
Photo courtesy of Michael Gelum

The 1st Annual "Non-Arnold" Ohio Tournament Results



*Jr. Tanto Randori medalists
(from right) Russell Burns, Sam
Sherman, and Alyssa Campbell*



*Freestyle Kata Winners
Jared Kaska & DJ Larger*

Category	1 st Place	2 nd Place	3 rd Place
Junanahon	Matt Partington & Tim Knepp	Geoff Wertime & Kate Blakeley	
Dai San	Josh Ramey & Bob King	Aslak Berg & Tiffany Doan	Geoff Wertime & Kate Blakeley
Freestyle Kata	DJ Larger & Jared Kaska	(2nd Place Tie) Matt Partington/Pam Ridenour & Joe Sherman/Jeff Davidson	
Men's Tanto	Josh Ramey	Sean Flynn	David Mulholland
Women's Tanto	Tiffany Doan	Amanda Stevens	Pam Ridenour
Jr. Tanto Randori	Russell Burns	Sam Sherman	Alyssa Campbell
Jr. Jo Kata	Jessica Martin & Dane Potter (tie)	Jesse Ly	Jacob Ly
Junior Junanahon	Joseph & Sam Sherman		



*Above: Women's Tanto Randori winners (from left)
Tiffany Doan, Pam Ridenour, Amanda Stevens*



*Shown above: Jo Kata winners (from
right) Dane Potter, Jessica Martin,
Jesse & Jacob Ly*



*Dai San winners
Josh Ramey & Bob King*

*Left: Tanto
Randori winners
Josh Ramey &
Sean Flynn, also
shown on right
with Jr. Tanto
Randori's 2nd
place winner
Sam Sherman*





Trials of the Teacher

by Ash Morgan



I started my *aikido* training at USC under Bob Dziubla-*sensei*. The decision to attend that first class was mine, but Dziubla-*sensei* deserves all the credit for keeping me coming back. Not that it took much effort on his part—I was never the popular kid growing up amid the cornfields of the Midwest, so I tend to take a strong dislike to all things, well, thuggish. So his description of *aikido* as “the thinking person’s martial art” along with its inherent elegance immediately appealed to my overly intellectual nature and less than brawny stature. And so, ten years later, I’m the one teaching classes, trying to impart to my students the same knowledge and joy of *aikido* that Dziubla-*sensei* imparted to me. Teaching has brought with it new challenges—how to find and keep students, how best to explain the principles and techniques, and how not to forget everything past 5th *kyu*. I say this only partly tongue in cheek—my biggest challenge is continuing to improve my *aikido* when I spend most of my time teaching.

Now teaching any subject—be it *aikido*, mathematics, or cooking—always brings with it a greater—or at least different—understanding of the subject being taught. For example, as we struggle with how to explain and demonstrate *shomenate*, we start to break the technique into its components—move off the line of attack, break *uke*’s balance to the front with your initial cut and block, break *uke*’s balance to the rear as you slide your hand up your center to *uke*’s chin, *tsukuri* forward and drop your center to complete the throw. Learning how to effectively “reverse engineer” *shomenate* will make us better teachers—no question about it—but it doesn’t make our own *shomenate* any better than it was. After all, we’re only verbalizing and demonstrating what our bodies have already internalized. Do we understand better *why* we move the way we do? Of course. Are we more conscious of *what* we’re doing when performing *shomenate*? Certainly. But if anything, this makes our execution of *shomenate* not better, but *worse*. As we pause to explain what to do at each point, we lose the continuous motion—the necessary fluidity—that makes *shomenate* work. As we think harder about what we’re doing and why we’re doing it, we lose the necessary *mushin*; our active mind interferes, and the technique no longer flows naturally. Instead of feeling for how *uke* wants to be moved, our attention shifts to how we ourselves are moving, so we fail to blend with *uke*’s attack. Ultimately, the analysis and exposition required for effective teaching works at cross purposes to achieving effective *aikido*. We can all, without question, dream of being the perpetual student, but our reality must include being the—at least occasional—teacher. Trying to maximize our “student” time and minimize our “teacher” time is an option only if we’re lucky enough to have someone to step into that role. If we don’t have that luxury, we must look within for how to combat the “perils” of teaching. As G.I. Joe would say every Saturday morning, “knowing is half the battle.” Being consciously aware that instructing is different than doing, allows us to compartmentalize our minds’ and bodies’ response during each.

We should start instruction by demonstrating the technique at full speed in response a committed attack. This serves to establish the “goal” for what we want our students to learn. They see a proper, committed attack and a response that blends with and redirects the energy of the attack into the desired technique. It doesn’t necessarily help them learn the technique, but instead serves as the pattern to which they should compare themselves. It also reinforces a “good” mind/body response in us before we begin to break the technique down. Next, we should demonstrate the technique again, but at half speed.

Uke should still give a committed attack, and our response should still blend and redirect exactly as before—just slower—resisting the temptation to change speeds during the technique. With the half speed demonstration, we start to transition from doing to teaching. We maintain the necessary timing, flow, and body sense, but begin to lose *mushin* in favor of an active mind that can consciously slow our responses to the attack. At the reduced speed, senior students should be able to pick up the essential components of the technique without further or only minimal explanation. Beginners will capture maybe only half—how the feet are moving or how the arms/wrists/hands are moving—but probably not both. For them, we must break things down further into a sequence of discrete steps and pair the verbal explanation with the physical demonstration. At this stage, however, we lose the timing, flow, and most of the body sense needed for good *aikido*—leaving only the barest essentials of *taisabaki*, *kuzuishi*, and *kake*. But of course, here maximal learning takes place for our students, as we demonstrate and explain both the main points and finer points of the technique. Again, we must remind ourselves during this phase that we’re teaching, not doing. At this point, we might be tempted to end teaching and let students start practicing, but this does both our students and ourselves a disservice. By ending with “teaching,” we reinforce in our bodies and our minds what it feels like to teach, which works against our goal of improving our own technique. Instead of ending with teaching, we need to work our way back up to doing. The transitional, half-speed step cannot be overlooked or skipped. Students should take this opportunity to “see” more of the technique than they did the first time with the “hindsight” of the additional breakdown and explanation we provided. We, as teachers, use this step to forget the mind/body response of teaching and being to replace it with the mind/body response of doing. And finally, end as we began with a full speed demonstration of the technique, reinforcing “good” *aikido* for both ourselves and our students.

Now this “pyramid approach” to teaching is only part of the solution for improving our *aikido* when we spend more time teaching than doing. The rest comes straight from Tomiki-*sensei*—“without *randori*, *aikido* is just dance.” Part of every class needs to be spent in *randori*. Not only does it give students and teachers both an opportunity to practice the *aikido* essentials of *taisabaki*, *kuzuishi*, and *kake*, but it gives us as teachers a chance to focus on the *mushin*, timing, flow, and body sense that connects the dots between those essentials. *Kakarigeiko* is better than *hikitate* or *randori* for this purpose, since there’s a tendency to overcome *uke*’s resistance with force instead of better *aikido*. In particular, two on one *kakarigeiko* or *ninindori* is particularly well-equipped as it forces us to expand our awareness beyond ourselves and the imminent attack, bringing us one step closer to the goal of *mushin*. *Ninindori* also enables us to practice continual motion and flow, since any stoppage creates an opportunity for simultaneous attacks. Then, once the proper foundation is laid with *kakarigeiko* and *ninindori*, we can progress to *hikitate* and *randori* with increasing levels of resistance from *uke*.

Teaching *aikido* is not lacking for challenges, but by being aware of those challenges and by taking specific steps to minimize their impact, we can continue to improve our *aikido* even when we find ourselves teaching more often than doing. *Aikido*, like life, is a journey, and at eighteen, I could not have predicted the profound impact the decision to attend that first class at USC would have over the years that have followed. But looking back now, I’m thankful of the anchor it provided me and continues to provide me week after week.

*Ash Morgan, Berkeley Shodokan Aikido
Nidan Exam Paper November 12, 2005*

The Attack

By Rich Bendula



The attack came swiftly, catching me completely off guard, however I instinctively turned to evade the thrust. While training in the art of Aikido, I never really thought I would be confronted with a real life situation in which I would have to use my skills to defend myself. But now the moment of truth was upon me and there was no time to think about what to do. It was like I was in a Tanto Randori match. Everything was happening so quickly. It seemed as if I could barely get out of the way of one strike when another one was upon me. For a moment I thought there was no way I could ever get a technique in this situation then I remembered Sensei's advice "relax and move, relax and move" and with this a feeling of calmness came over me. With this mind set things seemed to slow down and I started to see opportunities to use the attacker's energy to take his balance and throw him.

As my mind began to clear I realized this was no ordinary attack at all. I remembered that I was at work and attending a meeting with a potentially hostile and combative consultant, however I felt totally unprepared for the barrage of verbal attacks that I was receiving. Over time, I have realized that attacks can come in many different forms ranging from verbal to physical yet the basic principles we learn in Aikido can help us assess the situation and determine the appropriate response. Clearly, throwing someone at work or at school is inappropriate for most situations, however the ability to relax, evade, and off-balance an attacker are essential skills which can help defuse most situations.

Being relaxed allows us to clearly assess the situation without getting emotionally involved, while reading a person's body language will often give us clues of an upcoming assault. Many times letting an angry person vent for a while will help defuse an ugly situation by letting them get things off of their chest. In this situation, most people will calm down after a short time and be more receptive to reason. However, some will continue to escalate the attack. If we can keep our cool under this situation the attacker will commonly be viewed by others as unreasonable and will lose credibility. By not allowing our emotions to affect our ability to think clearly we can avoid head-on confrontations as we try to find ways to harmonize and blend with the attacker. Just as in Aikido, it takes considerable practice to know which technique will work best in a given situation, however, in time we can hone our skills to evade the attack and if necessary, use the attacker's negative energy to off-balance them and set them up for a fall.

In the meeting described earlier, I was able to avoid a head-on confrontation with the consultant using these techniques and by the end of the meeting this person was seen by their employer to be so unreasonable that they ended up losing a multimillion dollar contract. It is ironic to think that when I started taking classes in Aikido I thought I would never need to use these skills yet as time goes on I find myself applying the principals of Aikido every day as I try to find harmony in my life. I want to express my sincere heart-felt thanks to Apple Sensei, DJ Larger and everyone who provided encouragement and guidance in my journey. This truly has been an experience I will never forget.

JAPAN AIKIDO ASSOCIATION (USA) MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE (____) _____

_____ (____) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____ FAX (____) _____

NAME AND PLACE OF PRACTICE: _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE:

\$20.00 for individual members (with mailed hard copy of newsletter)

\$10.00 for individual members (with E-mailed newsletter)

\$180.00 for large club of up to 20 members (with E-mailed newsletter)

(Add \$10 for each member over 20)

\$5.00 for lifetime members (to partially defray insurance cost)

(Annual membership fee includes newsletter, national insurance coverage, and membership discounts on JAA/USA books, videotapes, DVD's, and most regional/national clinics and tournaments. Details on insurance coverage include \$1 mln liability/\$2 mln aggregate for participants and facilities; \$25,000 maximum medical expense benefit (\$100 deductible per claim); \$12,500 AD&D; & \$25,000 maximum dental coverage. This policy is with a rated insurance company with decades of athletic insurance experience.)

PLEASE INDICATE START DATE _____ (Sept or Jan)

For Club memberships, please E-mail list of names and E-mail addresses to: nettles@tomiki.org

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

JAA (USA)

5752 S. Kingston Way

Englewood, CO 80111

Dan Rank Promotions

Berkeley Shodokan
Sensei Warren Pottebaum



Ash Morgan
Nidan

KCW Aikido
Sensei Carol Apple



Rich Bendula
Shodan

Kyu Rank Promotions

CSM Aikido
Sensei Wade Current

Valerie Reuber Ikkyu

Russell Burns
Rokyu



Kyu Rank Promotions

Shizuka Na Arashi Dojo
Sensei Michael Gelum

Bruce Chapman	Rokkyu
Mark Pawcio	Rokkyu
Mary Pawcio	Rokkyu
James L. Phillips	Rokkyu
James R. Phillips	Rokkyu
Sheldon Phillips	Rokkyu



Sensei Michael Gelum (back row, left) with Rokkyu students along with Mike Barr and Sensei Moe Stevens (Just This Aikido), Sensei Wade Current (CSM Aikido) & Jeff Davidson (Piqua Aikido)

Mansfield Aikido
Sensei Scott Calderhead

Josh Ramey
Ikkyu

Ian Kent
Yonkyu



Just This Aikido
Sensei Moe Stevens

Sara Kessler	Gokyu
Laura Martin	Gokyu
Dave Hassenzahl	Yonkyu

Where Are You Now???

Have you changed the location of your dojo? How about the main contact information? Please take a look at the JAA/USA dojo listing in the website at www.tomiki.org and let us know if your information is still correct, needs revisions, or is missing altogether. We'd like to include contact information, rank, location, website, and any other specifics you'd like the world to know about your classes and dojo.

Additionally, if you post our promotion requirements on your websites, please make sure you have the most recent revisions and requirements (including membership requirements, clinic attendance, etc.), or simply link to the JAA/USA site for the current version.

UPCOMING EVENTS

(Tentative dates)

*2006 U.S. National Tournament
Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, NY
October 14-15, 2006*

*2007 International Tournament
Vandalia, OH
August 1-5, 2007*