

At the Third International Conference of Aiki Extensions, titled New Directions Along the Aiki Way, about 55 teachers and practitioners of the art came together to share with each other the ways in which they are expanding the circles of their practice off the mat to contribute to the actualization of O'Sensei's greater vision of world peace. The conference was held at the beautiful and spacious Aikido of Tamalpais Dojo in Mill Valley, CA on March 23rd-25th, 2001. Over the course of those three days it was demonstrated beyond a doubt that the circles of love and energy that O'Sensei cultivated are coming to fruition and are being extended into the world at large. Though it is difficult to summarize the depth and power of the presentations, we offer brief descriptions here to provide the gist of the event. The summaries were assembled from individual reports and comprehensive conference write-ups by Vaughn Brandt and David Lukoff.

Judy Warner: Getting Centered and Energized with Music

Saturday morning began with a brief centering piece by Judy Warner of Aiki Works. Judy wove together music, guided meditation, and movements from aikido, tai-chi, and qi gong with a model from her conflict resolution workshops to create an energizing start to the day. She was joined by colleague and fellow aikidoist Ellen Stapenhorst who completed the experience with a song.

George Leonard: Transformation and Options

George Leonard started off the program with a mini-workshop on Leonard Energy Training, summarizing his own work and offering insights about his personal evolution as a writer and teacher along the Aiki way. He discussed the guiding principles of presenting and connecting with audiences, the essence of his work on Integral Transformative Practice, his perspectives on the power of narrative and context, and his view of the role of the body as a teacher. Leonard shared some of his favorite LET exercises and pointed out aikido ways of redefining situations of stress or imminent breakdown that are often characterized by the perceived lack of options. For more of Leonard's work, see www.ITP-life.com.

Patrick Faggianelli: Aikido in Psychotherapy

Patrick Faggianelli presented the results of his doctoral dissertation "A Study Of Psychotherapists Who Are Aikido Practitioners" (see AEN #11 for more details). He asked eight experienced psychotherapists who were also advanced aikido practitioners about the way aikido informed or influenced their practice of psychotherapy. Patrick then explored implications of his result for psychotherapy and the use of aikido and aiki philosophy in training psychotherapists.

Victor LaCerva: Violence Prevention with Young People

Victor LaCerva, a former Emergency Room physician, now leads conferences on violence prevention for young people. His presentations involve experiential learning mixed with a spoken presentation of some very startling facts about violence. Some of the topics he covers include the causes of violence, avoiding victimization, suicide,

firearms safety, and what to do when threatened. After the spoken presentation, he involved the conference participants in some of the interactive exercises that he uses in his workshops. The aikido principles of purification, awareness, blending, trusting, and compassion were beautifully illustrated, and the participants were able to directly experience them in the exercises he used.

THREE PSYCHOTHERAPY SECTION PRESENTATIONS

Steve Schuh: Aiki-focused Counseling: Applications from Aikido to Addiction Therapy

Steve Schuh demonstrated techniques used to enable patients to gain better insight and control over their anger and explored some parallels between aikido and psychotherapy.

Beth Tabakin and David Lukoff: Aikido as a Mind-Body-Spirit Practice of Learned Optimism

Learned Optimism is an explanatory style that is associated with better health, resistance to depression, and higher achievement in life. Learned helplessness is associated with the opposite. Aikido is a mind-body-spirit practice that cultivates learned optimism. Tabakin and Lukoff showed two exercises (Ikkyo and Kotegaeshi) that alternated both responses, and discussed all four experiences. Participants shared other optimistic perspectives that develop from aikido.

Paul Linden: Teaching Stability to Children with Attention Deficit Disorders

As part of a sequence of psychotherapy section presentations, Paul Linden showed the brief body education process he uses in teaching children with attention deficit disorders how to self-monitor and self-regulate. He starts by teaching children to achieve a relaxed, balanced, stable state of posture/breathing/movement. Once they have experienced this, Paul has them role play their typical responses in confusing or overwhelming situations, and they rapidly figure out that what they normally do makes them somatically weak and unstable. Since their newfound stability is actually more comfortable and leads to immediate successes, children enjoy practicing and using their new skills of centering.

Tom Osborn: A High School on Aikido Principles

Tom Osborn and a few others are in the process combining the power of kinesthetics with the power of an intentional community to establish a high school. Osborn has many years of experience working in and with schools, and is now expanding his vision to create an alternative high school based on aiki principles, called Crystal Farm School, near Holyoke, MA. This project is still in the formative and fundraising stages, but it is very promising. If you would like to learn more, or offer your support to the project, please contact Tom via e-mail at: tdosborn@mediaone.net.

Wendy Palmer: Conscious Embodiment

Wendy Palmer offered a mini-workshop on Conscious Embodiment. She showed some centering techniques known as Basic Practice, which trains the body to become our stable reference point. This allows us to contact the part of ourselves that is wise, kind and capable of powerful, embodied action. She also shared how she conducts training with non aikidoists, and how valuable bokken work is for getting people's attention. She presented her work with humor, candor, and grace, emphasizing the healing power of humor to add ventilation to self processes. For more info on Palmer Sensei's work, please see www.consciousembodiment.com.

Kaz Tanahashi: The Art of Breakthrough

Kaz Tanahashi, a former student of O'Sensei in Iwama in the post-war era, discussed with participants the art and nature of breakthrough, and the need for it in today's world. Tanahashi Sensei is a renowned translator, publisher, writer, and calligrapher. His work focuses on the nature of breakthrough as an enlightenment experience, emphasizing the need for a breakthrough in social consciousness, particularly with regard to the global environmental awareness. He believes that now more than ever, human beings need a breakthrough to change the direction of the global consciousness towards a more ecological understanding to regain stability and sustainability on the Earth. Though he no longer practices on the mat, he discussed the power of aikido, as a practice and as metaphor, for creating positive changes in the world. Some of the benefits that he sees to extending aiki principles include the dissolution of categories, a discovery of new options, as a way to teach the body with physical metaphors, and as a way for human beings to develop an awareness of the relationship to others in a compassionate way. For more info on his work, please see: <http://www.brushmind.com/>

Fred Donaldson: Playing with Aikido

Fred Donaldson has worked with a variety of wild animals and kids to develop a stunning understanding of the power of play. One aspect of “original play” is reconnecting to our origins by disengaging from the “contest” arena – whether in work, athletics or in sickness – and “playing” through life and relationships. Fred says that learning, or re-learning, to play is an effective way of releasing trauma, and increases our sense of belonging and our ability to deal with the changes and surprises of life. His presentation was a highlight for many participants not only because of his genuine sincerity and spirited tone, but also because of the youthful freedom and frolicking innocence of his guided exercise on play. After telling some rather amazing stories of his own breakthroughs connecting with children who have special needs and with dangerous wild animals, the participants were encouraged to simply play from the heart. Fred led us back to the original sense of intentionless play and had the participants crawling and rolling around together on mat, laughing and releasing all of the usual intentions and expectations of adult life. For more information see: www.originalplay.com.

Richard Heckler: The Marine Warrior Project

Richard Heckler presented the work he is doing to develop training programs for the U.S. Military that emphasize character values, ethical and moral decision making, and provide the modern soldier with nonviolent intervention options on peacekeeping missions. Richard has worked with the U.S. Special Forces and the Marine Corps for the last fifteen years, and his work has now culminated in a program that will include a dojo on every Marine base in the world, and will affect 275,000 marines with 40,000 receiving it in their training each year. This monumental accomplishment to provide aikido training to the military is an ongoing activity and has received a lot of support from the Pentagon.

Stan Pranin: The Spiritual Odyssey of Morihei Ueshiba

Another highlight was the conference dinner on Saturday, which was followed up by a presentation by Stan Pranin on "The Spiritual Odyssey of Morihei Ueshiba." During this highly charged presentation and dialogue, the life and history of the founder and the art were discussed in detail, with many little-known facts coming to light. Stan Pranin is the editor of Aikido Journal and has been compiling a biography of O'Sensei for over 30 years.

Richard Moon and Chris Thorsen: The Training of National and International Leaders and Mediators

Richard Moon and Chris Thorsen offered a presentation on the work they have done to develop themselves as advisors to leaders in domestic businesses and in international peacekeeping efforts. They have worked in corporations to "train the trainers," by providing new models of communication and organization. They have also worked to train international peacekeeping mediators during the crisis in Bosnia. "Listening implies a change in who we are and what we are ... Listening, with an open heart, generates incredible power." Moon Sensei said. "Every time somebody goes off (violently or emotionally), it is because somebody doesn't feel seen and heard." By teaching mediators and organizational leaders how to operate with the power of openness and listening, the presenters are helping to restructure systems so that they will operate more harmoniously and experience less conflict both internally and externally. For more information on their work see www.listeninginstitute.com, and www.quantumedge.org.

Peter Schettgen & Karl Grunick: Aikido in the MBA Program at the University of Augsburg

Peter Schettgen first reported on the MBA course of study at the University of Augsburg where aikido has been involved as a two-day seminar every year since 1999. He emphasized that one needs a frame of reference to connect aikido with management education (in this case, conflict management). Peter and Karl then gave an overview of a systematic Aiki curriculum of conflict management they use during their MBA training. Karl demonstrated one step of the curriculum ("reframing a conflict situation") by showing some ki exercises (most notably the "foot exercise") that participants found fascinating and amusing. Then they briefly described Aikicom (= Aiki communication) as a model of transferring Aiki principles to the handling of verbal disputes, transfer tools

and main empirical transfer results. Finally, Karl and Peter made some critical observations about extending aikido to management education programs. They pointed out in particular that the participants in management education programs (e.g., MBA students) are highly rational people who are primarily interested not in aikido but in the solution of their actual job problems, and that therefore, one has to demonstrate to them how aikido contributes to problem solving.

Bob Frager: Aikido at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology

Since 1975 when Bob Frager founded the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Menlo Park, aikido has been a required part of the training in the psychology program. Bob still teaches aikido there and often takes one quote each week from O'Sensei to be explored on the mat and in students' journals. It was interesting to hear from Bob how O'Sensei used to "throw him without throwing" some 35 years ago. He showed how opening the heart and not just the belly leads to full blending rather than the usual practice of half-blends followed by a throw. He then demonstrated how he relates techniques to therapy. For example, *ushiro* is a metaphor for the unconscious material – that which is out of sight/behind us. We need to get centered and then bring it in front of us in order to deal with it.

All in All

During the conference, the Aiki Extensions Clusters also met for networking and smaller group processing of specialized topics. At the meeting of the psychotherapy section the decision was made to join the Body Work and Psychotherapy sections into a new Healing Arts section. The suggestion came from Paul Linden, while the name of the new section came from Steve Schuh.

As the conference came to a close, the participants shared their experiences and held a final business meeting to discuss the future directions of Aiki Extensions. Proposals were made for more extended workshops on specific techniques. It was decided to assess membership dues with a sliding scale starting at \$50 a year as the minimum amount.

Overall, the conference proved to be an incredible experience that was motivating and empowering for all. For many people who are doing extension work, there is sometimes a feeling of alienation because the Aiki principles are not yet commonly known or accepted by the mainstream cultures. But by coming together to regroup and share, a powerful sense of clarity and purpose was generated to continue expanding the circles of peacemaking into the world.

As Aiki Extensions continues to grow and evolve, please feel free to get involved either as an observer or an affiliate. All are welcome to access our communications through the web site, to subscribe to our listserv, and to apply to participate in our conferences. For more information on how to do so, please see: www.aiki-extensions.org.

AIKI EXTENSIONS NEWSLETTER

Editor: Marko Zivkovic

Note on Future Issues

This is YOUR newsletter. Make it yours even more by submitting

- (1) information about projects you are doing or would like to be doing;
- (2) questions that you would like to pose to the network;
- (3) titles and reference information on recent publications by all *Aiki Extensions* affiliates;
- (4) notes to the Editor; or
- (5) ideas of what you would like to see in future newsletters.

Send submissions and comments to:

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You can be an ***affiliate*** if you are already engaged in work extending aikido principles beyond conventional dojo practice and let yourself be listed in the *AE Directory*. This entitles you to a copy of the *Directory* and morally gratis copies of the *Newsletter*. To do that, complete the affiliates questionnaire listed in the web site www.aiki-extensions.org and send it to:

Marko Zivkovic, directory editor, zivk@midway.uchicago.edu

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