



Gordon Jones Shihan

In the last edition of the UKA newsletter there were tributes and comments to congratulate Gordon on his promotion to Shihan. Some of you may have noticed that I didn't appear on the list. This wasn't by choice but because of the fact it was difficult for me to put on paper everything that I wanted to say about a man who is as close to me as any brother could be.

I've known Gordon what seems like all of my life (almost 40 years now) and during that time I've seen his Aikido develop into the powerful entity it is today.

When I first knew him Gordon was (I think) orange belt (4th Kyu) or possibly green belt (3rd Kyu) and was my father's uchi-deshi; although we didn't think in those terms. Even then (1968) Gordon already had a formidable reputation as a fast, tough Aikidoka and, of course, he was also a very fit 20 year-old.

Over the years Gordon's reputation grew with some people choosing to avoid practising with him when possible and others relishing the physical challenge.

At about the same time as I met Gordon, we came under the wing of Chiba Sensei and a relationship between the two men soon developed. I still remember seeing Sensei demonstrating with what



seemed to be a rubber ball which just kept bouncing back at him, an event which happened most weekends at that time.

There are many memories of that period but one which stands out was a particular Saturday afternoon session at the old Cradley Dojo. We were practising from kata-dori and as ever Chiba Sensei was emphasising the importance of "being aware". Gordon was taking ukemi and was not protecting himself with his free hand. Suddenly we heard a slapping sound as Sensei kicked Gordon in the solar plexus and saw Gordon's knees buckle as Sensei turned to lecture us about zanshin. Suddenly he turned to face Gordon again as somehow Gordon stood up and tightened his grip on Sensei's gi. It was the first time (and one of the few times ever) that I saw Chiba Sensei shocked on the mat by

someone's resilience; as we all were, particularly when we all studied the bruise on Gordon's sternum in the changing room!

As I say there are many memories I could share with you but I want to finish by talking about Gordon's relationship with my father, William Smith Shihan.

Both men were strong willed and independently-minded individuals and sometimes I know they both struggled with that; particularly when they disagreed. Ultimately, however, there was a love and trust between the two men which meant that they could work through their differences and whatever was said behind closed doors stayed there. I know that there was a period where it appeared their differences were so vast that some people thought they had no future together but the fact was that each could be frank

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with each other and iron out any problems (although it sometimes took awhile for the dust to settle). I remember my last conversation with Dad when we discussed the future of the UKA; or more accurately I tried to. Dad's comment was "I'm happy with the future because I know it's taken care of".

On a more personal note I think my relationship with Gordon has been one of the most important relationships of my life. He has always treated me as myself; not as "Mr Smith's son" and over the time we have known each other, and especially during the last few years he has al-

ways been honest with me and we have become closer as a result. This was exemplified by his actions on the morning Dad died.

I had been sitting with Dad all night whilst my daughter had stayed at Harper Adams. When I realised the end was near (at about 5am) I phoned her and told her to find Gordon to bring her to me. She went to his room and knocked on the door, waking him up. His reaction was to hand her his keys with "Wait in the car". About 40 minutes later she was at my parent's home, and I opened the door to see Gordon's car just turning the corner of the road. We

hadn't made any arrangement; we didn't need to; both Claire and I knew he'd be there when we needed him.

So congratulations old friend on a well-deserved promotion, not just for your Aikido ability but also for your character; I truly think that the UKA has someone who can continue to take us forward together and develop our relationship with Hombu.

Philip Smith
UKA Shidoin



Ask a Shidoin....

The first question in this new section, sent in by Neil Mould, is:

"What does a Shidoin do to improve their technique? Do they have any training methods they use or do they see a weakness and practice their weakness within techniques while training?"

Peter Brown. Kyu Shin Kan

I personally use the same training aids that I have always found beneficial to improve the execution of technique.

The first aid I employ is sight, I look at what I am doing. Looking at body shape and style is most important; this is where I use the help of mirrors at my Dojo. This is done in much the same way as a dancer, what you see in the mirror is what your students and piers see in practice.

The second aid I incorporate is touch: to receive technique from all your partners has to be experienced at no matter what level you are. To work with all levels of movement, to experience good or poor technique, will assist you in the valuation of your own technique.

Putting both these elements together I believe, would be more beneficial than reading a book or watching a DVD.

To actually experience every one's technique is the only way to improve your own - no matter if you are a kyu grade, Fukushidoin, Shidoin or dare I say Shihan.



Ask a Shido-in....

"What does a Shido-in do to improve their technique? Do they have any training methods they use or do they see a weakness and practice their weakness within techniques while training?"

Allan Roberts, Ren Shin Kan

Ideally, they look, listen and learn.

Aikidoka are frequently criticised for watching what an instructor demonstrates, and then practicing what his or her own instructor would have demonstrated. This tenet can apply to all grades.

However, within the U.K.A, Instructors (Shido-in), receive instruction from their House Shido-in. This is where they discuss differences and commonalities within a technique with their peers, and, if a "weakness" is found in their interpretation, hopefully address the situation and do something to adjust. This adjustment is presumably adopted, (otherwise the exercise would be redundant) and reinforced in training.

It may sound a little semantic, but it is necessary to ensure that by "weakness" the questioner does not mean "difference". Producing an army of clones would destroy aikido totally. A Coach (Instructor) should perceive and work with the individuality of the student. The Instructor is also such an individual.

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Two Nights In Hong Kong (An opportunity to make new Aikido Friends)

As a result of a business visit to Taiwan, I was to have what added up to two nights stop over in Hong Kong and was fortunate to be able to visit Ken Cottier Shihan's dojo (unfortunately, he wasn't there at the time!). Nonetheless, Friday night saw me making my way to the dojo in Kwun Chung.

We started the class (a general class with students of mixed experience) with warming up exercises, basic tai-sabaki and ukemi. Chen Sensei then demonstrated basic aihanmi ikkyo, irimi and tenkan and then moved around the class, practising with students of all grades. The class had 5 Dan grades (including myself) with a good distribution of kyu grades. Subsequent techniques would include shi-

honage and kotegaishi and irimi nage, with a submission for kotegaishi that was new to me. It proved to be very effective and one that will stop in my mind for some time. The class finished with sitting kokyo ho and warmed down with ukemi and taisabaki exercises

We all put the mats away - **YES** they do that in HK as well - showered and set off into the night to find food and drink. We met my work colleagues close by the restaurant and continued to find a seat. It was unusually full but Alan managed to persuade the owner to set up a table outside. The food eventually came to our table and



Two Nights In Hong Kong - continued



Parkes Street – Kowloon



Eating outside at the Kwan Kee



Alan Chan (left), Stephen Kennedy (right)



Good Friends Already!

tasted absolutely divine. We talked about Aikido all night, and much to my surprise, with a lot of interest from my work colleagues, who were interested in the comradery and philosophy of Aikidoka. After the meal and more beers we made our farewells, promising to stay in touch, and made our way home..

On Saturday, I went to the Kowloon dojo. Yoshiaki Hikita Sensei (Yon Dan So Hombu) took the class (again a general class), starting with warming up exercises, ukemi and shikko around the dojo perimeter. Two Go Dan instructors (Edmund Wan and Samson Li) were also present so the HKAA was well supported by senior grades during this class. Hikita Sensei then continued the class by teaching a tsugi agi type exercise for developing a strong posture as a start point for shomen uchi ikkyo, Hikita

Senseis' uke being Vincent, a Dan grade from the Friday night class at Kwun Chung Dojo. This was very direct and relied on good unbendable arm technique as well as good straight posture. The emphasis here was directness of technique creating strength. This was then progressed to irimi & tenkan ikkyo. We then moved on to tenkan as a prelude to kotegaishi ensuring that there was no gap between the uke and tori during the transition from tenkai to tenkan, the gap again being explained as weakness in posture and technique. These themes along with meticulous attention to positional detail and etiquette were continued throughout the rest of the class with aihanmi shihonage and iriminage for both irimi and tenkan being the remaining techniques studied, each technique starting with an

exercise relative to these teaching points.

During both classes I made a point of ensuring that I practised what I was being taught and tried my best not to slip into my own Aikido. This achieves two things: firstly it is good etiquette and secondly, you usually learn something, as every instructor has something to offer the open minded student.

The friendship that the members of the HKAA gave to me is a direct result of the hard work that Ken Cottier Shihan has put into Aikido in Hong Kong over the last 35 years. The HKAA is a real credit to him and is a lasting testament to his dedication to Aikido and its philosophies. Long may it last!

**Guy Needler
Wa Shin Kan**