

Do any of you feel like you are making Aikido history. I do. The UKA is on the cusp of greatness, we are about to be a world wide force for Aikido at its best.

This can only happen if we all work together, building upon the work that Mr Smith and the other senior members of the UKA have undertaken. When the West Midlands Aikikai Split away from the BAF 22 years ago, forming an autonomous unit with a little over 400 signed up members, later to be called the UKA, little did we think that the organisation would have signed on nearly 6000 members as it approached its 22nd year. This level of growth and expansion is a phenomenal tribute to the hard work of Mr Smith. This level of growth and expansion needs to be maintained. However, an important counterpart of this expansion is the need to pay attention to the detail of our technique and instruction. Attention to detail of what we pass on to our students is important, because as we grow larger, the Aikido eyes of the world will be watching us with a mixture of awe, anticipation and jealousy, waiting for us to make a mistake, a mistake that could end all this hard work.

This attention to detail means that although we must embrace the individual evolution of Aikido within ourselves, our students and our instructors we must never forget the importance of basic instruction. Each of us has a different interpretation of technique and ukemi depending upon our physical and psychological makeup. Receiving instruction from each other to understand each others reasons for a particular view on Aikido is an important part of our own evolution both physically, mentally and spiritually. However, we must ensure that our students are taught the pure basics as taught by Mr Smith and 'O' Sensei before him, without deviation, thus giving them the robust foundations of a martial art that will, through understanding the basics completely and using these as the basis for our own evolution, ensure our technique and ukemi are reactionary rather than pre-conceived actions. Only then can Aikido within the UKA remain mainstream, being available and achievable by all who join us whilst passing on a martial art that is recognisable world wide.

Any organisation that grows has to entrust responsibility to others as the founding members cannot expand the organisation beyond their own capabilities. This is essential to ensure that growth occurs. Eventually, if everyone works together the organisation reaches another point in its growth, the point where it is so large that it either evolves to exceed its size and develops an organisational structure to manage this whilst coping with expansion, or it fragments as internal disagreements, resulting from the failure of personal expectations and ambitions, (natural expectations resulting from bestowed authority) to be realised become obvious.

This is where I see the UKA currently.

The UKA is at the cusp, this fine line where we can achieve further greatness and expansion to becoming a true world wide authority for Aikido and all that O Sensei stood for, or we split up into smaller fragments, only to disappear into mediocrity. We need to work together to ensure that the UKA as an organisation grows rather than breaks up.

If we want the UKA to become what it should be then Senior Instructors should therefore look themselves in the mirror and ask a very personal and soul searching question:

"Can I sacrifice my own personal ambitions in preference to helping the UKA expand and evolve further, therefore becoming part of a greater organisation, If not, am I content with being small and taking over 20 years to get to the same level of greatness, provided everything goes to plan!"

For me the choice is simple, I would sacrifice everything I have achieved to ensure that the organisation that Mr Smith has worked for continues to grow and evolve, I would like to think that you, dear reader are of the same disposition.

Guy Needler