



Memories of a Special Sensei

Summer school this year saw the first anniversary of Smith Sensei's passing. During the last year there have been many articles and statements made, their words capturing the writers feelings and thoughts. For many months I have wanted to write a few words not only on behalf of Mr. Foster, the Institute of Aikido, Broadland Aikido Club but also on a more personal level. I trust the following pays a fitting tribute to William Smith Shihan, MBE.

They say first impressions count and I can certainly say this was the case when I first met Sensei. I had travelled to London to attend a BAB course and meet Sensei with the hope that one-day I might be allowed to join the UKA and continue my connection with Hombu, having returned to the UK after living in Canada for eight years. The journey had been dreadful and with the bad traffic I arrived late. I quickly changed and was allowed on the tatami. Looking around for a gentle first practice I saw this small man and thought he'll do me, a nice slow gently start. I bowed to the gentleman and went to take ukemi, "You first son" he said. Then it was his turn and I soon woke up.

After attending many of Sensei's courses, I asked if he would travel to Lowestoft and teach a seminar: this he did, along with Mrs Smith, Pat Narey and Philip Winters this turning into an annual event. Many years later he agreed to teach in Lowestoft along with Haydn Foster Sensei and Tom Moss Sensei on our annual Big 3 course now the Lowestoft course. This developed into good friendships being formed between the three Senseis and the rest, as they say, is history. He was very supportive and gave tremendous support to Broadland Aikido Club, I am immensely grateful for his unconditional support and friendship.

Sensei was a man who treated everyone with respect and on their own merits, but he did not suffer fools gladly. One of his dislikes was people walking around on the mat kitted up, but not training. He had the ability to make everyone feel special but scared of him. He had time for all and would encourage and support you in any way he could. He was always very generous to me, always available to talk through problems and give advice.

Of course, it goes without saying that Mr. Smith was a great teacher. The UK has lost a leading light in Aikido. Personally I have lost a great Sensei and, dare I say, a good and true friend. I shall miss him greatly but that is just a speck of sand compared to the loss to Mrs. Smith, Philip and their family.

Everyone reading this will have his or her own personal memory of Sensei Smith. Memories are something to treasure and will ensure that his memory will go on. We can all take comfort and rejoice that we were blessed to have known him and have heard those immortal words, which were captured so well in the summer school video "Sorry Son". Whether as a husband, father, grand father, Sensei, or friend we can all take comfort knowing that the legacy he left will remain in our hearts forever. "God bless You Shihan William Smith MBE"

**Rest well Sensei
And rest satisfied with
doing well!**

**Frank Burlingham
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Interview from Downunder – part 2
by Kevin Wong

In Australia, I took the opportunity of meeting with Colin Hackett Sensei, Shido-in Yondan so Hombu. The following is the 2nd part of the interview I did with him and his vision of what he sees as the way forward for his aikido organisation in Australia.

(Q6) What differences do you see in the practices of a modern Aikidoist today from that practiced over 35 years ago?

There are two big differences that I see. The first is the Aikidoka's technical ability (skill) to perform the techniques, and the second is the Aikidoka's ability in the "receiving" of the technique. We can all do technique to a certain level. We all have some level of ability to execute the techniques that we are shown, even the humble beginner, but not everyone can receive the technique (ukemi). Now there's been a lot written on "ukemi" so I'm not going to bore you to death but so many people think that ukemi is "falling down". Well it is but it's about so much more. Uke and Tori both are always attacking each other's centre. Both must keep themselves safe. Both must find a way to keep the connection. Always engaged! Always Connected!

(Q7) Personally you must be very proud of the fact that a couple of your students were able to train

under your grandmaster, Chiba Sensei in San Diego and have now set-up their own dojo in Newcastle. Would you like to comment on this?

Well Darius and Gabby have always had a big "thirst for Aikido". They just could not get enough of it! But it was somewhat of a surprise when Darius and Gabby told me of their intentions to become "Kensushei" and practice for a year at Chiba Sensei's dojo in San Diego if they got accepted, which they did after William Smith Shihan and I wrote letters of introduction for them. Both Darius and Gabby left high profile jobs to fulfil their dreams. So off they went. They spent about 8 months altogether under the tutelage of Chiba Sensei. It would have been longer but for visa difficulties, which cut short their intended stay in America.

When they returned an even bigger surprise awaited me. They had got married and are now Husband and Wife. They actually got married in the dojo. I think it was the first time anyone had been married at Chiba sensei's Dojo in San Diego and it was all so special for the both of them. Something that they (and I) will remember all their lives. You can't top that! That's as good as it gets!

Darius and Gabby have their own Dojo now. Saku

Shin Kan Dojo situated in Newcastle. It's a fulltime dojo and they are both living their dreams. I wish them all the success in the world and support them as best I can.

(Q8) Is Australia big enough to accommodate more than one aikikai organisation?

It already does. Most of the styles are already well represented. Iwama Ryu / Takemusu Aikido / Koshinkan / Kenkyukai / Kokikai / Yoshinkan / Ki-Aikido or Shin Shin Toitsu as well as Aiki-kai. Although I hate the word "styles" as to me there is only one Aikido. What makes a style is whom you come into contact with and see doing Aikido. Sometimes it's just the man that attracts you to him. But if you say well that's the way I want to do Aikido, then you follow that man. His "style".

(Q9) As a mentor and instructor of Aikido, what do you see as your role and objectives? And what would you hope for from your students?

My role I feel as an instructor is to disseminate what has been taught to me by my peers, to anyone who thinks that I have something to offer them.

You see, there are a lot of instructors out there that do not practice Aikido anymore. They just instruct. They feel that they have





completed a process and need no further inspiration, and in fact they think, no further supervision.

As an instructor, I am the person responsible for the student, from the time that that student enters the training hall. Most of us would agree on when a persons training in the martial arts begins, but we hold it as a vital truth that training does not ever “end”. There is no graduation from the bu-do. It is a lifelong process. One is always learning, perfecting.



So I set the pace. I try and lead by example and I’m not afraid to admit that there are things that I don’t know. You have to lead from the front. I never ask my students to do something I can’t, and while I’m the teacher then I’m in charge but I’m still in the process of learning too. Be honest with yourself and don’t live a lie.

What I hope from my students is their respect and friendship, and

<http://www.centralcoastaikido.com.au/>



100% dedication to the art.

(Q10) Can you see a day when there can be open Aikido seminars and forums when ideas can be freely exchanged or do you see that the different branches of Aikido would never meet due to their differences?

That’s a difficult one. I suppose it’s how open or blinkered you are, and how much you’ve been brain washed by your peers. But I believe all our lives are interconnected, and all our ac-

tions have a direct influence on our lives in an abstract but very positive way!

After all, I believe we are all Spiritual Beings having a Human Experience!!

Thank you, Colin for your valuable time, views and insight of aikido in your part of the world.

For more information, details can be obtained from the following website address below



Mike Smith and Cath Davies respond to Neil Mould's question,

"With regards to teaching and the development of your students, in your experience, how much leniency do you give to allowing your student to develop their own way of doing things? If you correct a student too much because they are not performing the movement that you do, are you destroying their natural potential and possible own aikido personality?"

**Mike Smith,
Ren Shin Kan:**

In my experience, in the earlier days of training, the student should comply to the instructor's teaching because if not, the grasping of fundamental basic's will not take place.

In early stages, the newer student must be made to follow, if this is allowed to lax then a re-teaching will have to take place at a later stage. What must be appreciated the student has already adopted their own way of standing, walking, and usually, they can have their own kind of posture, any, or all of these factors may not be well suited to

good Aikido training, so at early stages good fundamentals must be followed to create a good technical foundation.

As most teachers should be aware, self learning must be allowed, and encouraged to take place, allowing their own individual character to evolve into their Aikido, this is not to be confused with the student being allowed to develop their own kind of variation, thus correcting the class or the individual must be based on the basic technique guidelines.

I think we're all aware of the obvious, that is to say, that we're all different, not

only in size and stature but as we move up the ladder gaining skill and experience, we also develop our thought and even opinions of how we perceive our art to be.

It is most evident that by seeing masters, past and present that Aikido becomes an individual art, without really straying from the original basics. I conclude in saying, that by a good balance of discipline for correct technique, and of self learning and observation, the student can gain their own goal in Aikido.

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**Cath Davies,
Myo Shin Juku:**

This question is governed by the concept of "shu ha ri". There isn't space here to go into too much detail but briefly shu means to follow the form; ha is to transcend the limits of the form and ri is to create one's own form. In an article by Chiba Sensei (can be found in the "Archive" section of <http://www.aikidoonline.com/>), he says that students should be at the shu stage until sandan; at the ha stage until 5th dan. From 6th dan onwards you start to create your own form.

So what does this mean in practice? Ideally, you find yourself a "good instructor" (the definition of which

could be the subject of an article in its own right but for now I'll define it as an individual who is able to inspire students with her / his physical ability; has a thorough technical knowledge and is able to teach in a way that conveys both. In these circumstances, I believe that the student should train with only / mainly that instructor; following without question, until they are ready to move onto the "ha" stage.

Whilst an instructor has to take into account that each student is unique, mentally and physically (and so may not be able to do exactly as the instructor does), I believe that it is a mistake for an instructor to allow too much deviation until the "ha" stage. Aikido is vast

and, from a personal point of view, I can see from where I am now that I have been extremely fortunate to have been in a position to study with 1 person for over 20 years. It has meant that I have a solid technical platform as I have started my journey into the "ha" stage.

The danger of trying to move to the "ha" stage too soon, is that you don't have a broad enough knowledge of aikido and, therefore, enough points of reference on which to base your deviation away from the form. This can result in a student making up what they don't know in order to "make fit" where they've allowed their practice to wander.