

## What's on in February

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> T.A.I.E. Seminar in Cambridge** with Tony Sargeant Sensei

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> T.A.I.E. Weapons Seminar** with Paul McGlone Sensei at Parley Cross Memorial Hall

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> Start of 6 week Beginners' Course** at Wellsprings Aikido

Check out the [online diary](#) for more details of these and other future seminars and events.

## Beginners' Course

Another [6 week course for beginners](#) starts on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February. The course gives the opportunity to experience aikido and provides a good grounding in the basics of the art. It also offers the chance to train with others who are just starting out and to make new friends. If you know of anyone who is interested in taking up aikido please tell them about this course and encourage them to come and join us.

## Pat Hendricks Sensei

Pat Hendricks Sensei, from San Leandro in California, is one of the top Iwama style aikido teachers in the world. She started studying Aikido in 1974 with Stan Pranin and Mary Heiny and then in 1976 she moved to Iwama, Japan, to study with Saito Sensei Shihan. Pat Sensei has visited Japan more than 25 times and spent a total of 6 years as uchi-deshi in Iwama. Last month (Jan 2012) Pat Sensei was awarded the grade of nanadan (7<sup>th</sup> dan) by The Doshu.

In July 2012 Pat Sensei will be teaching in Salisbury. Don't miss this opportunity to train with one of the most senior Iwama teachers in the world at a town near you! [more details from the Takemusu Aikido Salisbury website](#).

## About KIAI

KIAI is the newsletter of Wellsprings Aikido. It is automatically sent to all members of Wellsprings Aikido and also to any of our friends who wish to receive it. If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list then please send your email address to [enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wellspringsoftheeast.co.uk).

This edition of the newsletter is available online (as a .pdf) and can be accessed from the [home page of the website](#). Previous editions can be accessed [from this page](#).

Contributions to this newsletter are welcome and encouraged. Please send them to the address above. If there is a topic that you would like covered in Training Matters or anything else that you would like to see in KIAI then please let us know.

## Price Reduction!

*"The instructor teaches only one small aspect of the art. Its versatile applications must be discovered by each student through incessant practice and training."*

O'Sensei

We understand that you may be unable to train on two evenings at the weekend because of other commitments but if it's your finances that are preventing you from coming twice a week then we want to help out. With effect from February 2012 the cost per month for 2 sessions a week for those aikidoka who prepay for a month at a time will be:

£37 for waged

£32 for unwaged/students/pensioners

£27 for T.I.A.E. coaches

## Training Matters



This wonderful series of photographs, taken in February 1969 at the Aikikai Hombu Dojo in Tokyo by Jean Greslé, was published on the Aikido Journal Online Blog at the end of December 2011. They show O'Sensei leading the warm-up prior to training in one of the last classes that he taught at the Hombu Dojo. O'Sensei died from liver cancer at the end of April 1969 aged 85.



*“The Founder took great pains to maintain his physical conditioning all of his life. This is an excellent example for both students and instructors to follow throughout their aikido careers.”*

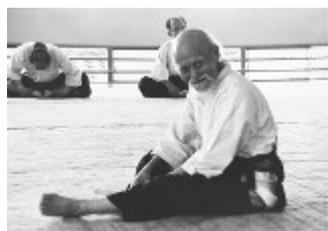
Stanley Pranin

Most of us are familiar with the need to warm-up our body before exercise to help prevent injury. When the body is warm:

- muscles contract and relax more quickly
- nerve impulses travel more quickly
- the response of the heart to exercise is improved
- more oxygen is available to the muscles
- the likelihood of damage to muscles, tendons and joints is reduced



Movements involving the large muscles of the body, e.g. those of the arms and legs, are the most effective means of increasing body temperature. The onset of light sweating and a feeling of looseness are good indicators of a thorough warm up.



What we see in these photographs is O'Sensei limbering up rather than warming up. Limbering takes the muscles and joints through their current range of movement. Limbers:



- prepare the body for the planned movement thereby reducing the possibility of injury
- increase circulation to the parts of the body to be used
- allow you to test your body before executing the movements
- prevent muscle soreness
- when practised regularly can improve the range of movement



Our bodies respond to the stresses and traumas of everyday life with specific muscular reflexes. Repeated triggering of these

reflexes create habitual muscular contractions which, as Thomas Hanna states, *“we cannot – voluntarily – relax. These muscular contractions have become so deeply involuntary and unconscious that, eventually, we no longer remember how to move about freely. The result is stiffness, soreness, and a restricted range of movement.”* This memory loss of how muscle groups feel and how to control them is called sensory-motor amnesia (SMA). SMA is a 'learned adaptive response' which can be unlearned.

*“Stiffness is a companion of death,  
flexibility is a companion of life.”*

Tao Te Ching

To unlearn these less than helpful habits and remember how to move freely we need to exercise in a particular way. We need to move slowly, with awareness and without force in order to 'reprogram' our muscles. What we don't want to do is stretch. Where we are tight we may 'feel a stretch' but we are not deliberately trying to create this feeling. Deliberate stretching involves the element of force and triggers what is known as the “stretch reflex”. This reflex causes the muscle to resist the stretch in an attempt to prevent itself being injured. In other words you are fighting with yourself. If you 'win' and overpower the resisting muscle then you will, to a greater or lesser extent, injure yourself. At the greater end of the scale you may cause irreparable damage. It may help to think of a muscle as being like a helical spring. The spring is extended when a force is applied to it and then it returns to its natural length when the force is removed. Apply too much force and overstretch a coil spring and it does not return to its original length. It has been permanently deformed.

*“The bamboo for example moves according to the relative strength of the wind, and when the wind stops, the bamboo returns to its original state. That is completely natural and it is alive.”*

Kenji Shimizu

At Wellsprings we warm and limber up with aiki taiso, a series of movements, the regular practice of which will help to improve and maintain your flexibility. Exercises found in other forms of body

work, e.g. yoga, can be useful too. Don't feel that you can't use something because “it's not aikido”. It's probably your ideas about aikido that are faulty. Consider that all the movements that O'Sensei is shown performing in the photographs are also yoga poses!

*“If you don't want to be broken, bend... Bend sincerely and wholeness will return to you.”*

John R. Mabry in “The Little Book of the Tao Te Ching”

Improving your flexibility will improve all your physical activities and not just your aikido training. This is because a flexible body has more options available to it to respond to any given situation than a restricted body has. The more options available to our body the more intelligently it can respond to the demands made upon it.

*“Our technique is powerful. Not because of superior muscle strength, but due to better body co-ordination.”*

Saito Sensei

Good flexibility will help you in the execution of techniques and when you take ukemi. It will help you to avoid injuries and reduce your recovery time after a training session. But you need to keep working at it to maintain your flexibility and prevent the creation of new muscular habits. Remember O'Sensei worked on his body conditioning right until the last.

*“This old man must train and train.”*

Morihei Ueshiba

Thomas Hanna, founder of the field of Somatics wrote: *“The basic somatic task during our lifetime is to gain greater and greater control over ourselves, learning to flow with the stress and trauma of life, like a cork floating on top of the waves.”*

*“As we grow older, our bodies – and our lives – should continue to improve, right up until the very end. I believe that all of us, in our hearts, feel that this is how life really should be lived.”*

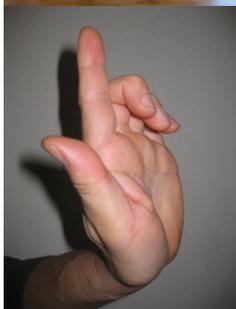
We think O'Sensei would have agreed with him.

## Breath with Movement Part 2 of 8

During 2012 Mark Sensei is introducing exercises combining breath awareness with movement into the training sessions. The purpose of these exercises is to tone up muscles and stimulate the flow of energy throughout the body. Here we present the second exercise which is known as 'pulling the bow'.



1. Stand, as shown in the photograph, with the feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and the arms raised in front of the body. The arms are crossed at the wrists with the right hand furthest from the body. The hands are formed in relaxed fists.



2. On an inhalation turn your left hand to the left with fingers up and the index finger pointing up (see photograph). Turn your head to the left too. Imagine that your left hand is pressing flat against the wood of an archer's bow and that the fingers of your right hand are loosely curled around the bowstring.



3. Now pull the imaginary bow string to the right, leading with your right elbow. At the same time press your left arm out to the left, leading with the palm of the left hand. Hold the position for one second.



4. On an exhalation bring your arms back in front of your chest into the starting position but this time with the left hand furthest from the body.



5. Draw the bow to the right side as you inhale. Pause for a second then exhale and return to the start position.

Perform the exercise 4 – 8 times.