



Welcome Karen Kalleil Sensei!

Karen started Aikido training in June, 1998 with Toyoda Sensei at the Aikido Association of America (AAA). She trained there until July 2002 and before leaving to train at Shinjinkai with Moore Sensei in Chicago. In September 2005, she moved to San Diego to continue her training under TK Chiba Shihan where she earned her Nidan and Fukushidoin in 2008. She is

currently continuing her training at Shinjinkai as well as her instruction at Northwestern University. She teaches Jyo Basics on Fridays at Shinjinkai.

Other than that, She is a dialysis social worker and has a private clinical practice on the side. She is in the process of writing a novel and plans to have that completed by the end of 2010.



Aikido Off the Mats

By Michael DeBaets

Since I started Aikido in the fall, I have tried to apply the mindset and the physical components to my every day life. The most applicable lessons were about grounding, walking, and moving

all together.

Glen Sensei taught us the proper posture to ground ourselves, and our partner pushed on our chest. We worked on staying centered, and channeling the energy from our partner into the ground. This

was one of the more esoteric lessons, but because of that, I could access it more easily than ikkyo, for instance. Whenever I have to stand in line (and am aware enough to remember to do it), I practice grounding, breathing, and staying centered.

Aikido Off the Mats (continued)

I was also taught how to walk. Glen Sensei showed me the proper way to slide my foot across the mat (heel stays down) by lunging forward and then by switching feet. The trick is to go slowly and move your feet through the center of your weight. I have often practiced that when I was putting mats away and I practiced walk-

ing through the halls in the dorm. It is also a fun concept to focus on when I am walking from class to class although I do not use my arms as much in this situation, for appearance's sake.

I have gotten the feedback from many partners that I do not move as a cohesive unit, whether I am

an uke or a nage. Usually my arms trail the movement of my feet, meaning that I am not supporting my spine and staying centered. I have taken this out into the world by working on improving my posture and by striving to keep my life unified and cohesive.

My First Day of Training

by Grace Huang

I guess I started aikido because martial arts seemed interesting. Part of me still regretted that I never listened to mom when she suggested I take up karate as a kid – who'd want to miss out on action and adventure? – and I thought it'd be a good way to stay active and work on my focus. I'd heard that aikido held practices at Blomquist, which was pretty close by, and went with two other friends to try it out.

By the end of the one-hour "trial by fire" in which we all blundered around and attempted to follow along with everyone's movements, all I could really think was: wow. And, wow, that's going to be some training every week. ...Every week? Oh boy.

My friends decided that they weren't going to continue with it, and I wasn't sure. Could I really get through practices from here on

out without feeling as if I'd gotten hit by the equivalent of a truck every time, while embarrassing myself in front of the experienced members with my utter inability to pick up what they were doing? Did I have what it took? I gave up sports and the like years ago; really, anything athletic probably wasn't for me.

I showed up next week anyway, without my friends. You probably could chalk it up to some odd kind of determination, and a sense of 'no way am I quitting after only one try.' Besides, as self-discipline's needed for this kind of thing, I guess I wanted to prove that I could do something like this. And even on the tougher days, the feeling I got when we finished practice for the day and I felt like I accomplished something was so great.

After a short while, I stopped feeling so tired out after every single practice. And though I still

sometimes feel like I can't follow along with the techniques in class well, I can start to see patterns in how we move during certain techniques, and I feel like my movements have gotten a little smoother and less blundering. Seeing members newer than I am reminds me that over this past year, I must have come a ways. Compared to how I was when I started, that's definitely true. I'm really glad that I stuck through with aikido all the way up until now. Really, my friends have no idea what they're missing out on.



My 5th Kyu Test

by Ted Yeh

Testing for 5th kyu was one of the most rewarding experiences in my short aikido career. I tested in April of 2009 after many weeks of intense studying and training. The preparation included not only learning the required techniques, but also remembering the nomenclature, which I found to be far more difficult at first. Through the course of our normal train-

ing, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I knew most of the testing requirements. The tai subbake and bokken work were the easiest to remember because of their relatively simple movements. Most of the techniques were covered frequently in class, even though I had trouble at first with the initial body movements to start the technique. However, with the help of other students, I was able to practice and memorize the names of the various test requirements.

One aspect that helped tremendously in the month before the test was going to train at Shinjinkai. The atmosphere is very different from our classes in Blomquist; it is an authentic dojo feeling rather in stark contrast to the often noisy and distracting floor of the university gymnasium. Furthermore, the people at Shinjinkai have been training for much longer, which means I was more able to take advantage of the skill and experience of other students. It helped me develop confidence in my techniques and fine tune some aspects which might have still been unclear to me.

The day of the test was mildly stressful, as I remember. It consisted of constantly checking the requirement sheet to make sure I remembered the names and could perform both versions of most of the techniques (inside, outside, in front, behind, etc.) The test itself was very intense because it's one technique after another, with almost no time for rest or catching your breath. It was also very helpful because I received feedback from Moore sensei (and many of the other instructors) that helped me continue to improve. I remember being mostly satisfied with my performance, but knowing that there were places to improve. Even though the next test will be harder and is still quite a ways away, I am looking forward to the challenge.

Form, Function, and Aikido

by Moshe Cohen

Historically, there have been two movements in design. The first is to figure out what you want to do, and create an object that does it. The other way is to design something aesthetically pleasing and then figure out what, if anything, you can do with it. These are form follows function and function follows form, respectively. A more recent idea, dating to the middle of the nineteenth century or so, is that form and function are one. I start with this because recently a friend asked me why I picked Aikido instead of one of the other arts martial offered on campus or off. I think the beauty of aikido is the way the form and function are inseparable. We do not start

with a goal of defending against an attack, and neither do we start with a series of movements which appear graceful. The form and function in aikido are the same, and the way we practice in the dojo is (in theory) the same way a person would defend himself against a real attack. I also read somewhere that the goal of aikido is to destroy an attack, not an attacker. This is the perfection of both form and function. If we were to perfect only the function, we would not care what happened to the attacker, and if we were the perfection solely of the form, we would not know how to defend ourselves. The Platonic ideal is that there is one perfect and beautiful form in art. I think this is true in aikido as well. For every

technique, there is a perfect form (as part of the function) which has been handed down from O Sensei through his students to us. This is the form we strive for. In this perfect form, we would truly be able to defeat an attack while preserving the attacker. And if the attacker were to use the perfect form, he would not get scraped up nearly as much as I do. The perfection is both for the uke and nage. Without this perfection of form, we risk damage to one party or the other, or both. This is what drew me to aikido: the ethic of controlled force, not wanton violence, and the idea of the discipline of a form, and striving for the perfection of that form.

Start with Why

by Mert Iseri

I get pretty excited about life. At least, I choose to surround myself with things that get my heart pumping: Design, dancing, painting... Aikido is definitely one of them.

The three aspects of aikido, The intent, energy (Kiai)– The decision, impact (Kime) – The afterthought, awareness (zanshin) are my favorite topics. It was through these three teachers I learned to appreciate what aikido meant to me.

I like the analogy of a painter describing the four stages of learning. First, the student thinks that he is by far the best. The level of

understanding is so low, that the smallest feature is magnified in his eyes. He is a beginner, yet he thinks he is already a master.

Second comes the level of degradation. This is the part where the student realizes his true character in the art, and it usually feels as if he is getting worse. Actually, there is progress. He is a beginner, and he actually is slowly realizing what he is.

After intense training, comes skill. Student has stepped above who he is and embraced the art. He realizes he is good, he has studied the techniques numerous times and he can apply them with power. He has turned into a great

artist, and but there is still another step to go.

The final enlightenment is forgetting that he is good. Good doesn't mean anything anymore, he just is. There is no thought, no preparation, no aftermath. Kiai – Kime – Zanshin are united within one being. He is now a master, and the student realizes that he is a beginner again.

I love this transition. From a beginner master, to a master beginner.

This is the reason I train. It has fueled me in the hardest of times, and it is what takes me to the mat day after day.

The Importance of Keeping a Training Journal

by Alexander Adler

By this time in our lives, most of us have been students for a very long time. And, ever since we learned to write, we've been taking notes on what we learn in every class from social studies to CHEM 212. The logic is simple: notes help us remember what we learned in class from all our different teachers so that we can reflect upon these lessons later on in the week or in life. When starting Aikido, many of us might not think that the same system should apply to this more physical activity; however, nothing could be further from the truth. A training journal is more than just a great way to reinforce your lessons and vocabulary in the short term, it's also a great place to keep track of what you've learned for a given technique (tips, pointers, draw-

ings, etc.) in the long term.

The journal need not be fancy (be it a note pad or a personal blog); remember, you're not doing this for anyone other than yourself. However, the content should be complete enough for you to be able to recall what you've done one day or one month from the day you wrote it. Diagrams and quotes do all the more to evoke thoughts and reactions on what you've learned. Of course, keeping track of the date and the instructor of your class are important especially as you branch out in your training. Finally, it's important to update the training log regularly! The more complete your notes, the better your reflections can be. As time goes on, you may find yourself including references to past articles. You might comment on how you feel

about a technique you practiced today compared to how you felt the first time you experienced it two months ago! When it comes time to test, you can look back on the techniques you will be tested on and refresh yourself on what you may have had trouble with in the past so as to avoid making the same mistake(s) twice. You might even find yourself writing in the journal about events that didn't take place in practice at all. Perhaps something you did today at work reminds you of a lesson you learned in a training session.

It's easy to begin to see how keeping track of your progress can enrich your progress as you train in Aikido. The only way to fully experience what this journal can do for you is to start one for yourself!

