



## Why do we attend far away weekend seminars?

By Alex Natelli

Driving up to Tauranga with Richard Halson Sensei and two fellow Wellington aikidoka, my thoughts centred on the upcoming Mid-Winter Aikido seminar and the eternal question, "Are we there, yet?"

It took several hours to complete our journey. Our conversations ranged from the weather, to individual travels, and our families. Having attended several seminars by Nobuo Takase Shihan (7th dan) and Toshiharu Sawada Shihan (7th dan), I knew that they would each captivate us with their mastery and teaching. Suffice to say that both Takase Shihan and Sawada Shihan rose to the occasion.

Though I was tempted to describe the accommodation, the gymnasium and some of the techniques that we practiced, I have come to realise that there is a more important question to answer. That is, "Why do we attend far away weekend seminars?"

Driving home from the seminar, along with the rain, sleet and wind, I realised that there are at least three answers to that question. The first is the most obvious. When else do we get the opportunity to learn from two fantastic masters of Aikido? At risk of overdoing it, both Shihan are excellent practitioners and teachers and definitely worth the travel time and cost of admission.



Toshiharu Sawada Shihan  
Emphasising precise irimi & posture with uke



Sawada Shihan's open handed technique and Aikido weaponry is simply fascinating to watch

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The importance of correct irimi followed by controlling uke

The second reason relates to the quality of training. No matter how big your home dojo, nothing can compare with the diversity of training partners available at one of these national seminars.

We had people from Australia, New Caledonia and all over New Zealand. They varied in size, shape and skill levels, but everyone was keen to train.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important in the long-term, is the opportunity to catch-up with old friends and the occasion to make a few new ones.

This time around, I was pleasantly surprised to see the Kuketsu-san (Nagoya, Japan) and Roland (Australia) had managed to secure some leave from their jobs to join us. It was a lot of fun to train with these guys and the many others who attended.

The Tauranga aikido weekend of June 2008 was well worth the trip. And, when you think about it, it's the friendships that will last long after we forget the bumps and bruises.

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