



# William J. Smith, MBE, Shihan



## William James Smith, MBE, Shihan

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> August I, along with about 200 other people said a final goodbye to William Smith Shihan MBE. It was a sad and emotional day, only lifted by the number of old friends from the distant past that joined us at the dojo for several hours of 'remember when.....'.

We all lost a remarkable man who, against all the predictions, had fought the ravages of cancer for nine and half years. A man from humble beginnings who built a house; a loving and close family; a successful organisation and a worldwide reputation. His achievements, like the man, were extraordinary.

His family lost a man whose goal throughout his life was to build a close knit family who could enjoy health, prosperity and happiness. Nobody could ask for a more caring and supportive husband and father.

And I lost a friend. I had been with him for 41 years and had enjoyed a relationship that was very rare outside that of father and son. He was my teacher and mentor as well as a friend. He was at my wedding; almost at the birth of my first daughter (we were on a course together); her wedding and he had met my grandson. I first met him at West Heath and for the next 20 odd years was at his side as his uchideshi, before we knew there was such a word.

The teaching in those early years was haphazard and hand to mouth with no structure and no teaching skills. But Mr Smith was in his mid 30s then, young, uncompromising, fit, tough and fast. All these attributes I was made painfully aware of on a weekly basis.

As the organisation grew, not through any intention - he just wanted a home for his students to train in, his role changed: he became the statesman of Aikido. The dynamics of our relationship also changed and we worked together to build the UKA. We had an honest and straightforward relationship, the times we did disagree were always followed by a handshake.

His teaching skills always led the way, I watched fascinated as his aikido underwent change after change as his body grew older and he adapted his skills to compensate for this. This process must have begun with O'Sensei and makes aikido unique.

He would always be there to offer help and support to anybody that needed it, always seeing the best in everybody. I saw his trust betrayed and abused on more than one occasion yet this belief in those around him was always undiminished.

In the 42 years that he was involved in aikido he was without question the pivotal and most important figure in the UK. His influence can be seen in all of the 3 major organisations in the country. Aikido will never see the like of this man again.

We will all miss him.

**Gordon Jones**  
UKA Chairman





### Letter from Mrs Smith

Dear friends and Aikidoka,

First of all I would like to say a big thank you for all the wonderful tributes you all paid to Mr Smith; I know he would have been very humbled had he been able to read them, and I was very proud to read them. Each and every one of you had a special place in his heart. He was a family man who loved us all and he thought of the UKA as an extended family, that is what he worked for and that is what he hoped he had achieved, and I am sure he had. His philosophy in life was that if you planted the right seed it would grow and flourish, and to do that you had to start with the basics to have a good foundation. He believed this in everything he did especially his Aikido life. I am sure his Aikido will not die and that his dream and his work will carry on with the UKA in the way he would have wished, working together respecting each other and building on what he started.

**God bless you all.  
Mrs Smith**

Before Mr Smith died, he asked that the following people be publicly thanked for all they had done for him over the years:

Gordon Jones	Allan Roberts
Guy Needler	Dave Lenton
Mario Falaschi	Peter Brady
Pat Narey	Peter Brown
Phil Winters	Keith Hayward
Keith Bailey	Roger Douras
Michael Smith	Paul Wilkes

Mr Smith also wanted to acknowledge his love for his "special son, Philip".

### Memorial Service for William James Smith, MBE, Shihan

There will be a Memorial service held at Birmingham Cathedral at 3.00pm on 23rd October 2006. All are welcome.



### Ren Shin Kan Website Memorial Page

There are a number of tributes to Mr Smith on the Ren Shin Kan Memorial page -  
<http://www.renshinkan.co.uk/MemorialPage.asp>

