

Feb. 7, 2012  
President's New Year Message

Dear Fellow Takemusu Aikido Member:

Another year has come and gone, and we are looking again to a new year of aikido activity. Every year it seems we are expanding our membership and growing internally as well. I am pleased to announce that three of our senior members, Bernice Tom Sensei, Hoa Newens Sensei, and Kim Peuser Sensei were selected by the Aikikai and Hombu Dojo to receive 7<sup>th</sup> dan at this year's Kagami Biraki. This honor is because they have been working for a long time to establish aikido in their respective areas and demonstrate the highest level of commitment to aikido. It is also, no less, a testament to their personal character.

Running and maintaining a dojo is difficult work as you all know. The development of a dojo is a slow process and requires commitment and perseverance on a personal level that one does not see often in an "instant gratification" society. Each of the three recipients have spent many years being true to their beliefs that aikido is a life long personal journey and not just a casual activity to be sampled between water skiing and snow skiing.

Recently in a correspondence with a member of the Hombu Dojo office, I was reminded that aikido is a path of self-realization and not just a fighting method. That statement is one we can all meditate upon. Of course there is the physical aspect of aikido. Saito Sensei always said that up until 4<sup>th</sup> dan you train your body—after that you train your mind. However, when you combine the two and look at your life span you realize that a continued involvement with aikido is a personal journey and not one to be taken lightly.

By entering into the dojo and beginning training, you are allowed access to a path of personal development which relatively few people have the opportunity to enjoy. You are privileged to follow in the footsteps of the Founder, Saito Sensei, and other serious aikidoka who made this path their life's work.

The "do" of aikido means road or path. The Founder chose that character to differentiate aikido from a martial skill and implied there was more to the art than just combat readiness. I have been fortunate to be able to listen to some of the "after hours" conversations by some of these senior teachers and, clearly, they display that something extra which years of training have provided. We are so fortunate that 2<sup>nd</sup> Doshu opened aikido to the general public, during those early postwar years. That decision enabled aikido to spread in Japan and also overseas. As we know, aikido dojos begin small, and the first dojos in the San Francisco Bay Area, for instance, only acquired new students one at a time. It has taken a long time to reach this point where we can proudly point to a large membership in our association. We really have been on a personal journey.

For this New Year, I would like to encourage everyone to engage in training with a focus on personal development. Newer students will pick this up and emulate their seniors and instructors. I can't think of a better way to spread aikido—One student at a time.

Happy New Year,

Bill Witt  
President  
Takemusu Aikido Association