



# ABUNDANT PEACE AIKIDO & T'AI CHI

# Connections

Editorial

May, 2010

Spring Course Calendar



April was another exciting month for our community. A number of us took part in a pistol range training day, an interesting experience, and especially so when the principles of marksmanship are taught in alignment with the principles of aiki.

Hot on the heels of their first, our beginner T'ai Chi class held another noodle night, in recognition of reaching the second cross hands...and far ahead of schedule! This class must be recognized for their focus, commitment, and dedication; hard work and regular participation in classes and open workout times has enabled them to achieve this milestone more quickly than usual.

We also held our "second annual" dinner in recognition of the 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Club, as well as our teacher's birthday! It was held at Bul-Go-Gi House Restaurant, and was enjoyed by all who attended. It is hoped this sort of purely social evening can become a more regular feature of our community calendar!

Stuart

## Corporal Francisco Gomez Memorial Library

The Corporal Francisco Gomez Memorial Library continues to grow, thanks to so many kind donations from our members. We see donations on a regular basis, with either of our Librarians, as there is always something new and interesting; and remember, we will happily accept all help and donations!



**Victoria Day Keiko: Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 to 9:30 AM, with a Holiday Breakfast afterward. Mat fee is \$10.00!**



## Promotions

We congratulate those who were promoted in April:

### Kids

- Kristiana S. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Emily S. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Andrew S. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Caidence M. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Rowan C. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Leo M. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Oscar W. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Julia M. Jr. 13<sup>th</sup> Kyu

### Adults

- Cathy D. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Omar S. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Chris G. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Nicole M. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Mat J. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu
- Marc P. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu

# Congratulations!

Only one session remains, in the spring and summer calendar...

**Meditation Made Easy.** Discover the benefits of meditation practice, and how easy it is to learn at this afternoon session. Meditation is ideal for opening a "gate" to your inner self, and will help to develop a base for relaxation and stress reduction.

**Sunday, 16 May 10, 2:00 to 5:00 PM, \$75**

## Meditation Retreat

I have been studying tai chi for eleven years with Sifu Brad at Abundant Peace. I have learned many life skills in this time, but what I would like to focus on here is the importance of the retreats that Brad offers twice a year. The retreats are usually held at the Star of the North in St. Albert, and food and accommodation are included.

The summer retreat focuses on learning techniques to enhance our tai chi experience. Every year is based on a different theme and sometimes we learn a whole new set of moves. The Staff set was taught at one of these retreats. The winter retreat is a meditation retreat. Brad teaches us proper methods of breathing, centering your energy in the dan tien, and chi flow.

The meditation retreat for this year was held on March 6 and 7. This retreat covered a lot of meditation and chi gong methods and I think we all learned a lot. It was a powerful lesson and even though we were doing a lot of sitting meditation, we were all exhausted (in a good way!) at the end of the weekend. I believe we are very lucky to have this opportunity and I encourage everyone to attend as a supplement to our weekly classes.

-Ruth G.-



**See Sensei Brad for T'ai Chi and self defense CD's, as well as for any clothing needs, or training weapons requirements. Bokken are in stock and available for purchase today!**

**Obvious Note: "Meditation Made Easy" on May 1<sup>st</sup> would be a great introduction to the philosophy of meditation practice!**



## Announcements

**Aikido Summer Camp** will be held from 25 July to 1 August in Glenwood Springs Colorado. Five of us have registered, but at this point the seminar is full...so our names are on a waiting list! The good news is that we have been told we will very likely be able to attend...this will be a unique aikido experience, one that we all look forward to!

**Saotome Sensei** has announced the dates of his next Seminar at Aikido of Missoula; it is scheduled for the weekend of 24 to 26 September 2010. This is always a special trip for our aikido students, so make plans to travel with us and experience the amazing talent of our Most Senior Shihan!

**Aikido Special Training** will be held on Friday, 14 May, 6:30 to 9:30 PM. We will explore and discover the Ikkyo Curve through our program techniques. The Ikkyo Curve allows us to immediately and directly affect our partners' centre, enabling us to perform "kuzushi", or balance taking, and thereby provides us the ability to both control and protect the attacker.

**Dedication Ceremony:** We still intend to hold a dedication ceremony to formally launch our Library and Aiki Shrine; this will be scheduled as soon as possible, and after the repair and upgrades are complete. Members will be notified in advance!

**Bokken practice** will become the focus of our weekly weapons classes, beginning in the first week of May. These classes are great fun and an excellent enhancement to our empty hand training. White oak bokken are available from Sensei Brad.

**Finally, remember** to always keep an eye on [www.abundantpeace.com](http://www.abundantpeace.com) for an up to date list of seminars, courses, and events.

**New at [www.abundantpeace.com](http://www.abundantpeace.com) this month:** 1) *kumijo* video; 2) *belt tying made easy*, on the kids aikido page; and 3) *t'ai chi group practice* video.

## Tai Chi Demonstration

A group of our senior T'ai Chi students did a demonstration of a variety of forms at a benefit concert to raise money for famine relief in Ethiopia. Held at New Hope Community Church on the evening of 30<sup>th</sup> April, our presentation was well received. Forms presented included the Yang set, the Sun style mini-set, broadsword, and staff.

Sifu Brad asked that I pass on his thanks to those students who gave of their time to share our T'ai Chi with the wider community, at an event that will benefit people on the other side of the world; special thanks as well to Judith, for submitting the selection of pictures you see here in the next column.



**Great news; early morning aikido keiko continues on Mondays and Thursdays, from 6:00 to 7:30 AM. Mat fee is \$10.00; join us if you can!**

## The Hakama

We are occasionally asked about the Hakama, which is the split skirt worn by our senior aikido students, and was a part of the traditional dress of the Samurai. This garment was originally intended to protect the legs of mounted warriors, and was made from heavy cloth. Over time, as Samurai were dismounted they persisted in wearing the hakama as a sort of formal wear, or class identifier. As we entered the modern age, the hakama is still worn, as a traditional, formal garment, as well as by students of many martial arts.

In traditional aikido, O Sensei was emphatic that all students wore hakama; understand that, from his view point, the martial arts gi was little more than underwear, and the hakama would have been required to enforce modesty and decorum. In the aikido world today, various organizations follow different paths. In Aikikai, hakama are worn only after one has earned Shodan rank, while in ASU all students may wear this garment. In our community, we follow a somewhat different path; the hakama is worn once a student has achieved 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu ranking, or blue belt.

Very simply, to insist that all students wear hakama from their first class would be an expense that many might be unprepared to bear, and would limit access to training. At the same time, wearing of the hakama is viewed as a privilege, and is therefore something many will work to achieve. As it is a badge of rank or achievement, it is therefore also a symbol of leadership, and of the responsibility that senior students have within the school, to our community.

The hakama has seven folds, five in the front and two in the back; each of these is said to have a symbolic meaning.

1. Yuki: courage, valor, bravery;
2. Jin: humanity, charity, benevolence;
3. Gi: justice, righteousness, integrity;
4. Rei: etiquette, courtesy, civility, and also means "bow";
5. Makoto: sincerity, honesty, reality;
6. Chugi: loyalty, fidelity, devotion;
7. Meiyo: honor, credit, glory; also reputation, dignity, prestige.

As leaders, we must conduct ourselves in an exemplary fashion at all times, and in doing so set a proper example for junior students, especially beginners; we must show care and concern for the safety of all who train with us; we must welcome the opportunity to teach; we must actively seek our opportunities to contribute to the life and health of the Dojo. Leadership is a privilege, and an act of service; it must therefore be continually earned!

Stuart