



THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL AIKIDO FEDERATION CONGRESS IN TANABE: 6TH – 12TH OCTOBER 2008 TANABE: A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY – By Peter Gillard



The Founder's grave in Tanabe

Tanabe, the birthplace of O-Sensei, is located in the southwest of the Kii Peninsula in southern Wakayama Prefecture of Honshu. It was also the birth place of a legendary warrior monk Musashibo Benkei, whose statue greets you as you emerge from the train station. The town is set between ocean, rivers and mountains, with warm, friendly people wherever you go, and with wonderful fresh fish. We ate fish every day the whole time we were there!

A couple of hours' drive into the mountains takes you to the three Holy Shrines of Kumano, which are amongst the oldest in Japan. These are believed to be the sacred grounds where the gods reside. O-Sensei would visit these holy grounds to train his spirit, and it was the teachings of Kumano that O-Sensei fervently believed in since his childhood: that heaven, earth and human beings should live in harmony; and this embodies the path of Aikido.

Of course, Tanabe is also the place where O-Sensei and the second Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba are buried. And on the first day a ceremony was held at the site. The Kozan-ji temple, set on a hill overlooking the town, is a delightfully peaceful place. A monk from this shrine, Master Sogaba, used to study with O-Sensei after the war. So all these shrines played an important part in O-Sensei's Aikido.

Tanabe was chosen this year for the venue of the I.A.F. Congress since 2009 will mark the 40th anniversary of O-Sensei's passing. Alongside the actual Congress, which was conducted each morning, classes were held in a large Dojo, training taking place in the morning and afternoon. It was a great opportunity

to see and practise with Doshu and no fewer than 14 Shihan. Among the latter were Tada Sensei, 9 Dan, and Tamura Sensei, Yamada Sensei, Asai Sensei, Ioyama Sensei and Sugano Sensei all 8 Dan. The Doshu's class had over 1,000 students according to one count!

An important item of the week was the Demonstration, which was held in the sacred grounds of the Kumano Hongo Taisha, with representatives of 26 countries taking part. Tada Sensei and the Doshu represented the Hombu Dojo; and Matthew Holland Sensei and David Yates Sensei represented the Scottish Aikido Federation and the British Aikido Federation. The atmosphere was very moving, since the demonstration was happening in a place to which O-Sensei went all those years ago, at the beginning of his life-long study of the way of Aiki, which he passed down to us in Aikido.

O-Sensei reached the pinnacle of his art both from a physical and a spiritual point of view, in him both were joined. And it is this spirit of Aikido and it's principles that we must protect and for which we must strive. Aikido should not be defined narrowly simply by technique. In the words of Tada Shihan "O-Sensei's Aikido should be a leader not a follower". It is meant to help bring order and harmony to our lives and to the lives of others, together with the whole of nature! Spending time in this area where the roots of Aikido were planted, at the shrines which meant so much to the Founder, brings into focus the spiritual side of O-Sensei, and the hope that one day it might just be possible to understand his Aikido. We must continue to strive to keep to his path and try to make O-Sensei's Aikido part of us!



Dave Yates, Peter Gillard, Peter Goldsbury and Matthew Holland at the Congress.

A FEW PERSONAL REFLECTIONS – BY PETER GOLDSBURY

I will add to Peter Gillard's account of the I.A.F Congress in Tanabe a few personal reflections, mainly as the person who was ultimately responsible for all the organization.

I was pleasantly surprised that the Congress was so successful. Some 1,500 Japanese and foreign visitors converged on the city for the events, and municipal facilities, such as accommodation and transportation, were severely stretched. For several days, people wandering around Tanabe in keikogi and hakama, laden with wooden weapons, were a regular sight and shopkeepers and small restaurant proprietors were occasionally overwhelmed by two dozen non-Japanese speakers suddenly appearing and expecting to eat traditional Japanese food. Generally, everybody coped very well.

Actually, I had severe misgivings. On an earlier visit to Tanabe, the city officials who were planning the event expected around 500 participants, half from overseas and half from Japan. Then, a few months beforehand, when it was discovered that over 700 people had already signed up to come from overseas, the city officials became very worried. On the one hand, the Congress would be a major event, putting Tanabe firmly on the map – which is exactly what they wanted. On the other hand, where was everybody to be accommodated? In addition, the maximum number of tatami in the largest dojo / sports hall in Tanabe was 600. How would 1,500 participants be able to practise?

I was not the only one to have misgivings. When the idea of holding the Congress in Tanabe was first mooted, virtually every member of the I.A.F. Directing Committee was opposed. The two previous Congresses had been held in Tokyo – very successfully – and the idea of holding a Congress and training seminar at the same location, within easy reach of the Aikikai Hombu Dojo, sent a powerful message that the I.A.F. was dedicated to serious training, and not merely to sitting in a room discussing aikido 'politics'. A Congress in Tanabe could not keep to this model.

On the other hand, I discovered from discussions with Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba that the three cities where O Sensei had resided for significant parts of his life: Tanabe, Shirataki and Iwama, had forged a close relationship with the Ueshiba family and with each other, and that the initiative for holding the Congress in Tanabe had come from the mayor of the city, who pledged his support. As a result, Tanabe became the chosen location, with the general theme of '*A Return to the Roots of Aikido*'. In addition to the Congress and aikido training course, optional excursions were laid on to places of interest, such as Koya-san, the Buddhist temple founded by Kukai, and the Nachi Falls. (B.A.F. members may have seen the famous pictures of O-Sensei on a pilgrimage, standing in front of the falls, and of Ueshiba father and son performing *misogi* under the waterfall.)

I had visited Tanabe before and the city was quite hard to reach by public transport, so I decided to drive from Hiroshima. My car has a GPS navigation system and one way of finding a route was to input the telephone number of the hotel where I was staying. This I did and the pleasant Japanese female voice told me that I would arrive precisely six hours and 12 minutes later, at 14.16. (Actually, I arrived somewhat earlier, probably because I did not keep to Japan's extraordinarily low speed limits.) Almost all of the Congress delegates, shihans, and many of the overseas visitors were accommodated in the same resort hotel, a vast property overlooking the sea and equipped with swimming pool, public bath, and fitness center (right next to which was a well-stocked – and well patronized – Haagen Daz ice cream vending machine!), but no Internet access. The problem was that the hotel was around three miles away from the Congress hall and nine miles away from the dojo, right on the other side of the city. To meet this problem the City had laid on a free bus service, connecting all the hotels with Congress hall and dojo. The organization was actually superb. The Aikikai Hombu had put together a posse of staff and volunteers, headed by Hayato Osawa Shihan, who were on hand at Osaka Kansai Airport, Tanabe Station, all the hotels, the Congress hall and the dojo, so the only thing that the visitor needed was the Congress / Training Course ID card.

One of the highlights of the Congress was the Aikido Demonstration. This was held at the Kumano Hongu Shrine, deep in the mountains to the north of Tanabe. Some 20 buses made the 30-mile journey and parked on a riverbank. From there visitors made their way to the old Shinto shrine at Oyuno-hara, the entrance path flanked by a huge torii or shrine gate. The demonstration was planned as an offering to the shrine deities and to O-Sensei and continued into the evening. After the dedicatory ceremony, the demonstration began, on a tatami stage, which, as it got dark, was illuminated with burning torches. After the demonstration, visitors could drink traditional sake and eat hot snacks provided by the Kumano Dojo. The event was hugely successful – one of the highlights of the Congress.

For me the week passed all too quickly. The Congress was successful and I had the honour to be re-elected I.A.F. Chairman. Despite all the anxieties, I was pleased that so many had attended from overseas – and I was especially pleased to meet Peter Gillard, David Yates and Matthew Holland. For the 11th Congress, in 2012, we shall return to Tokyo and resume the practice of a Congress and training course at the same location, with easy access to the Hombu Dojo. Nevertheless, the Tanabe Congress will go down as an event to be remembered.

RYUSHINKAN NEW YEAR COURSE 2009 WITH OHTA SENSEI



Kanetsuka Sensei explaining a principle of physics applied to aikido



Group photo with Ohta Sensei

BUAF WEEKEND COURSE IN OXFORD, 15 FEBRUARY 2009

Kanetsuka Sensei started as usual by leading the class through basic *tai-sabaki*: *torifune*, *furitama*, *irimi*, *tenkan*, kneeling, standing. How we stand and sit, and how we move our bodies is much more important to him than technique, and everything should be a natural movement with the whole body. He also showed how the feet should be used: they should be soft, and most of the contact with the floor is made through the balls of the feet, with little weight being carried on the heels. During the class, he also talked about the use of the hands in aikido: so much of the movement of the arms in *shihonage* and *kokyū-ho* is related to the *gassho* ("prayer") position of the hands, with the hands coordinated on the centre line, and the arms and shoulders totally relaxed. Sensei often describes his body movement as having the feeling of "hanging": he demonstrated this by climbing up the wall bars in the dojo and asking his uke to hold his wrist and pull down, while sitting on the *tatami*, and then controlling his partner without effort.

Kanetsuka Sensei talked about an experience when he was practising in Gozo Shioda Sensei's dojo in 1962 and there was a visit by Senator Robert Kennedy. Shioda asked Kennedy's bodyguards to try to immobilise him, but with a tiny movement threw them to the ground. Sensei said that, ever since then, he had been trying to work out how to do this himself! We practised this kind of exercise in the class: two or more partners hold the wrists, and tori has to control them all at once without struggling. This works through keeping that "hanging" feeling in the arms and shoulders, and using correct *te-sabaki*, or hand movement, to make connection through the partner's grip. He also emphasised the need for "three-dimensional" movement,

using the freedom of movement we naturally have in our bodies – not just up and down, side to side or pushing and pulling, but making spherical movements.

At the end of Kanetsuka Sensei's class he presented Ken Marsden and Peter Megann with their 6 Dan certificates, which had been awarded at the *kagami-biraki* ceremony in Hombu Dojo at the start of January.

Before the grading examination, Don Morgan taught a very clear and simple class with basic techniques, starting with *shomenuchi ikkyo* and *iriminage*. He stressed that in *shomenuchi ikkyo omote*, *tori* should initiate the attack with a strike to *uke's* face, and gave an interesting explanation of this: if you are faced by multiple attackers all around you, you can take the initiative by dealing with one of them with this kind of pre-emptive tactic, and then make your escape.

Ken Marsden finished by patiently correcting a few errors which people had made during the grading: one particular instance was that many candidates seemed to be confused between *omote* and *ura* in *yokomenuchi shihonage*.

APM (Southampton Shiseikan)

AMAZON AND THE B.A.B.

The B.A.B. has added an Amazon Affiliate program to the B.A.B. Website, which means that they can gain revenue from any Amazon purchase made by clicking through the Amazon Advert. The help of B.A.F. members would be appreciated to support the B.A.B. by going to the website at <http://www.bab.org.uk> before buying anything from Amazon.

Using the Amazon links on the B.A.B. site will assist in keeping down the cost of running the B.A.B. Website.



Peter Megann (above) and Ken Marsden (below) receive 6 Dan certificates from Kanetsuka Sensei.



AN INSPIRING STORY

At the beginning of February I received out of the blue the following e-mail from Alan Haden, whom I have never met.

Peter Megann

Dear B.A.F.,

Many years ago I remember reading a brilliant article about Kanetsuka Sensei and how he overcame cancer. I'm curious to know where this article can be found, as I'd love to read it again it, since it is most inspirational. Is it still available and if so where can I find it?

The article he refers to is one which I was asked to contribute in 1996 to a martial arts magazine, which has since ceased to be published. On reading the copy of the article which I still have it occurred to me that few people in the B.A.F. have ever seen it. It contains some very interesting details about Kanetsuka Sensei's background, and it is worth printing it in our Newsletter.

Like so many Japanese children, Minoru Kanetsuka's first taste of traditional martial arts was with judo. In 1968 he took up aikido at Takushoku University after being thrown half way across the dojo by a slightly built female student! The university club was taught by Masatake Fujita, who had studied for a number of years with the Founder of aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, and who now as 8 Dan is a senior figure at the Aikikai Headquarters in Tokyo.

Lunchtime sessions at the university were not enough for the youthful Kanetsuka and he was soon training most evenings at a neighbouring dojo under the formidable Gozo Shioda (founder of the Yoshinkai). At that time he had no perception of aikido 'styles'. Sometimes he went to the Hombu (Headquarters) Dojo of the Aikikai Foundation, where amongst other celebrated teachers Koichi Tohei (founder of the Ki Society) could be found teaching.

The influence of Shioda Sensei's practical approach can still be discerned in Kanetsuka Sensei's aikido today. Indeed, this early training in practical self-defence was to prove useful on a number of occasions. For example, while working during his student days as a security officer in a mental hospital, he was suddenly attacked by a demented patient. He first fended off the attack with punches and kicks, but to no avail; and it was only after he applied yokomen-uchi shiho-nage that he put his attacker out of action and managed to escape serious injury himself.

After graduating in 1964 Minoru Kanetsuka joined a party of young Japanese martial arts enthusiasts bound for India, as part of a programme of introducing Japanese martial arts around the world. But when problems beset the group they decided to go their separate ways. Minoru Kanetsuka eventually arrived in Nepal and thanks to his connections with the King's brother-in-law he secured nearly seven years of happy work teaching aikido to the royal bodyguard. He also opened a



Kanetsuka Sensei with Chiba Sensei around 1972.

Japanese restaurant in Katmandu, went trekking in the Himalayas and flew over Mount Everest!

Minoru Kanetsuka left Nepal in 1971 and travelled to Calcutta, where for a short time he taught self-defence at a police training school. Then, after a short spell in Italy with Tada Sensei, he arrived in London and promptly enrolled into the dojo of Kazuo Chiba. Chiba Sensei had been sent to Britain by the Aikido Foundation (a body formed in 1948 for the purpose of spreading the teaching of the Founder of aikido throughout the world) and he created the Aikikai of Great Britain in 1968. (This was later renamed the British Aikido Federation.)

Kanetsuka Sensei had studied under a hard sensei in Japan – Shioda Sensei; now he was to train for 4 years under an equally exacting sensei in London. It was a period when, besides pure aikido, much time was spent studying the systems of aikiken and aiki-jo developed by Saito Sensei. Kanetsuka Sensei was encouraged by Chiba Sensei to open his Ryushinkan dojo in London (ryushinkan means 'flowing mind'), and as Chiba Sensei's assistant he began taking courses throughout the UK and on the continent. When Chiba Sensei's father-in-law, the sixty years old Sekiya Sensei came to Britain for 12 months, he acquainted

Kanetsuka Sensei with the traditional sword school known as Kashima Shin Ryu. At that time Sekiya Sensei was studying under Yamaguchi Sensei, whose fluid, effortless aikido had been markedly influenced by this kind of swordwork. At that time Kanetsuka Sensei was physically very strong and his way of practice pretty vigorous. One day Sekiya Sensei, who was of quite frail build, remarked: "No, no, Kanetsuka San. Some day when you become my age it will be impossible for you to practise like this". Through the Kashima swordwork which he studied during this time with Sekiya Sensei Kanetsuka Sensei discovered the importance of basing his aikido movements on tanden and the fundamental relationship of



A dynamic Kanetsuka Sensei in the late seventies.

hands, arms and centre in natural circular or spiral movements, based on the principle of non-resistance. During this period, too, he discovered the importance of atari: making (or 'catching' as the Japanese word implies) real contact with one's partner's centre at the very first moment of contact.

And so were sown the seeds of the development of Kanetsuka Sensei's aikido along a path that was to lead to fruition only after a battle of life and death played out in the latter part of 1986. From around May of that year he had been suffering from headaches which became steadily more severe. Doctors ascribed a variety of causes but didn't seem to take the problem too seriously. So he continued his exacting programme of daily teaching in London and Oxford and weekend courses throughout Britain and abroad.

At the B.A.F. Summer School in Chester that year Kanetsuka Sensei collapsed and was rushed to hospital; but puzzlingly no precise cause was diagnosed. His frequent headaches became one unceasing headache and fainting spells were now becoming more frequent. Finally, when he was admitted to hospital in Oxford in September, a massive cancer was identified in the laryngo-pharyngeal region (the upper nose behind the throat). It's surprising that it could have escaped detection for so long.

The picture looked bleak. The cancer was too close to vital arteries to permit surgery. Radiotherapy was carried out but the doctors thought it unlikely that he would survive more than three or four months at the most.

Yet survive he did; even though he had been reduced to little more than a skeleton, unable to get out of bed without assistance. But at this low point he never stopped thinking of aikido. His dreams, he said, were full of aikido. Visitors to the hospital would be listening to this feeble sensei, as he explored some point of technique that he had been pondering over...then find themselves sprawled on the floor, amazed at the power he could still summon up.

It was then that Kanetsuka Sensei took charge of his own destiny. First he refused the pain-killing morphine which was being administered routinely to him, since he realised that it was interfering with his digestive processes. Instinct told him that he must keep these working properly at all cost, even though this meant a great deal of pain. Once the course of orthodox treatment (radiotherapy and chemotherapy) was completed and he was allowed home, he put himself onto a rigid 100% vegetarian diet prescribed by a practitioner of Japanese tradition medicine.

Now, with his mind set on combating the cancer, the hard training under Chiba Sensei – who used to describe the dojo as a battlefield where the question



Kanetsuka Sensei in Kashima stance.

of life and death had to be confronted – brought its rewards. As soon as he was able to walk again Kanetsuka resumed aikido practice. He was now so thin that his keikogi swamped him and he resorted to wearing a track-suit in the dojo. With his bald head (a result of the chemotherapy) he looked like a Buddhist monk. But despite an emaciated appearance he had developed a wonderful source of inner strength. Unable to make use of physical power he developed the kind of effortless aikido which Sekiya Sensei had demonstrated years before, and began studying Kashima swordwork with renewed diligence, applying the logic of its natural swinging movements to his aikido.

Inevitably, the experience of his illness has had a profound effect on Kanetsuka Sensei's aikido. People who knew him years ago and associated him with a vigorous,

physical aikido, would hardly recognise him today. It's not that his aikido is not powerful – far from it; but the power comes from sheer expertise: timing and finely adjusted tai-sabaki. Perhaps most of all from a sensitive relationship with uke, which commences at the very first moment of contact. And good contact is something he emphasizes again and again in his teaching. Thanks to this continuous contact with his uke's centre Kanetsuka Sensei controls his partner until the final moment of the technique (and here there is a distinct similarity with the aikido of Yamaguchi Sensei, whom he greatly admired).

Another characteristic of Kanetsuka Sensei is his burning desire to communicate. He hides nothing. If he feels that his hakama is obscuring his leg movements he will take it off. He is not interested in showing off complicated techniques; but whether he is teaching at his Ryhushinkan Dojo in London or at a national course he will return again and again to the principles of basic aikido movement. Certainly there is never a lesson which does not leave a feeling of having glimpsed something special and important, albeit elusive. The dojo is his laboratory, Kanetsuka Sensei says, and his students are sharing in his discoveries.

For his sensitive aikido Sensei emphasizes the need to develop a flexible body; and he has acquired through hard work and determination over many years a flexibility that is the envy of many students much younger than he. The core of his body preparation is a Japanese system of stretching exercises known as Makko-ho. These are essentially few in number but relate directly to aikido movement.

The outstanding qualities of Kanetsuka Sensei as a teacher and as a personality are appreciated far and wide. Proof of this is the fact that students from Holland, France and Poland, where he has in particular a devoted following, travel considerable distances to attend weekend courses which he conducts in Britain.



Fujita Sensei and Kanetsuka Sensei at the celebration of Kanetsuka Sensei's 60th birthday at Summer School 2000.

A MASTERPIECE RESTORED



One evening in 1985 an impressive figure entered the Oxford Dojo. Of ample girth with a shaved head, dressed in the robes of a Zen Buddhist monk, he was introduced by Kanetsuka Sensei as the Reverend Suzuki Sochu Roshi, abbot of the famous Japanese Zen monastery of Ryutakuji. Numerous well-known public figures who studied Zen meditation under him including Yasuhiro Nakasone, Prime Minister of Japan from 1982 to 1987. So, what had brought the abbot to Oxford? The Reverend Suzuki had founded the London Zen Society in the '60s and visited London every year. Kanetsuka Sensei had met him at the London Zendo and had invited him to visit Oxford, where the Japanese crown prince was studying at that time (Kanetsuka Sensei was then living in Oxford). During his visit the Reverend Suzuki came to the dojo of the Oxford Aikikai to give a talk on Zen in relation to martial arts.

After his talk, fortunately translated for us by Kanetsuka Sensei, the Reverend Suzuki unpacked a small bag, and in front of the students, sitting respectfully in seiza, spread out a number of newspapers on the tatami. Then he rolled out a length of paper and placed besides it some paintbrushes and the wherewithal to prepare some black ink. In a matter of seconds he deftly painted in broad powerful strokes the three characters 合 (AI) 氣 (KI) 道 (DO). This was Zen calligraphy executed before our very eyes! The reverend Suzuki, indeed, was a very celebrated calligrapher, whose works are much treasured. The

paper used in Zen painting is very absorbent. There can be no question of retouching a mistake. The instantaneous and inspired execution must be perfect first time. The Reverend Suzuki presented the calligraphy (signed with his pen name Shingyo, 心鏡) to Kanetsuka Sensei as a gift. It was subsequently framed in the western manner and hung on a wall in the dojo.

Unfortunately, over the years the calligraphy has suffered from the high levels of humidity in the dojo. Built around 1968 the Oxford University Sports centre was not perhaps the most ingeniously designed creation. Little thought appears to have gone into the question of ventilation. In the dojo, for example, the windows are so designed that when the wind is in a certain direction and it rains, they cannot be opened because rain enters the dojo and has to be mopped up from the tatami. There is very little through draft so that in the winter, in particular, a great deal of condensation is deposited on the walls. In the early days the problem was not so acute since only the judo and the aikido clubs used the dojo. But as the years have gone by there has been a proliferation of martial arts



groups using the dojo: karate, taekwon-do, sulki-do, shorinjikempo, kick-boxing, etc. Ambitious plans by the University sports department to build a large new martial arts centre on the Iffley Road site have been shelved. Unhappily, the condensation in the dojo created by countless sweating martial arts practitioners has greatly increased. As a result, the magnificent calligraphy which hangs at the far end of the dojo was deteriorating alarmingly. The Oxford Aikikai, (a combination of the Oxford University Aikido Club and the Oxford City Aikido Club) decided that something must be done urgently. An expert in the restoration of works of art was located in Cambridgeshire.

The conservation process was considerably more intricate and difficult than was first envisaged. The paper was very cockled and had been badly affected by years of humidity. The work was undertaken by Nicholas Burnett, the director of Museum Conservation Services based in Duxford, who have the expertise and knowledge to carry out this kind of work. The artwork was first photographed before treatment. The paper was then deionised with water between blotting papers and the red

seals protected with a special solvent. Then the paper was de-acidified by spraying with a solution of calcium hydroxide. It had become very weak and degraded and needed strengthening with a lining the scroll with China paper, using a special wheat starch paste. Then the paper was flattened where it was possible and attached to an acid-free mount and reframed in a new frame, which was sealed to prevent humidity coming into contact with the scroll again.

The work took many months and during that time there seemed to be something missing in the dojo. At the beginning of the year it finally returned, and although the reverend Suzuki passed away some years ago, the calligraphy radiates once more the tremendous vigour of its creator.

Interestingly, the calligraphy has appeared in print. In a lavishly illustrated travel guide to Japan published in 2000 by Dorling Kindersly Ltd. in the series 'Eyewitness Travel' (and subsequently reprinted four times) there is a section on martial arts. The editor appealed for a photograph to illustrate the text and several were taken by Peter Megann of Kanetsuka Sensei executing aikido techniques in the

dojo. The calligraphy can be seen in the background of the photograph which appears in the guidebook. It can also be seen in the videos of Kanetsuka Sensei's detailed exposition of the B.A.F. Teaching Syllabus.



A STATUE OF THE FOUNDER AT IWAMA

To mark the 40th anniversary of the passing away of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, there will be the creation of a statue of O-Sensei. The statue will be placed in the precincts of the Aiki shrine in Iwama, where he passed his later years pursuing the completion of his creation, Aikido.

All Aikikai associations around the world have been invited to support the project, the cost of which is estimated as 25,000,000 Japanese Yen. The British Aikido Federation has duly sent a contribution.

B.A.F. SPRING COURSE

25/26 April 2009

in

Chepstow Leisure Centre

with

Shihan Kanetsuka Sensei

and

Shihan Matthew Holland

Saturday: 15:00 – 18:00

Sunday: 10:00 – 13:00

(Full details on the B.A.F. website)

B.A.F. INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL 2009

Chester: 1 – 8 August

with Guest Shihan:

Takeshi Kanazawa

(Aikido World Headquarters, Tokyo)

Minoru Kanetsuka

(B.A.F. Technical Director)

Matthew Holland

(Scottish Aikido Federation)

plus senior B.A.F. Instructors

For full details and booking form follow the Summer School link on the B.A.F. website:

<http://www.bafonline.org.uk>

A LONG ACQUAINTANCE

By Raphael Arilla

I have been following for many years the classes of Kitaura Sensei, the Aikikai representative in Spain. Currently our dojo in Toulouse follows his teaching since he is formally responsible for it. At the beginning of the eighties I had the opportunity to meet Kanetsuka Sensei during a course directed jointly by Kitaura Sensei and Kanetsuka Sensei. Already, during this first meeting we developed an excellent rapport. Sensei was immensely friendly and approachable: an excellent teacher. He gave me his address in London and invited me to visit him there; but at that period of my life it was not possible.

Whenever Kanetsuka Sensei came to France in the following years I never missed his courses, both to enjoy seeing him and to develop more deeply my understanding of Aikido.. From the beginning he has always exerted a powerful presence that invites one to practise seriously. Because of his exceptional aikido I have attended three weekend courses in Oxford in recent years, combining the pleasure of seeing Sensei again, to practise with my British friends and to go out in the evening en famille in your charming city.

You can understand that the answer of why I come to for courses with Kanetsuka Sensei. It is very simple: friendship, fidelity, and especially the feeling of how lucky I have been in my life to have made the acquaintance of two great aikido masters, who impart such energy into their teaching for which we feel so grateful.

DOSHU TO VISIT THE UK IN 2010

Doshu, Ueshiba Moriteru, has accepted an invitation from the British Aikido Federation, the Scottish Aikido Federation, the United Kingdom Aikikai, British Birankai and the Komyokan Aikido Association to visit and teach in the UK. The seminar will be held from Friday 18th June to Sunday 20th June 2010 at the Welsh Institute for Sport, Cardiff, South Wales.

This is Doshu's first visit to the UK for many years and the first time he has visited us since he became Doshu in 1999. We are pleased to announce that Doshu will be accompanied by his son, Waka sensei, Ueshiba Mitsuteru, and a third Hombu dojo shihan.



BRIAN WOOD – 73 AND NOT OUT!

Brian Wood has been practicing Aikido for over 20 years now and has been a member of the B.A.F. since 1991. At 73 years old Brian is a role model to all of us in the Yorkshire Aikikai. During his time at the dojo Brian has introduced and looked after many a new student to Aikido, this author included!

Brian currently shares instruction responsibilities with Sensei Marsden, Browne and myself at Bradford Aikido Club, and has done so for the last 6 years or so. Brian has also been a qualified coach since 2006. In addition, Brian plays a leading role in the administration duties of the dojo having held the role of Club Treasurer for at least 10 years. Apart from this, Brian has from time to time over the years financially supported the club, and by 'putting his hand in his own pocket' has helped keep the dojo afloat during difficult times, for which at Bradford we are all grateful!

At 73, in truth, Brian is not as fit as he once was (though he still puts some of us to shame!) and has problems with his knees when in Suwari-waza or doing Shikko, but he still trains twice a week, week in week out, does a full session each time (not letting his age get in the way!), and has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with members old and new.

Brian has a fascinating background, and many a time he's regaled us with stories over a pint or two! Did you know for example that Brian was called up for National Service in 1953, joining the Royal Irish Fusiliers? Whilst on National Service, Brian travelled to countries as diverse as Germany, China, Japan, Korea and Kenya, and actually saw action fighting for his country. After National Service, Brian trained as a welding instructor, taught at Bradford College, took early retirement in 1990, then taught again part-time at other local colleges and finally called it a day in 2000.

But back to Brian's interests in martial arts ... In 1963 Brian

took up 'something strange from Japan called Judo?' and went on to eventually teach it from 1983. This was all to change in 1986 when Brian discovered Aikido. Since that time Sensei Blick (who sadly passed away in 2002) has been mentioned frequently as a major influence on Brian's Aikido career, as well as by other Bradford Dojo students.

Congratulations to Brian again on his promotion to Shodan – the Yorkshire Aikikai are proud of you.

At 73, and not out – you could play cricket for England!

*Andrew Peterson
Club Secretary, Bradford Aikido Club
November 2008*

