



Gordon Jones Sensei Interview.

Harper Adams Agricultural College, UKA Summer School, August 2004.

Conducted by Mark Walsh.



Gordon Jones, 6th dan so Hombu, Shido-in, is one of the co-principals of the UKA. He teaches regularly a Renshinkan in the West Midlands, at the annual UKA Summer School, on UKA national courses and abroad.



When and where did you start aikido?

At the small West Heath dojo, 40 years ago this year, with Mr Smith*. There were about six people in the class and Roy Dudley was also a teacher. It was the blind leading the blind really, as we didn't know anything. A lot of people you talk to now have some idea of what aikido is about, but in the mid sixties no one knew anything. It was considered strange to do judo, so it was unheard of. It was an isolated concept.



No one really knew anything; we were under the auspices of Mr Ralph Reynolds*, who was second *dan* I think. He used to come down once every twelve weeks and grade the odd person, but the rest of the time we just muddled along, trying to remember what we had seen at the last course and trying to emulate it. Obviously there was no teaching structure. Dave Bushell was also around at that time. I graded to green belt (3rd *kyu*) with Mr Reynolds and it was a very odd situation the way I was graded, I won't say too much about it, but I thought this can't be what it's about. Soon after that, Mr Smith said look, there's this Japanese guy [Chiba Sensei*], lets go and have a look and see if we can get involved. And of course it was like moving out of the darkness into the daylight. It was exactly what we believed, or subconsciously believed, aikido and martial arts should be. There was this dynamic Japanese guy, that appeared to be super-human, and it was jaw-dropping stuff.



But we had to travel to Leicester once every four weeks, and probably during the intervening weeks we used to go for an evening class or a weekend course. We tried to have some connection every two or three weeks. It was a very, very difficult transition as there was personal animosity between Chiba Sensei and Mr Reynolds and he mistrusted everyone who came from him, so we had this eight or nine month.... test I suppose: to see if we were the real thing, or just moving over because it was convenient. Mr Smith then was 2nd *kyu* and there were another couple of guys of the same grade. They did a grading at Leicester dojo, which is a cellar with no natural light or air, and it seemed to last half the afternoon, although it was probably an hour. After it the three of them couldn't stand up, and one of the young, strong guys that did it with him, couldn't work for a three days. After that point they were all awarded 1st *kyu* and we were accepted as a group unofficially. He was pleased to see us when he saw us after that. The others aren't practising now, though Roger Duras* from that first class is still practising.



I've heard it was quite intense training with Chiba Sensei, and that you used to have to psyche yourself up for it?

Even after 3-4 years with him, if we were going on a course on a Saturday afternoon in Leicester, Friday lunchtime I used to get these feelings in my stomach of pressure, stress...



fear I suppose: as there was never any quarter given. You did it or you didn't. There was no, "Why can't you do it?", or "Do you find that difficult?" you just did it and that was it. I've seen a lot of stuff with him and felt my trepidation was well founded.

Injuries?

Yeah, looking back you realise maybe why he was like that, he had very little time for people who weren't committed to him, and it was his way of finding out about that commitment. But saying that, I was with him at least once a month for 25 years and he never injured me. I was bruised and battered but all recoverable stuff. Some people had injuries that took a long time to get over, but he didn't do anything like that to me. The absolute experience of being around him, with him, involved with him, is never going to happen again. There will never be another one like him in the same situation.



Are there any other teachers that have been a big influence?

No, not really. Obviously Mr Smith has always been there, he was my direct teacher for many years, but no one anywhere near as much as Chiba *Sensei*. He graded me 2nd *kyu* to 6th *dan*, I've got the book, I don't think anyone else in this country has got that as they have all been graded by someone else at some point. That's a good thing.



Are there any stories you'd like to share from those times?

Well, there's a lot: it's all history. It was a very testing time. I look back and see it as my climbing Mount Everest. I could have walked away from it at any time but chose not to, as I wanted to be a part of it. You never knew what was going to happen, and that was the most unnerving part of it. Some of the stuff was just unbelievable. Like, as a small example, cutting through quarter inch wood with business cards. He [Chiba *Sensei*] had Kanetsuka *Sensei**, who was his student then, to hold the wood and I picked up the pieces as I was a dog's-body at the time. It was awesome, seeing someone cut with such energy. Then he started to slice A4 pieces of paper up with a sword. He started off with Kanetsuka *Sensei* on his knees holding the paper between his hands, and then he drew and cut, never aimed, just drew and cut. Next it was half the size and so on, until it was eventually about an inch apart from his fingers.



Chiba *Sensei* had a black ebony bokken, and we were doing some weapons once and I did it wrong. Then I did it wrong again, and at that point you knew you had one more chance to get it right. I was standing around three metres away and he struck my bokken down and caught me with the end of his, right next to my eye. It must have been travelling at some force to do it, and I'm standing there with blood dripping down my cheek, and he says, "Now do it right". How he managed to hit me in that exact spot without blinding or missing me, I'll never know.

Are there times you almost quit?

Well one time, he gave me *Shodan* at the end of a teaching course. There was a teaching course with about 40 people there, there were 2nd and 3rd *dans* from all over the country, Mr Smith was then a *Fuku Shidoi**. All the teachers came into the *dojo* one at a time, then had to go out into the garden so they couldn't tell anyone what had gone on. So he tested them all, and there were about 6 guys who took the *Fuku Shidoi* test. He said he needed to talk to them all again, and asked me to take the class (full of guys way above rank than me), and sat there watching me. Nothing was said until the next day he went around saying, "This is wrong, your *ukemi*'s no good.", then he came to me and said, "Contact's no good, *ukemi*'s no good, stand up, *Shodan*". So I thought I got away with that pretty well, that was good.



Two weeks later he came to a course in the Midlands and there wasn't enough room for everyone on the mat, so all the *dan* grades go on the floor, and he was bang, bang, bang. I went home at lunchtime as we had a couple of hours, and I was absolutely battered



because the floor was hard and because of the immobilisations he was doing. I said to my wife, "I can't go back. I can't physically make myself go back." She said, [puts on berating voice] "If you don't go back now, you'll never go back again." So I went back again, and that was perhaps the only time I felt I couldn't take anymore. Obviously he was waiting and if I hadn't gone back that would have been the end of it. He did things to test people's commitment, that's how I see it now.

Are there any good things that stand out from those times?



Yeah, lots of things. I don't want to paint a picture of him [Chiba Sensei] as being brutal, cruel and hard. You have to see it from the viewpoint of then, you look back on it now and you possibly see the reasons for the way he was. I have a lot of fond memories. Sometimes he was really friendly, I always seemed to get on well with him. I remember once I had a hernia, and I was in my mid-twenties so I was quite young, and I didn't know what to do. I thought the doctor will want to operate and that'll ruin my aikido. But it started to get worse so I went to see him on a course. I barged into his room saying, "I need to talk to you!" and he was getting out of the shower absolutely starkers, saying, "What do you want?". We talked about various things and he said, "Does anyone else know?" Well they didn't, it sounds silly now, but it was quite a personal thing. I asked him, "Don't tell Mr Smith or he'll treat me like a china doll." Well we go back out, he call me to the front and absolutely batters me for 15 minutes, to show everyone that I was OK.



I talked to him about a lot of things. So that was something, and when my father died he wrote a really, really lovely letter. I've known him for 35 years and he's been quite a prominent figure in my life.



You've travelled quite a bit with aikido as well?

Well I've travelled a bit: Greece for instance. I think this year is the tenth anniversary of me going out there. And that's grown from Athens to Thessalonica, Mitillini and somewhere else. Also now we've been to Serbia, which will probably turn into an annual thing, and all being well, I'm off to Australia next year to visit a student that we had 10/15 years ago.

Any aikido differences between say Greece or Serbia and here?



Well yes, they've both come under different influences over the years, and it's unreasonable to expect people to throw all that they've learnt over the last 20 years out the window and pick up what you do. It has to be a very gradual process and you have to prove what your doing makes more sense than what they're doing. It's very difficult to go into a dojo and say just because I'm doing this it's right, there has to be some reasoning. The Greek Aikikai joined us, and it was a learning process that has taken 10 years, but that we're both comfortable with. There can be no harmonisation between aikido organisations if people try to superimpose their will on people who have been practising for a long time, you can't reasonably expect that to happen. The only way is the idea of mutual learning.



There is quite a lot of disharmony within and between many aikido organisations. Is the idea of mutual learning something you see as overcoming that?

People have to realise that if you've been practising aikido for 20 years, and someone comes along and says it's all wrong, they'll say fine, I'll carry on doing it wrong for the next 20 years. You have to convince them, through deeds not just words, that what you're doing makes a lot more sense, either as a practical or ethical way of doing it. In order to prove that you have to work alongside them rather than trying to dominate them, because most of the time people that want to join different organisations want to do it, very often for self interest. They might not have Hombu recognition for example and they want it, and it's unreasonable to expect a short circuit around the people that have been with us for a long time. So it has to be a balance and compromise between the two things. We want people to join us, but we don't want to give people the goodies as soon as they walk though the door, there has to be some sort of commitment there: a give and take process.





That sounds like the kind of aikido politics that people say they hate. How do you feel about aikido politics? Is it inevitable?

Someone said the other day that politics is another word for ego. That's probably the biggest problem that we've got: egotistical instructors who believe that what they're doing is better than anyone else, and they all want to be the leader and the best. There are situations where grades are given by people who haven't got official grades, or by groups of people, or given by students to their instructors. They turn up one night and say, "Oh *Sensei*, we've promoted to you to 8th *dan*". That and self-promotion make a mockery of the whole grading process. I'm not saying that what we do in the UKA is perfect, but we recognise the authenticity of the BAF, the BA*, people who have a direct association with somebody who is bigger than they are.



An example is that we feel we're working in this sphere of influence and within that you are a big fish in the pond. The danger is that you believe your own publicity, you believe that you are the best there is, and what you do is really good, of benefit to everybody and anyone who doesn't do it is no good. Now, the benefit of our relationship with Hombu, is that it allows us to experience aikido from people who are *really* good, and that is a very grounding experience. Last year we had Kobayashi *Sensei*, and this year we have Sugawara *Sensei** visiting. I've been practising 15 years longer than Sugawara *Sensei* but he's the same rank as me. I look at what he can do and what I can do, and think, "What am I doing with this?". "I should be like, two ranks down the line if I compare myself with him.". It's a very stabilising influence when you experience people who are a lot better than you are. You walk away thinking I'm not that good at all, and if people haven't got that outside influence they can believe this myth that they have created around themselves and there's no levelling. It's easy to say, "Well I got third *dan*, but I really think I'm worth fourth *dan*...", and so on. There's a guy I know that started practising when I was third *dan* and wasn't particularly inspiring, and is now 8th *dan**. You wonder where that grade has come from, as I've worked and studied hard, and had the instruction of probably one of the best teachers in the world to get here. And where does it end? Eventually we're going to go past 8th *dan* and get a 10th *dan*. The problem is to the public it's all the same. Now if I'm 6th *dan* from Hombu Dojo and someone else is 6th *dan* from Joe Bloggs' *dojo* down the road: the general public sees no difference, and that the disturbing part. It's not an egotistical; "Oh I need to be better or higher ranked than him." it's the view from outside.



You get an elevated position on the mat with people literally kneeling at your feet. It's a very hierarchical situation. People believe that you can stand in front of others and say that night is day, day is night, and white is black. It's an extreme example, but people will believe what you tell them when you've created this closed environment. They see you do this or that and say, "Oh my God, he's a super-being!" so everything you tell them you believe. You can change the whole situation to suit what you say you are, and not what the truth is.



In psychology such environments are referred to as closed environments, examples might be particular army units or hospitals. They are renowned for becoming a) abusive and b) psychotic in the sense of removed from reality, as they don't have a system of outside checks and balances.

That's right, and even the instructors we have from Hombu Dojo have their masters to keep that down: so it goes right to the top.



Change of track. Was there a demonstration in Paris that you particularly remember?

In the mid-seventies. It was an International Aikido Federation congress, which are now only held in Tokyo. We were with Kanetsuka and the BAF at the time, but for some reason he couldn't make it that weekend, so I went instead. I was the most senior instructor that was available to go, I think I was 3rd *dan* at the time. I went with Tony Cassells* who was then a BAF 2nd *dan*, and my student if you like, and another guy called Angus. So we



went for the weekend and took part in the course and the demonstration, which was in a stadium in Paris. There was 6000 people in the stadium, Doshu* was there, Chiba Sensei was there, all the senior instructors from around the world, and three television crews. We had to go out and do our bit: our fives minutes for England, so it was a bit daunting! I remember standing in the tunnel waiting to go out with Tony and Angus, and Asai Sensei* is in front of us sweating, pacing up and down and looking more nervous than I was. He was 7th or 8th *dan* at the time so I thought: well if he's nervous I've got nothing to loose out there, and it went pretty well. Chiba *Sensei* thought it was ok.



Was that the IAF conference where there were all sorts of controversies and arguments?

Well yes, there always are.

Some technical questions now: You are renown for having powerful aikido, where does the power in someone's aikido come from?



Am I? Well, being relaxed is critical. That's the key thing. If you look at the all the *Shihan* and compare that with what we try to emulate, you seem big strong guys in particular, use strength in one way or another and this restricts their ability to do technique. What disturbs me...well, if you wanted to be a really good golfer you'd look at someone who is the best in the world and say "What is he doing, and what do I need to do that if I'm going to get there?" Now you look at senior *Shihan* and say, "No strength, relaxed, great." but then go back on the mat and continue as before. While you're using strength, that reflects into the *uke*. It's like a mirror, the more strength you put into the contact, the more tension and resistance is recreated. So you get two almost stationary objects coming together. But from a relaxation approach, you can draw out the energy from your partner and take their centre of gravity.



The power then comes from applying technique when *uke* is unbalanced. There are very few techniques that will work on someone who is in a completely stable position. Even if it's only an inch off their centre of gravity, that's often enough to make a technique work, and the technique will be a lot stronger as there's no fixed point that your partner can relate to. In order to fight back and resist what your doing they need to have their feet on the floor or whatever, to stabilise themselves. If they haven't got that, if they're falling forwards or backwards the first priority is to stabilise themselves to give themselves a base to the come back into you. If you don't allow that to happen then you're always pushing a rolling ball. It's like trying to push a car downhill, the problem is that people try and push it with the handbrake on, whereas you just have to keep it moving.



What is *ukemi*?

Ukemi is the recovery; it's not the breakfall. The *ukemi* is not the end bit; it's everything that happens after the first point of contact or even before. The point of contact is made and you follow the direction of the technique. You stretch your body, or move your body as far as you can, without falling, and after you pass that point you take *ukemi*, not as a negative thing to fall over, but that by taking *ukemi* you can come back into it again: it's a recovery rather than an escape if you like.



What are the skills of a good *uke*?

Relaxation. That you're not using a lot of strength, though that's dependent on who's making the technique work. Following the movement that's created with the centre of your body and not with the shoulders, trying to stay in the game. Trying to recover yourself so that you can continue to attack, for want of a better word, your partner. You need to continue to move around and come back with the other hand and not fall over. Don't give up half way though a technique because that is what expected of you. There is a balance to be made between being awkward and being a good *uke* that's difficult.





Without raising the profile of the *ukemi* the level of technique will not raise either. One makes the other one better, because if you're doing *irimi nage* and the other one falls over, then you're creating a very false situation, which outside of the dojo wouldn't happen. You need to take into consideration the awareness of where the next attack could come from, as your partner would be struggling and resisting. To recreate something like that in the dojo, you need to follow the technique with the centre of the body, then accept the technique as far as possible and then when it can't be accepted anymore, take a break-fall: forwards, backwards, whatever.



Contact is a big theme for all the instructors in the UKA and many visiting Sensei?

Starting from a simple hand contact, your little finger makes contact here [shows *katate dori* grip as per sword], then the bottom of your arm, then the centre of your body. You move that little finger point so there's no gap between the palm and the wrist, then the whole body will start to follow it. Now, if you do it the other way around, so you're holding with the top part of your hand, that moves to the shoulder, then you have to bend your body till you loose contact. The whole dynamic of what you're trying to do changes because you're holding this way rather than that way [demonstrates point].



What about with *tsuki* or *yokomen*?

The idea of how *ai-hanmi* and *gyaku-hanmi* happens is then exactly the same as *shomen* and *tsuki*. You're going into your partner and if you're making impact, then that's like holding with the top part of the hand. As *nage*, if you go into *shomen uchi* and impact with the arm then the partner bounces off and you create a different situation. You need to allow the movement to continue in its direction, as that's basically what aikido is: it's harmonisation. Through it, round it, whatever, but if you hit the arm, in say *shomen uchi irimi nage*, then I then *uke* can move around it in a different direction, as you've stopped the moving car. If you hit *uke*'s arm he can back off at that point, but if you move around that point, there's no point in which *uke* can feel that he can start another movement. As soon as the movement stops *uke* can reestablish himself and that's natural. To impact is the biggest problem as it enables self-preservation to reassert itself, and come out of the foot, the head [shows head butt], whatever. So it's important that contact is maintained and stuck to.



What is the difference between basic, intermediate and advanced aikido?

The stock answer would be there is no difference; just that one has been doing it longer than the other. The principles and techniques stay the same, and what you learn as fundamental movements don't change. It's just that you move sharper, in a more balanced form, and you have, particularly through the later part of the kyu grades, a bigger portfolio of techniques and experiences that will change what you do. Aikido is not a cure all for everything that happens, it's not a Sherman tank on the mat, it's vulnerable to mistakes, errors and posture; overwhelming strength and that sort of thing. It's not something you learn and think, no matter what happens I can look after myself. What it has to be is a flexibility that allows you to change without thinking about it; so one technique can evolve into another one, which can evolve into another one. Ultimately what you're trying to develop is jointless changing.



Within the lower kyu grades you learn this foot here and that foot there, and that's a technique. When you get into the more senior kyu grades you realise that the foot wont work quite right that way so you have to move a little bit differently. You have experience of slightly different ways of doing things that work better for you, so you adjust what is being taught as a natural consequence, but still within the confines of what is shown as a basic movement. By the time you get to 1st kyu you've probably learnt four or five ways of making *irimi nage*, and you can call on those through a moment within a technique. You think, "That's not going to work, his bodies too...I need to change my position/ his position..."





So it's more resources to work with from inflexible to flexible?

More flexible, yes.

What about 5th an 6th *dans*? What are you working on?

I'm trying I suppose to put the minimum amount of effort and get the maximum amount of effect. In order to do that I've realised the less strength and resistance I put in to what I'm doing, the greater the end result will be. I need to move my body, but not move my shoulders. Look at the masters: it's the body that moves and as a secondary result of that the shoulders move. The less energy you can put into the shoulders and the more you can generate from the centre of the body the greater the technique will be. We all know this to be a fact, but it's putting it into practice that's the art. I'm determined not to put myself in a position where I think I know what I'm doing. I never want to stop learning, that's why I want to go on courses with people who I know are better than me, so I can learn from them and incorporate that into my aikido.



You take quite a bit of *ukemi* from other teachers too?

Yes, because you're learning from everybody, and once you think you can't, you might as well hang your hakama up. Our life evolves; I'm not the same guy I was 10 years ago. In my thirties people used to walk off the mat when I walked on, because I was hard and fit, they're people the same now. I can't and don't want to be like that anymore, I've matured, and the last thing I want do is make people fear me. I need to learn more control of what I'm doing so I still feel I can do dynamic aikido without tearing somebody's arm off.



Is this you changing your aikido or aikido changing you?

Who knows how it affects us? I think that aikido seems to select it's own students. Imagine aikido as a living thing if you like, the people who don't fit into the philosophy of aikido walk away from it. The one's that do come into it, but don't fit the profile as to what an aikido person is, then they change to become that person. It sounds a bit abstract...

So you're not sure about the cause and effect relationship?

Yeah, that's right. I don't know what my nature would be had I not done aikido so it could well have changed me out of all recognition, or it could be that my philosophy is parallel to that of aikido. For instance I've never been a particularly argumentative or aggressive person. It all sounds very esoteric, as it's not something you can nail down, but I know a lot of people that practice and 95% are of the same sort of nature.



What do you mean, they're all kinds of people in aikido?

Yes there is, a dojo should represent a cross section of the community and often it does. The difference between going to a golf or karate club and an aikido dojo though, is that everyone is, or at least appears to be, the same sort of nature. No one wants confrontation in conversation, and everyone will try to help each other out. It's a non-competitive environment because the nature of aikido is that you give yourself to your partner, for them to learn on your body what they're trying to do. That then grows to become part of you.



So you feel that it is incorporated into you to some extent?

I'm sure it is, but I'll never *know* that.



Well there are twins here this week. If we banned one of them, and trained the other up his whole life, then we'd know for sure...

When I feel the difference between aikido people and others is the week after Summer School. I've acclimatised to aikido people and I get a bit of a shock back in the real world.



Well it is, that's right. Many of the friendships that you've got in aikido will go on and on and on. It's different, as they're a different dynamic than with people outside. There's, "What sort of car have you got? How much do you earn? How big's your house?" all that outside rubbish that doesn't affect people. In my dojo there's one guy who comes in a convertible sports car and another comes in a Datsun that's falling off its wheels. But they're both valued to the same degree in the dojo. We've got schoolteachers, people who are unemployed, every kind of job; and none of them see each other in a different light.



Is there anything you would like to say about your philosophy of aikido?

Not really, but philosophy's a big word. When you start talking about aikido, you realise you have been talking about philosophy, but it's hard to pin down. You see it when it isn't practised: people in the outside world really ready to argue and fight, and you feel you're lucky not to be a part of that; you're quite able to walk away. Or, you find if you *are* arguing with someone, you don't just stand up and shout in their face, you find a way of harmonising, but you don't actually think of it as aikido. It's an inbuilt nature that aikido develops without you seeing it.



What do think will be the future for aikido? Both the UKA and in general?

I think that the UKA, without being detrimental to anyone else, is probably the most balanced group in the country. Because you have a number of senior instructors who all work together and aren't trying to out do each other. All of us accept the technical ability and everything else that the others have, so there's no one-up-manship. I suppose the UKA has a membership that is possibly 10 years older than the equivalent BA membership, so it's slightly more mature and we like to think family friendly. As I said before, politics is a word for ego and we've had [this year] one technical committee meeting for 10 minutes, and one AGM for 45 minutes, because there's no need for constant bickering. We work hard during the day and when we come off the mat everyone is one family, there's no demarcation. It's an extension of what happens on the mat, and likewise if there is conflict off the mat, it tends to go onto it as well. I just hope that it continues. Am I hoping for the growth of the UKA? Possibly. If people want to join us they are very welcome to, and we don't have many hard and fast rules regarding that, as long as they are prepared to be a part of us.



There are also a lot of teens and other young people around this year?

Yes there are, probably this year there are. I was thinking more of when I went to the BA Summer School this year and the average age of a dan grade was 25-35 whereas here it's 35-40. And either way's fine, but it's a little bit different. It also shows that with aikido you can carry on.



I spoke to a group of instructors from another organisation earlier today, and they commented on several things: for instance, the variety of instructors here, and the relaxed atmosphere. They also seemed impressed by the house system* of the UKA.

Is there anything at all that you would like to say about aikido?

Yes: I went to Barcelona, and there's a cathedral there designed by Gaudi. From the outset they knew it was going to take more than 50 years to build, and in Britain there are cathedrals that took hundreds of years to build. So when you're laying stone, it's for the man who'll build on top of that, and you may never actually get to see the finished thing. That's what it takes to build something really good. It's the same with aikido: you're on a ladder helping the next person up, working together and getting better.



Thank you for your time.

No problem.



Notes.



* William J Smith, 6th *dan so Hombu Shihan*, MBE, the other principal of the UKA.

*Ralph Reynolds is a founder member of the Aikido Fellowship of Great Britain and was one of the first aikido practitioners in the West Midlands.

*Roger Duras, 5th *dan so Hombu*, teaches at West Heath in the Midlands, and still trains regularly with Smith Shihan.



*Kazuo Chiba *Sensei*, 8th *dan Shihan*, head of the USAF western region, based in San Diego. Instructed for 10 years in the UK, and still visits regularly.

* Minoru Kanetsuka, 7th *dan Shihan*, technical director of the British Aikido Federation.

**Fuku Shidoin* - Chiba *Sensei* introduced a *Fuku Shidoin* and *Shidoin* system in Britain in the 1970's to classify assistant and national coaches. Now widespread elsewhere.



*BAF - British Aikido Federation, BA - British Aikikai. Both Aikikai Hombu recognised organisations.

*Yukimitsu Kobayashi *Sensei*, Shigeru Sugawara *Sensei*: 6th *dan*, Hombu *Shihan* and recent UKA Summer School visiting teachers.



*Currently no person of English birth has an Aikikai Hombu recognised rank above 6th *dan*. The senior ranked instructor resident in the country is Kanetsuka *Sensei*, 7th *dan so Hombu*.

*Tony Cassells, , 6th *dan so Hombu*, now a senior member of the British Aikikai. He teaches in the West Midlands and abroad.

*Doshu here refers to Kisshomaru Ueshiba, not his son, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba.

* Katsuaki Asai *Sensei*, 8th *dan Shihan*, head of the German Aikikai.



*The UKA is organised into four "houses". These are semi-autonomous organisations (e.g. they run their own *kyu* gradings), under the umbrella of the UKA. Foreign affiliated organisations such as the Hellenic Aikido Federation of Greece, operate under similar principles. This structure is a break from the normal model employed by aikido organisations and gives a less restrictive feel.