



SUMMER SCHOOL SEASON

By Simon Puffett

Summertime is a gloriously celebrated season here in the UK. Possibly due to but not necessarily literally, for the sole opportunity to run recklessly through the glittering high streets of London's main shopping district. Searching for those few must have purchases that will transform all from their attire they have donned throughout the past eleven dreary months of the year... scarves, winter coats and warm fleecy under wear. You could also be forgiven for not procuring the obligatory weekly bottle of tanning lotion, so liberally seen on those who daringly laugh in the face of the frequent cold snaps and the horizontal heavenly perspiration. Many welcome the prospect of surgically removing from their person, that quintessential of all fashion accessories for everyone living in the UK...the trusty umbrella. OK, ok, I know, a slight embellishment on my part.

I for one celebrate the coming of the golden rays for more than shopping or basking in those tantalising two weeks of brightness. Or even for the simple fact that everyone is certainly in need of a deserved respite from what appears to be winter's constant flogging...I'm in party mode because this is the start of the summer school season and with so many Aikido organisations within the UK, you can easily stack up plate full's of interesting tid-bits from the smorgasbord of aikido technique on display.

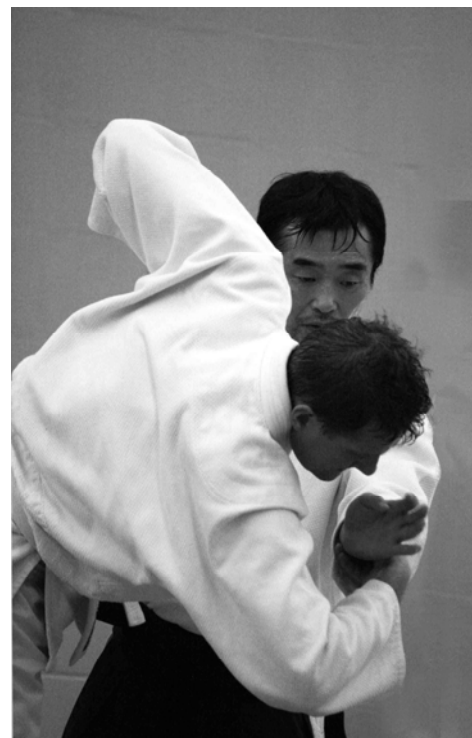
One summer school this year was situated in the Midlands, some two and half hours travel by motorcycle. Shihan Yukimitsu Kobayashi 7th Dan from the World Aikikai Foundation was the guest of honour at the week-long United Kingdom Aikikai Summer School for 2009. With this in mind I hopped upon my steely steed and sped off into the refreshing early morning drizzle. Luckily having made good time and only stopping once ever so quickly for nourishment (a chocolate bar and a caffeine fix), I had arrived at the Dojo. Quick as a flash I gingerly hopped off the oversized metallic moped of near constant vibration and was left wondering whether I had actually bought the model with the shock absorbers and comfortable leather seat. Ever so slowly I began to regain the feeling in my legs and with my eagerness still intact, I took a couple of semi co-ordinated bounds like that of a seasoned hurdler to successfully negotiate the single flight of stairs to reception. Circulation - it's so over-rated! On entering reception I was met by the jovial team lead by Sue Hayward who warmly welcomed everyone to the UKA Summer School and directed us to the changing rooms and Dojo. Finally, I was geared up and dressed to impress, moving like a person twice my age.

My decision to attend the UKA Gasshuku was due to my friendship with Sensei Peter Brown 5th Dan from the Kyu Shin Kan Leicestershire branch of the UKA. Peter Sensei began practicing Aikido at the age of nine under the guidance and tuition of our own Alan Wade Sensei from Gisborne. That's obviously prior to Alan Sensei stowing away...Oops I mean emigrating to the sunnier shores of NZ in 1975. Unfortunately my attendance at the summer school could only last as long as the weekend was long but in those two days I had a lot of fun meeting many, observing all and adjusting to suit the marvellous technique that was being demonstrated by Kobayashi Shihan and the other senior instructors of the UKA. Kobayashi Shihan demonstrated very clear and precise technique, constantly inspiring all levels with his individual movements and interpretations of aikido.

In my opinion, the most enjoyable aspect of attending a course is not only the opportunity to meet the many passionate, like-minded, fanatical Aikido enthusiasts but also to take full advantage to look and learn, to pick and choose or be it to steal and modify to suit one's self, the techniques that are being demonstrated.

Amusingly enough I am beginning to think that Aikido is a little like cooking, not that I can cook very well either but once you have the basics well and truly under your belt, you have the choice of either adhering strictly to the recipe book or you could start to experiment and create purely from feeling.

Well enjoy your Aikido as I'm off to the next summer school :0)



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