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合氣道

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# Zan Shin

**“It is what we do in this life that defines us,  
not what we say...”**

*By John B. Mazza*

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In the end, looking back over a road well traveled, we reflect on what has been achieved with this life; the possibilities... the successes and the failures. We find that the joy will have been in the pursuit of those dreams, dreams which continually ignite our passion and illuminate our path. After all, is it the

“journey” that defines our being and enables



our choices. That very same dream which guides our steps, giving us strength to continue?

*“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision.”  
(Theodore Hesburgh)*

If we lack this passion to pursue our destiny, then how are we to continue?  
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## **Birankai Instructor’s Seminar 2007**

*By William Light*

What did Chiba Sensei emphasize this weekend at the annual Birankai instructors meeting, you might ask? Attitude, timing, precision, commitment, and martial intensity. These are all things that we assume we are employing when we practice, but it is still somewhat gratifying that Chiba Sensei emphasizes this. Other things emphasized were what he calls ‘ten-direction-

eyes,’ meaning that you can see everything that is happening, at every time. Chiba Sensei was also very specific in mentioning that this must be cultivated in every condition, in every situation, outside the dojo as well as inside the dojo. Which might bring one to his unifying point, namely, that Aikido is a vehicle to change one’s life not only on the mat, but also

in every aspect outside of it.

Technically speaking, the instructors seminar was a mixed bag of styles and ideas about aikido. Frank Abadaca and Kristin Varja broke down basic techniques in great detail, while Vasquez Sensei has a bit more of a flair for the dramatic, and emphasized more complex versions of things like jujinage and kokyunage.

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**Contributors to this issue:**

- John B. Mazza**
- Will Light**
- John Ferrer**
- Bart Chwalisz**
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**“It is what we do in this life that defines us, not what we say...”**

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Is it not better to spend a lifetime in pursuit of an ideal, then to sit idle lamenting on the past and lost opportunities? Each of us is given an opportunity to reach for the stars, and it is through these opportunities that we reflect our nature; who we are.

Each moment is filled with chance. The chance to be, the chance to see, the chance to do, the chance to pursue, the chance to stir our passions and our soul to new heights. It is up to us to grasp these opportunities, and in doing so; we not only enrich our daily

lives, but bring joy to our journey.

Part of that journey is your commitment to an ideal...becoming proficient in an Art, an Art that you have chosen. This is achieved through training, but not only training. There has to be a certain commitment to yourself, to your fellow students, to your Club.

This path we take through life is not a solitary journey. At times it may seem that way, but there is a connection that must be acknowledged. One needs only to look around and see those connections. Nature is the example, we need only to listen and ponder. One such example Nature offers is the

“Immutable Law of Cause and Effect.” There is no need to explain what it means, it is self explanatory.

The Law of Cause and Effect can be applied to your commitments and expressed in your daily life. It is a connection you’ve chosen to acknowledge... Your support of the Club, either by attendance or leadership is what has sustained Zanshinkan for Thirty-Two (32) years. Without your connection and support we cease to be...Cause and Effect.

Make every effort to be the cause and not the effect. In the words of Winston Churchill, *“I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.”*

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## Reigi

*By John Ferrer*

The Founder of Aikido said, “Aikido begins and ends with courtesy.”

Reigi (ray-ghee) is a form of proper etiquette. Though seemingly simple in definition, reigi holds an essential role in the practice of Aikido. Broken apart, rei can be translated a couple of different ways. In one sense, rei means to bow; a salutation. On a more spiritual note, rei also translates as Holy Spirit, and gi as manifestation. Reigi stems from the concept that if the outer form is correct and proper, the inner impulse will be to shadow that conduct.

Reigi is a matter of presence, the style of graciousness and an awareness of movement. Reigi isn’t just the matter of bowing properly. It is a way to manifest the respect we have for one another as independent people, sharing some of the same causes. This courtesy is coupled with a sense of obligation and a debt of gratitude.

It is neither an exotic or alien idea in the final analysis. The sense of gratitude comes from the understanding that we are fortunate to find a group of people regardless of rank (Sensei, Sempai, Kohai)

to share our interest in Aikido, and that we have the opportunity to share our skills and grow in our knowledge of the activity we enjoy. We employ a system of mentorship based on this idea of mutual obligation, both between the mentor, sempai, and the mentee, kohai, and it is through this concept of "reigi" that keeps it tied together.

When mastered, reigi becomes a means of full self-control and a way of sheltering the spirit, preparing one for any situation or circumstance on an off the mat.

## **Birankai Instructor's Seminar 2007**

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Chiba Sensei, on the other hand, blended basic sword practice into basic technique, revealing how shihonage works in all of its varieties, including a jodan variation that looks not very similar to shihonage as most people envision it. At times it was a bit tight, what with ~80 people on the mat (which really reminded me of training at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo in Shinjuku!) Despite this, the seminar was a great opportunity to train with a variety of people from differing backgrounds.

One last comment that Chiba Sensei had struck me as being incredibly important. He stated that one must have almost a sense of joy every

time one gets on the mat. What I interpret this to mean is one must be hungry to understand how this whole thing works, ready to focus and train, not just go through the motions. The fact that this was stated at an instructors seminar suggests to me that it is a very critical point, as even instructors get tired or discouraged. Yet, on some level, it is still an instructor's

responsibility to start to inspire good traits to manifest themselves in their students. Things such as attitude, timing, precision, commitment, and martial intensity, so that they can improve their daily lives as well as their attitude towards training. One last thought, though, is that even a master sculptor can not make much out of mud, unless, the mud fortifies itself



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## **Discovering a new path**

*By Duong Nguyen*

My training in aikido has taught me more than just techniques. I am beginning to learn a new mindset. I had wrestled in high school; I learned folk-style and then Greco-Roman and Freestyle wrestling. They were physically and mentally stressful. I lifted weights and conditioned all year round. I was working towards the ideal type. The ideal wrestler is muscular and strong willed who knows all his techniques crisply and almost mechanically. In wrestling there was only one path to this one goal; it was a rigid and

unbending style. Though the wrestler training will strengthen the body and mind, it is almost poised for crushing the opponent. I saw wrestling matches where limbs were broken intentionally. It is a sport in which the strong pick on the weak. There was a decorum expected between wrestlers but often ignored. Wrestling is a dog eat dog world. Even on a wrestling team the scores reflect more on individual abilities than on teamwork. Each person must win the match to gain score for the team.

Aikido differs from this. There is harmony. Everyone is learning together as uke and nage; one cannot learn without the other. It is not centered on strength and the techniques are flowing movements. I like how my shoulders are not tense and legs are not charging forward. The style is alert but not rigid; strong but not forceful. I especially enjoy how each technique is tailored to prevent as much injury as possible. Unlike wrestling, aikido is a something I can see myself continue doing into my older years.

## A NU recruit

By Anna-Maria D’Cruz



As a self-confessed “girly-girl” (and proud of it!), martial arts seemed an unlikely hobby. So when my boyfriend suggested I give aikido a try, I gave him the full benefit of my female indignation and delivered a half-hour tirade in the car, all the way to Northwestern. The general gist was that my shocking malcoordination would result in embarrassment and injury and that I was ill qualified to take up anything so “feisty”, because “feisty” I was not. In fact, I had been feeling decidedly unfeisty over the preceding months: I actually felt rather lost (sniff). I had just arrived from England, started a new job in a new field and left my friends and family behind, as well as my great passion, dancing. Being musical and a romantic, dancing – and all the dressing up and old-fashioned leading/following stuff that

goes with it – is very much my cup of tea. Consequently, repeatedly falling over in a bulky white suit and “thumping” people really did not appeal. I voiced all these concerns at great length but they did little to help: there I was at Blomquist. Yes, I could be a chicken, I was told (complete with sound effects), or I could join in – so join in I did.

One of the most tortuous parts of aikido for me (there were many actually) was knowing when to bow and what to say. Everyone else seemed to approach the mat with composure, and a sense of self-assurance. I on the other hand felt like a nodding dog: I didn’t know when to stand up, when to kneel down or what to say, so I found myself bowing whenever everyone else did, but always at least half a beat behind. I

confess to not remembering much of what I did that day (or for multiple practices after that). Two things came to light however. Firstly, I had clearly proved myself to be the Malcolm I always knew I was (an endearing English term for someone who is malcoordinated, affectionately shortened to “Malc” or “Malco”). I did not know what to do with my arms, legs or torso and wondered why, if I was reasonably proficient on a dancefloor, I simply could not carry out the most simple of instructions when I took to the mats. Secondly, I was surprised and thankful for the very warm welcome I got, and for the patience and dedication of the instructors and senior students. In truth, I hadn’t expected them to waste time on such a helpless case but instead they tirelessly explained the techniques to me, even moving my clumsy-self to the right position.

And so I came to two conclusions. One, aikido would become a Saturday afternoon pastime, one that I would never make any real progress with and nor would it take the place of my beloved dancing. Two, I would never wear a gi. This was based on the logic that as long as I didn’t wear a gi, people would know I was a novice right away, and as such the flailing, flapping and undignified contortions I displayed on the

mats would not seem quite so surprising.

Within 2 weeks, both these plans were foiled. I was made the “surprise” gift of a gi and I promptly decided I was rather fond of it. Next I was somehow coerced into attending a practice at Shinjinkai, and (shock horror) I loved it. The car ride there resembled a protracted version of my first trip to Northwestern practice with the usual sighing and indecision, as well as the confidence bashing I liked to give myself before training.

But once there, it is no exaggeration to say that I was rather captivated by the dojo. I was welcomed warmly, coached patiently, and praised resoundingly for even the tiniest crumb of progress. And although I was still fumbling my way through basic techniques, as I watched others, I came to see a certain beauty in the art, a tangible flow of energy. Each movement seemed logical, and not just designed to confuse me or tie me in knots. In fact, aikido seemed to me to share much with dancing, and thus there ought to be some hope for me yet.

Since then, gradual but nonetheless significant changes have taken place. I stopped being painfully self-conscious and started doing what the English call “mucking-in”. This phrase epitomizes the English spirit, where individuals who aren’t necessarily particularly good

at something don their stiffest upper lip and do their jolly best at it anyway. Of course I still feel hopelessly clumsy sometimes, but I remind myself that this is fleeting and comfort myself with the knowledge that I am trying my very hardest.

I started to build my day around aikido practice, quite an undertaking when it means making the journey from the Westside to Evanston in rush-hour. I looked forward to seeing the people I was getting to know through training, and making new friends, not an easy thing when you’re new to the city and you talk funny like I do. I got glum when I was too sick to practice but went along to watch and sweep the mats afterwards. I have surprised myself by becoming louder (much to my boyfriend’s

dismay), and by starting to kiai voluntarily. A few weeks ago, I set my alarm for 6.15am and found myself trudging through the frost to the car to go to morning practice.

As I write this, I keep reminding myself not to make too many bold statements about me and aikido at the risk of sounding hasty and overly enthusiastic (very un-English). However, as Oxford is the place I associate with dancing, Chicago has become the place where I practice aikido: I find myself building ties to this city in ways I would never have imagined a little while ago. Indeed quite a lot has changed in a very short space of time. I currently sport two handsome bilateral yonkyo-induced bruises, irrefutable proof that I am “feisty” after all.

## Accomplishments of Note

On April 21st, Tom Teterycz and Bart Chwalisz took part in the kyu rank test at Shinjinkai Headquarters. Tom, who tested for the rank of 4th kyu, was given probation and will have to demonstrate some of the techniques by mid-May in order to pass. Bart was testing for the rank of 2nd kyu and passed.

Tom began his aikido training in September, 2006. In December, 2006, he tested for the rank of 5th kyu and passed. Eager to learn aikido, Tom trained hard over the next four months to be ready for his 4th kyu test this past April.

Bart began his Aikido training in January 2001 at Northwestern's Zanshinkan Dojo under Glenn Patterson Sensei. He has since trained at Zanshinkan and its Shinjinkai parent dojo in Chicago, in addition to practicing Aikido, Judo, and ballroom dancing in Portland, Oregon, and Oxford, England. He was president of the NU Aikido Club in 2002 and 2003.

# The Lake of Tranquility

By Tom Teterycz



Have you ever tried to draw circles on the water? Yes, it is a strange concept, but if you think about it, all disruption in water—a splash, a skipping stone, a raindrop--eventually becomes a circle. Crazy, but true, all you need is a big water surface. Now, imagine that in Aikido all you are trying to do is to move all motion into the circular trajectory.

If it is simply a concept of dissipating energy and redirecting the force of an attack, then is it that simple?

There is a point for every one of us who practices Aikido, where we come to the conclusion that we understand a technique. That conviction usually lasts up to the point where one of our senseis finally spends a minute of his time to show us what we don't know about a technique; at

that point, we are confused and we question our ability to practice the Art. In fact, it is the beginning of understanding.

To me, Aikido is a process of inserting the motion in our mind and our mind in the motion. In a circle, all motion remains constant and therefore remains in balance. In Aikido we are trying to create our own circle and to remain inside its center, so that all attacks are simple disruptions of our balance. In order to preserve our balance, we need to get our attacker off his balance and impose on him our own definition of balance. The trick is to slow down an attack by accelerating our perception of what is happening around us, that is, to be aware of our situation in any given moment, and to be ready to respond to what is coming our way. Hopefully,

we will have the technique ready when we need it!

This concept is so difficult to imagine, it is almost equal to trying to picture a white dragon drawn on a sheet of white paper. For a master of martial arts, it is not a question of whether the dragon is really there, it's a question of how the dragon moves!

And for us, all we need to understand is the fact that all bodies of water are made from individual drops. Likewise, Aikido assembles from simple techniques; the question is how many techniques do we have to draw upon? It is like with the water, before we start drawing the circles on the water we need to gather drops to create our own lake of tranquility. And then, if anyone will disrupt the calm surface of our lake, we will know how to neutralize the wave of aggression.



# About cross-training

By Bart Chwalisz

There are many martial arts. In fact, almost every country in the world has at least one national art, and some particularly warlike ones have several. For one reason or another, each one of us has chosen Aikido as our martial art of choice. Nevertheless, it is only natural to want to expand one's horizon, and to be curious about what other practitioners are up to. Also, the time may come when one has to move or travel to a place where Aikido is practiced very differently or not at all, and there one may not even have the choice to practice the art in a familiar setting. What then?

Personally, I have indulged my own curiosity a few times, mostly when I was away in a different country or state. I have cross-trained a little bit in other martial arts (Judo, Tai Chi, and various forms of Jiu Jitsu), and also in different styles of Aikido under various instructors. I have had many good experiences and a few bad ones, so I would like to share a couple of general observations and recommendations of mine.

One thing that I have found particularly striking is that quality of instruction and price are often inversely related: the more expensive the dojo, the poorer the martial teaching, in my experience at least. Also, before putting money on the table, I highly recommend observing a class or

participating in one, to see what it's like. I am wary of dojos that don't allow that, and also of ones that require one to commit oneself to several months of dues, nonrefundable and to be paid in advance. You know something is fishy when a dojo acts like a cell phone provider. On the other hand, I have always had very good experiences at dojos where I was treated like a guest, and where I was allowed to practice for free a few times before having to commit. These were often gathering places for people united by their love for the martial art, and their training was so much better for it.

In the end, it's a judgment call that each one has to make: does it feel right? Is the training sincere? One good clue is the behavior of the members toward each other: are they respectful, and do they try to help? These things are not to be taken for granted. Another clue is the state of the dojo: is it clean and tidy, and does it exude an aura of calm? "Dojo" translates as hall of enlightenment, and whenever I'm at the Shinjinkai headquarters, this is what it feels like to me. That said,



however, I have also experienced very good training in improvised facilities such as university gyms (obviously), and the back room of a Buddhist temple (with training on genuine bamboo tatami...).



As you can tell, I feel pretty positively about cross-training. I don't think any single teacher has a monopoly on martial skill. Therefore, much can be learned from others, including practitioners of other arts. However, I think that one warning is appropriate: I believe it is preferable to wait for a year or two before cross-training in other disciplines, in order to build a strong foundation. Else the result may be confusion, rather than an enhanced understanding of one's own art.

Finally, consider this: each individual has to find her way in the martial arts. Each body is unique, and must train differently. Ultimately, the goal in all martial arts is the same – or so they tell me. There are no superior martial arts, only superior martial artists. And hard training, with teachers and peers who are sincere, will be rewarded.

# Sensei's Corner

## Transition

By John B. Mazza



Transition is once again upon us; as the season begins to change and the days growing longer and, finally, warmer, we see the ebb and flow of daily life come alive. Things are changing all around us.

In the next few months we will be completing yet another school session in our 32 year history of bringing Aikido to the Student population. This also signals the transition of Students from freshmen, to sophomores, to juniors, to senior (If such terms are still used these days), to beginning a new experience: advancing, moving off campus, leaving the School, the City and even the State; starting a new adventure in your lives.

It is also a time for Zanshinkan to reflect and renew...electing new leadership: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Web Master. This year we will see most of the present leadership move on; beginning a life outside the University. This is not uncommon. The process is left to those who remain, to take up the gauntlet, if you will, becoming the next generation of leaders building and growing the Club for those that follow. This is what has enabled the Club to continue for these 32 years, you the students who commit their time, energy and hard work to make this Club a success. Not to mention the satisfaction garnered from knowing that your leadership skills are responsible for this continued growth.

I wish to thank the present leadership for all their hard work, and welcome those who dedicate themselves to the challenge.

## Tengu

By John Ferrer

Tengu are Japanese mythical creatures with either the head, claws and wings of a crow and body of a man, or barefooted mountain priest with extremely long noses (called yamabushi tengu). Tengu were masters of martial arts and would teach swordsmanship and strategy to those that deemed worthy. Tengu are magical, mischievous, and sometimes helpful. They appear to people in remote mountains and through dreams.

The most famous tengu story is about Ushiwaka-maru. His father, Yoshitomo, had been killed in war, and the boy was sent to a Buddhist temple, Ushiwaka-maru would sneak out at night and practice swordsmanship in the Shojo Valley. One night he encountered a yamabushi priest who offered to teach him swordsmanship. The Yamabushi preist was Shojobo, king of the tengu, and Ushiwaka- maru became one of Japan's greatest warrior.

Many of the great martial artists thereafter have had tengu teach them the arts of swordsmanship and strategy. Morihei Ueshiba was no exception.

O-Sensei tells the of story how one evening he was suburi training in the garden and an apparition attacked him repeatedly with lightning fast strokes of his sword. At first O-Sensei could do nothing, but eventually he began to parry the strikes. The next two evenings the apparition (tengu) returned, and then vanished forever. Thereafter O-Sensei was invincible with the sword.

O-Sensei also trained at the fabled Shojo Valley on, Mount Kurama, the home of Shojobo, king of the tengu. His students would practice with him for days in the valley living on rice, pickles, miso soup and wild herbs. They trained at all times of the day and night. Some nights, O-Sensei would stike at them with a live blade, missing them by a hairsbreadth. O-Sensei believed strongly in the spiritual world and must have believed that the tengu of the valley were helping teach his students.

I believe that we all have tengu to tame. Tengu are our personal guides of the Way, as we tame them we tame ourselves.