

## 「合気道と私」

ペイトマン明子

この度、初段に昇段させて頂く事ができました。ありがとうございました。

今回エッセイを書くにあたり、何を書こかなあ。中尾先生リクエストの体重が200キロの患者さん（私はイギリスの病院で働いています。）のことが興味深いかな、と悩んだんですが、結局初段＝気持ちのリセットっちゅうことで合気道のことを書こうと思います。早いものでイギリスで暮らし始めて15年になります。こちらに来たばかりの頃は、言葉もわからず、友人もいらず、右も左もわからへん状態で、しばらくはほんまに大変でした。ブラちゃん（夫）に薦められて合気道も始めてみたけど、礼をしただけでぎっくり腰になるようなガラスの腰状態で、なかなか続かへんまま、出産・子育て期間に入ってしまいました。

そんな私が本格的に合気道を始めたのは、息子のシンが学校に行き始めてからやから、8年前のこと。始めた理由は「ブラちゃんがやっていたから」「夫婦で何か共通する趣味があつたらええな」というもので、残念ながら合気道自体に興味を持ったわけではありませんでした。その頃の私はとにかく体力なしで、腰も悪くて、身体もガチガチに硬くてねえ。1回稽古に行ったら1週間はものすごい筋肉痛で階段上るのもやっとという状態。稽古も受けを取るのが恐いし、技かけられたら痛いし、身体は思うように動かへんし、最初の1年ほどは正直ちつとも楽しくなかったな。行き続けたのはブラちゃんの手前、私なりの意地があったこと。そして1週間に1回、夜に子供抜きで出かけられるのがええ息抜きやったから。

そんな私が変わってきたのは、合気道を始めて2年ほど経った頃かな。受け身がようやく上手にとれるようになってきて、前ほど頭を打たんようになり、ちょっとはスムーズに動けるようになり、腰が丈夫になってきて、合気道自体をちょっとおもしろいと思い始めました。それでもずっと受けを取るのは恐かったなあ。合気道は武道やからねえ。こっちのデッカイイギリス人が私を投げ飛ばすと、ほんまにぶつぶんです。腕持ってギューとかするとめっちゃ痛いし。そやけどここらあたりで私はふと思いました。私は「ギュー」とか「とりやあつ」とかの力任せの合気道はやりたくない（っちゅうかできひん。）。もっと軽く、大きく、のびのびとした合気道を目指したい。そしてそんな私の目指す合気道が、ブラちゃんが中尾先生から刺激を受けて目指している合気道と一致して、私は本腰を入れてブラちゃんのクラスに通い始めたのでした。

合気道はなんせ奥が深いからねえ。やればやるほどわからなくなり、考えれば考えるほど身体が動かへん。今でもわからへんことばっかりです。そやけどいつの間にかガラスやった私の腰が丈夫になり、一緒に汗を流す仲間ができ、家族みんなでがんばる時間が持て、ずっと私と共にあった恐怖感が薄ってきてね。私の合気道自体の上達よりも、稽古を通して得られる別のこと（仲間や家族や、自分の身体と心が強くなっていくこと）が実は大事なんかな、と思つちやつたりしているんです。今はね、ほんまに稽古が楽しい。集中すること、身体を動かすこと、仲間と笑うこと、力を抜こうと努力すること・・・が楽しいです。ま、一番の楽しみは稽古の後に飲むビールやけどね。これがウンマイのなんのって。笑。

ということで、最近ではすっかり合気道にハマッっちゃってる私です。イギリスの合気道と日本の合気道には違いがあるのかな。イギリスの人たちは皆身体もデカイし（私もやけど。）、力をギューッと使う人が多いのは確か。そやけど合気道への情熱と取り組みのマジメさは、日本人にも負けへんほど。とにかく一生懸命、一生懸命稽古しています。これからも私はここイギリスで、大きなフーリガンたちを相手に、どれだけ皮膚と毛の合気道ができるか。それが今後の目標と挑戦です。

200キロの患者さんについてはまたの機会に・・・。

## EN

As part of our club gradings, each member was asked by Nakao sensei to write a short essay, not necessarily about Aikido, but anything they cared to write about. After reading the different essays provided, some of them carried a common theme regarding the camaraderie and friendship that Aikido provides, this gave me the idea for my own essay – required for the Nidan promotion I received back in May.

En is a word often used in the Japanese language, but does not have an easy translation into English. In its simplistic form, it can be seen as the connection between people, but goes much deeper, perhaps it's better to say a special connection between people. Over the years I have come to experience En many times, when you realize them they are sometimes the strangest connections and may not have any obvious significance, others may have life changing experiences. Here are a few examples that I recall:

On two separate vacations in the early 80's I bumped into two people that worked in the company next door, only to find them on the same holiday, in the same hotel, and one of them even with an identical ski suit to me. A bit weird, but they were largely insignificant ones I think.

Going to a kimono shop in Japan to sort out Ako's wedding kimono and bumping into Nakao sensei outside the front door.

I moved to Milton Keynes in 1988, in 2003, by total chance, I found that my best friend who lived next door to me in Crawley back in 1999, who I'd long lost contact with, was now living in Furzton, only a mile from my house.

After training in Aikido with Ray for many years in Milton Keynes, we find that we were both born in the same hospital, and grew up only a couple of miles apart.

Standing on an extremely crowded subway platform in Roppongi, Tokyo at midnight in 2004. I turned round and found the Japanese gentleman standing behind me actually used to sit next to me when we both worked for a Japanese Securities house in London nearly 10 years before.

After moving to Tokyo, Ako and I were standing on a crowded subway train whilst house hunting, only to hear my name called. I turned round to find one of Nakao sensei's students sitting on the train on his way from Kobe to Endo sensei's dojo for a training seminar in Niigata.

One of Nakao sensei's English students moved back to the UK and started training at a dojo in Bristol. Not long after George joined Seibukan UK after moving from the very same Bristol dojo.

I was introduced to one of my now best friends about 5 years ago, only to find out that we'd been born and grew up about 5 miles apart. Our parents worked in the same company and our lives had taken an almost identical path, to the point when we met, with some remarkable similarities.

Whether you believe in EN or not is irrelevant, they may just seem like odd coincidences to some, but for me there is definitely a deeper connection involved, and one that has now also touched many of my friends.

I had only been doing Aikido for about 4 years, at the same time I was also playing baseball. Whilst playing baseball I became friends with a Japanese teacher from Gyosei, who was also a member of the team. It was because of this friend that I first started to learn to speak Japanese, and had cause to visit Japan for the first time. The first trip led to a longer trip the following year. Only days into the trip I was introduced to the woman who would become my wife, she in turn introduced me to a friend that did Aikido. That friend introduced me to a person called Nakao Shingo sensei, an introduction that has massively changed my Aikido life. Going back to the essays I read regarding friendship and camaraderie, I can clearly see how En has caused Aikido to enrich my own life and that of my family, highlighting many special links connecting many people and friends together. Suffice to say....Aikido is EN....

And to find that Nakao sensei's birthday is on the same date that Ako and I got married.....

My name is Darren Clayton; I was born in a village called Woburn Sands. I lived in a quiet street with my Mum, Dad and younger sister Jo. My Nan and Granddad lived two houses away from us and my Uncle, Aunty and cousins lived at the end of our street. We lived near the golf course and woods and I enjoyed the countryside from a young age. I sometimes took myself off for a walk when I was only 5 years old to see my Great Nan who lived in the next village, much to my Mum's despair, as she didn't know where I had gone!

At school I was in the rugby team. I didn't really enjoy school apart from the rugby and the girls ☺ I was quite good at maths, English and p.e. (Physical education).

I joined a judo club at 9 years old for 1 year, but left to concentrate on rugby.

In secondary school when I was 15 years old I started training at Lau- Gar kung Fu. I enjoyed it and did it for 5 years, but it wasn't really what I wanted to do.

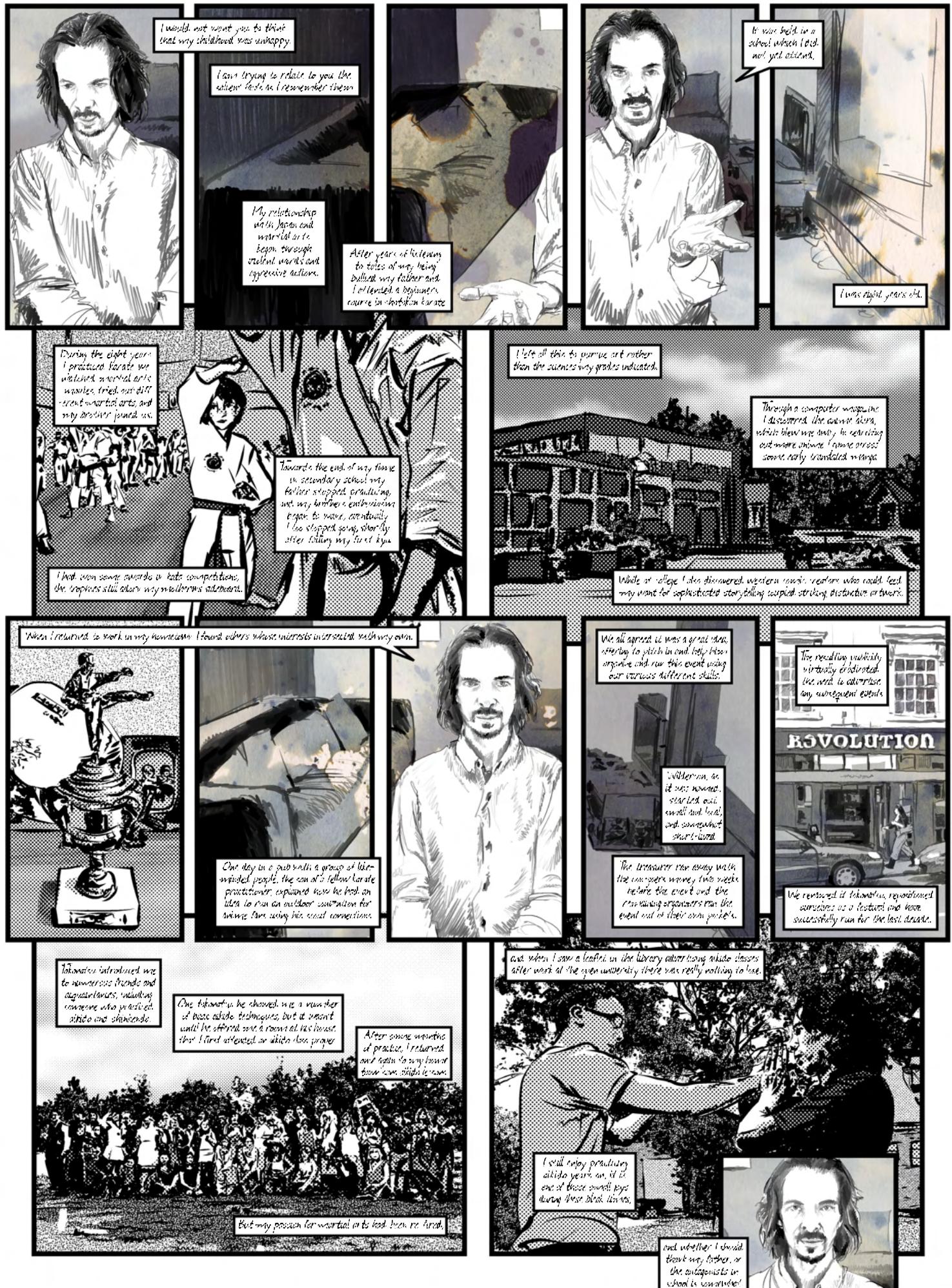
I've worked as a trainee air conditioning engineer, laser cartridge recycler, trainee electrician, a bouncer, and a warehouse operatorative.

I love animals and nature and travelling. I learnt to scuba dive in 1996 and enjoyed diving in Cyprus, seeing octopus, moray eels and various fish. I've had many pets including, dogs, cats, ferrets, a budgie, iguanas, tokay geckos, snakes and fish.

I live with my girlfriend and her two daughters, a dog, two cats, two guinea pigs and 3 fish. It's a mad house☺.

I enjoy aikido, weight training, and walking my dog. This year whilst on holiday in Wales I discovered a new passion, which is walking in the mountains and I intend to do a lot more of it.

I enjoy socialising, meeting different cultures and there's many countries that I've yet to visit. My sister lives in Australia and I'd love to go there one day. I would really love to go whale watching and swim with sharks and dolphins. But I am happy as I am and don't need to travel to have a fulfilled life.



I always found it difficult writing essays. Ever since I was a schoolboy I remember dreading the times were we were asked to write an essay about arbitrary subjects. I very rarely had any genuine ideas with regards to subjects we were asked to write about and even during my late school years, I never had the inclination of sharing my ideas of "...world peace", "...the influence of technology in our lives..." and "...solving world hunger" with my teachers or classmates. That, plus the fact we were supposed to complete the essay in 45minutes made the whole process hopelessly uninspiring for me.

Although after growing up I understood more and more of the reasons why we were asked to complete such tasks (learn how to express ourselves, improve our writing skills / communication, learn how to present logical arguments etc.) I still to this day do not like writing essays. So, instead of me writing an essay I would like to write a long "Thank you" card to Nakao sensei and his wife Akiko for visiting our dojo in Milton Keynes. Apart from just writing an essay in order to fulfil my grading obligations I would like to write the following words as a genuine and pleasant way of saying thank you to Nakao sensei and his wife Akiko.

The reasons why I feel grateful for Nakao sensei and Akiko's visit are several. First and foremost, I had the opportunity to be instructed aikido by two people who have spent a great deal of their life practicing this martial art. And what I enjoyed and appreciated most was the fact that I had the opportunity to actually train with both the sensei and his wife. That gave me a feel of the techniques and the basic principles involved (i.e. distancing, timing, posture, breathing, etc.). I had the opportunity to learn new things (techniques / concepts). Sensei and his wife have passed down a lot of information in a different way and from another perspective that I normally see things. Therefore, in this way my curiosity and desire to learn were fired up and I have plenty of things to work on in the coming year.

"Aikido is a journey of continuing learning and improvement" or something along these lines, is what Max said to me during our last day of training. Which brings me to my next point: I feel grateful for Nakao sensei's and Akiko's visit because it brought different people from different dojos together. I had the opportunity to meet new people in the course who had to offer me a great deal. Apart from Max who studied Aikido at Kobe Seibukan dojo, I met other students and instructors from Brighton, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, who were patient enough to train with me and shown me a few new things. I also learnt a few more things about my fellow aikidokas from the Milton Keynes seibukan dojo. Normally, after we finish training at the dojo, everyone goes their separate ways, until the next class. However, the little gathering we had on Saturday night at Bryan sensei's house gave me a bit more of an insight to my fellow aikidokas' lives. Most of all I saw other people training with a lot of vigour and passion, which in turn spurs me on to carry on training hard for the next year, continuing with my journey in Aikido.

So, to summarize, a big thank you to Nakao sensei and his wife Akiko for visiting us and I look forward to their next visit whenever that might be.

I wanted to write an impersonal essay about aikido but the more I try, the more I realise that it is impossible. Indeed aikido is not one of this sport that people can without involvement. I started years ago following my father who had been practicing for a few years. I didn't think much about it back in the days, it was fun to practice with other children and that was it.

I stopped for roughly ten years and started again as teenager. Once again, aikido was fun but that was pretty much it, it gave a physical activity where competition was absent, which I was looking for. One day though, our sensei asked me to come in the middle for a demonstration. As I was still beginning I was quite nervous about it but did the technique quite well, for my humble level, with him. Then he asked me to do the same with my father. Suddenly, I just couldn't get it right anymore. Our sensei told us that because of my family links with my father, I couldn't work with him as I work with other people. Back in the days I didn't give this event too much importance and it is only recently that I started thinking about it again.

I had to change clubs again to really start thinking about it. I moved to Britanny and there I found a different aikido. While in my former club people were focusing on the energy part of aikido they were forgetting that good basis and well defined techniques were important too. I realised this in this new club. This is where I really started to practice seriously. Twice a week at first and then five evenings a week. With such a huge amount of practice, it is unsurprising that my social life was totally merged with my aikido life. I think this is when I realised how much aikido is about the people we are working with. I don't think it is only about level, it is about this harmony we should all be looking for while on the mat. We need both uke and tori to make a technique and both have to play their part. Uke has to attack honestly for tori to be able to work on the techniques.

In the end, for me aikido is as much about the techniques and the physical side that about the relationship with people. I am looking forward to practice with more people during the classes as well as during the future seminars.

Aikido, A moment in time.

It's said "time fly's when you're having fun" as sure as there is never enough time in the day or the week.

We pass through time trying to manage as best as possible with our daily tasks and embrace our problems

so we can overcome them to improve our quality of life.

The same could be said for Aikido, as time passes by we learn more as we practice and become better at the art,

as we overcome the learning curve.

Aikido is a mark in time for me and an event associated with having fun and harmonising as we learn to come

through the confusion of what we are trying to learn when we practice.

It seems like we graded only a short time ago, but the truth is we graded 12 months ago and time is flying by as usual.

Soon Nakao sensei will be visiting again, we will all have to be better than before, I am sure this time will be soon

and come round again in a flash.

It's ironic that as we practice we find more to learn until we finally get a chance to show what we have actually

learned during grading.

Aikido is great medium for summarising the struggle for knowledge and the fun in trying to overcome and learn something new that's special.

It's important to remember, as time fly by and we get older we become better, health permitting we must

grow in knowledge & improve next year.

Many thanks to all who take the time to teach us and organise everything so we can practice.

Joe Szmutko

PS don't take my grade away!

It would appear at first sight that my day job and aikido have nothing in common. However, a closer look at my research shows how it can describe how aikido grading works.

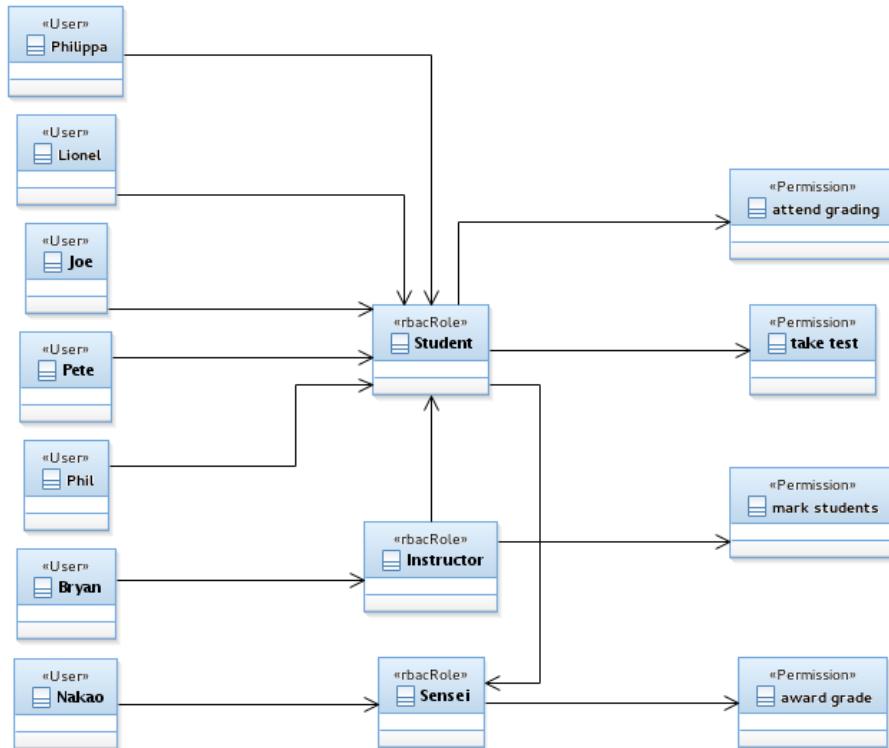
I am a researcher in computer security, and I work on access control. Access control deals with deciding who is able to do what: who can transfer money from my bank account, who can access my email or who can edit an article on a website. In my research, I deal with users that have some roles, and those roles give them the permission to do some things. Once I have decided who can do what, I can ask a question about the model I have created, and the answer is 'true' or 'false'. I can, for example, ask 'Am I the only person who can access my email?', and hopefully the answer will be 'yes'. Access control applies in many contexts, and not exclusively in computer science.

Grading in aikido follows a number of rules. I will show how some of them can be expressed using my access control model.

There are many users: each student, each instructor, sensei, and even everyone that is not a member. There are three roles: student, instructor, and sensei. People are assigned one role (or several roles) depending on who they are. There are 4 permissions: to attend the grading; to take the grading test; to mark students; to award the grades. The student role gets two permissions: to attend the grading and to take the grading test. The instructor role gets one permission: to mark students. The sensei role gets the same permission as the instructor role, plus another one: to award the grades.

On top of that, other rules need to be enforced: there need to be two people marking each student, and nobody can be simultaneously sensei and student. In access control terminology, the first rule is a rule. The second one is called a separation of duty rule. These rules are usually defined to prevent fraud or abuse.

Now that the model has been defined, we can verify whether or not it conforms to some properties. For example, "Sensei cannot award a grade to himself" is true. Another property is "Nobody can mark their own test". This is false according to the current model. One needs to add another separation of duty rule between the student role and the instructor role to make it true. The following figure shows the corrected model.



## THE BEGINNING WAS THE DISCOVERY

A journey of discovery may take us to many places, and during its course we may meet exceptional individuals that influence its direction before we realise that the discovery was made at the beginning and that the most exceptional individual was the one that inspired the journey in the first place. My journey began at the age of 14 in 1976 when I started aikido at Sanshirokwai Dojo, and likewise it has taken me to many places and its course has been influenced by many along the way, but the true spirit of aikido was most profoundly introduced to me by Steadman Davies Sensei

Steadman Davies Sensei was a deeply spiritual man and a great master of the arts of Judo, Aikido and Yoga. He learned these arts while in the army, stationed for many years in the Far East during the Second World War, and on his return to his home town of Llanelli founded and built the Sanshirokwai Dojo. It began in 1958 as little more than a shed in a back yard with the top and one side open to the weather, cold and wet in winter and breezy in the summer. The twelve foot square mat was a bed of sawdust covered by a white sheet held down by weights at each corner. In the winter months lighting came from a paraffin storm-lamp held aloft in turn by a third person standing at the side. As numbers increased, the need for more space precipitated a move in 1962 to an old abandoned chapel which he and his students worked hard to make fit for purpose. Many of the judoka trained by Steadman at the Anne Street Chapel gained Welsh and British Medal successes, and it was there that Aikido started in earnest. With continued growth a new site was found and with relentless perseverance and dedication Steadman's vision became reality when the Sanshirokwai Dojo was built and opened in 1974. Many more Welsh and British Judo champions followed and in 2002 Steadman was awarded an MBE for his services to sport and the martial arts. The aikido and yoga classes remained equally strong and in addition the dojo became a centre for Reiki healing. It was, and continues to be, a deeply spiritual place, quite unlike any other dojo I have visited, and the presence, fortitude, inner calm and plain honesty exhibited by Steadman Davies are unparalleled in any individual I have since met.

I practised Aikido with Steadman Davies Sensei at Sanshirokwai Dojo for a year, or may be two, before my journey changed direction when I decided to follow a break-away group led by Wynne Jones Sensei who was originally trained by Steadman and developed an interest in Ki Aikido. The emergent Ki Aikido Club in Burry Port founded by Gwynne Jones Sensei was closer to home and my aikido progressed quickly as I was able to train four times a week instead of two. It's strange how we become ignorant when we are immersed in new ideas, and it was two, or may be three years later that for some reason I went back to Sanshirokwai. I was astonished to see a girl that started aikido on the same day as me make herself impossible to be lifted off the ground by four strong men, and push another holding a stick to her throat across the mat as if he wasn't there. On that same evening I witnessed the most amazing iriminage I have ever seen when the feet of Steadman's huge uke almost hit the ceiling of the dojo before he carefully cradled him gently to the mat. It wasn't just the iriminage. All his movements were, as I remembered, without bravado, soft, fluid and evidently powerful. Some high grades sat in seiza on the side of the mat meditating before gracefully joining the class with poise once their kokyu was awakened, and during the low and audible misogi breathing at its close they seemed astoundingly comfortable with a minute between breaths. The class was in every way a spectacle, and it made me question my motives for my change in direction, but it was close to the time when I was soon to leave for university when the course of my journey would inevitably change again. For years, I meant to go back. Perhaps after many more years' experience it might not have looked so impressive, like the hills that seemed like mountains when we were children, but it is with resounding regret that I will never know.

On Monday, 8th August, 2011, the body of Steadman Davies was recovered from one of the Delta Lakes not far from the the Sanshirokwai Dojo. The local community was dumfounded and those that held him close to their hearts were empty with loss. He had chosen to embark on the next part of his journey. After over fifty years of service to the martial arts, and with deteriorating health, his job was done. He was 85 years of age and had been training and teaching classes as usual the week before. Unbeknown to anyone, he had provided for the future of the dojo and left there a map of where he could be found. Undoubtedly, he was in full control of his destiny and his passing was just the next step in his journey, his last meditation or mahsamadhi, the act of consciously leaving

one's body at the time of enlightenment. Only the enlightened are able to achieve this, and their karma is extinguished upon death as they merge with the cosmos.

Some are born great while others achieve greatness. The legacy of Steadman Davies Sensei lives on and the Sanshirokwai Dojo is as vibrant today as it once was - all credit to those he entrusted with its future. I was honoured during my last visit to be asked to teach the class, and this was as good a consolation as I could have asked for for getting there too late. It was evident that his spirit remains soaked in the walls of the dojo and in the hearts of those that welcomed me. The class cost a couple of quid, or "whatever I could afford", and when I asked if they needed to see my insurance and club membership book, they laughed with me. May be the spectacle was meant to remain as inspiration for continuing my journey....!

So still, Steadman Davies Sensei remains the greatest aikidoka I have ever seen, and his being reflected the true essence of the art more vividly than any other, even though over the course of my journey I have seen many teachers of great notoriety with impressive grade and lineage. It is notable then that to this day I still do not know what grade Steadman Davies Sensei was, or who his teachers were. Clearly these things are not important...!

Marc Davies, October, 2012

Stony Stratford

<http://www.sanshirokwai.co.uk/>

I stopped the car in that familiar place and cut the engine, it was deserted. Climbing out I wandered the short distance to the path and turned right and gazed at the black line that disappeared into the far off distance to the gate, a journey I would not be making today.

I contemplated crossing the grass which was still wet with the rain that had passed through earlier. I knew I would, even with these shoes on. It was almost a ritual I that had carried out over more years than I care to remember. Then, with one step I made my way towards the railings, ready to lean upon and stare out over the view.

I knew what to expect, the darkness of the sea below, the greyness of the sky which it met and merged with in the distance.

The breeze greeted me with a cold damp hello as it caressed my cheek, familiar, filled with the smell of the sea, almost welcoming and yet at the same time distant and anonymous.

In the distance, the outline of the new bay area, hotels, restaurants and smart apartments. Raised and transformed from the old docks and steel works that once existed, visible now only in my memory and hiding the history of the toil of men. Men who had worked one hundred years ago so that those fortunate enough could build the place where I now stood to oversee their kingdom.

It was the place where I grew up, my wonderful childhood, school, university— the place I had left so many years ago.

Is it home? Is it drawing me back? Will I stay?

I felt the dampness on my feet as the engine purred into life and I am on my way, so much still to see.

Maybe next time

THE BIRTH OF A STAR, THE DEATH OF A LEGEND.

1935 - 1977.

January 8<sup>th</sup> 1935. Gladys and Vernon give birth to twin boys in Tupelo, Mississippi, in a two-room "Shotgun" house built by Vernon, on Old Saltville road. The first of the twin boys, Jesse Garon, is still born, buried the next day, at Pineville Cemetery in a unmarked grave, 30 minutes later the second of the twins is born, ELVIS Aaron PRESLEY. The world will never be the same.

At the age of six, ELVIS starts 1<sup>st</sup> grade, at Lawhon School, Tupelo, a well mannered, but very quiet child, in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELVIS is asked by his teacher, Mrs. J-C Grimes, to sing in the high school cafeteria, and in the chapel, the same teacher enters ELVIS in a talent contest. At the Mississippi-Alabama Fair and Dairy Show, on "Children's Day" on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945, at the age of ten, his first public appearance, dressed in a cowboy suit, on a chair to reach the microphone with no band, or background music, ELVIS sings Old Shep, and wins 2<sup>nd</sup> place. On his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, ELVIS wanted a bike, coming from a very hard up family, all his father could afford was a six string guitar. Vester ELVIS' uncle gave him lessons, Vester later works for ELVIS as a gates-man in his Memphis mansion - 'GRACELAND'. In 1948 Vernon Presley packs up the family and with everything they own, they leave for MEMPHIS, penniless and with no job. Vernon finds work at the Precision Tool Company, they move into a tiny apartment at 572 Poplar Avenue. On September ELVIS enrolls at the L.C. Humes high school, Memphis. This is the final school, and ELVIS leaves an average student. After a couple of jobs ELVIS starts driving a truck while also learning to become an electrician at the Crown Electric. ELVIS saves up his money and makes a acetate record, Singing my happiness and that when my heart aches begin. At the Famos Sun record, owned by Sam Phillips - his assistant Marion Keisker - makes history by keeping ELVIS' phone no and passing it on to Sam. ELVIS returns to Sun records to record a 2nd and 3rd song, Usual love affair - and I'll never stand in your way. Sam Phillips likes what he hears, and puts him on file, his first release That's all right (mama). The Journey begins: to this day ELVIS Aaron Presley is still the biggest selling artist.

## HOW I SEE IT:

**Way of harmony, spectacular elegant movement, the art created by two or more interacting partners on the mat in perfect balance.**

**That is the image which always comes up to my mind when I think of Aikido. Beautiful interplay hiding countless hours of training, exploring the principles and that tremendous joy comes along when you suddenly realise "ah-ha wow, this is a genius, shall we try again?" Those moments are absolutely priceless.**

**Every one of us who has been drawn to this amazing martial art it was for different reason. I clearly remember even nowadays what was mine one. My very first thought to start with Aikido happened long time ago when my cousin done some unfamiliar pin ,that time, on my wrist and I ended up in excruciating pain nearly kissing the floor. I was so amazed that I wanted to try it again maybe for curiosity whether it really works or not. And when we tried it again, it had same strong effect as before. Then he told me: "Peter that was Aikido, my cousin has been doing it for some time now, and he showed me this technique". That was a first time I come across something so awesome like this, and I knew from that moment this is it, this is the martial art I'd love to learn. Although I had already some experience from different martial arts but this one was a different cup of tea, so effortless and effective at the same time.**

**What's very nice about Aikido and is so much true that it brings people together I can only strongly agree with that because during my experience I've had a chance to meet a lot of fantastic people which I'm only grateful for and made so much friends too.**

**If somebody asks me: so why do you do Aikido? I'd just say because I'm loving it, it's been part of my life for quite a while and when I'm practising there is that feeling which makes me happy and satisfied.**

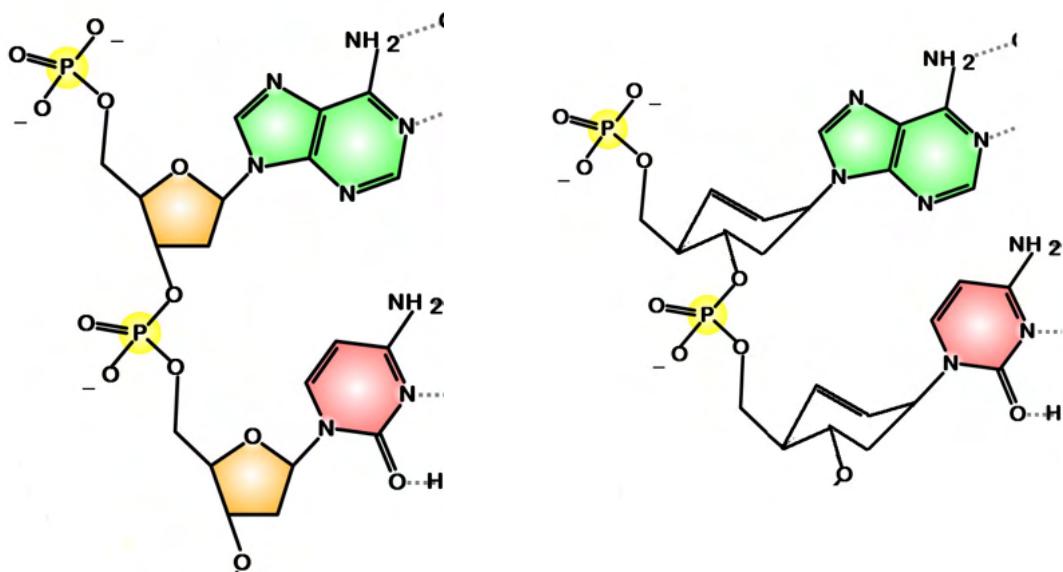
## Synthetic DNA evolution – possibilities for a different kind of life

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is, along with proteins and ribonucleic acid (RNA), one of the three “building blocks” of life, large molecules that are critical to all known living organisms excepting a select group of viruses. DNA carries genetic information – segments of strands with this information are genes – and will also form long structures in cells which are chromosomes. These chromosomes can be replicated by an organism, using RNA and enzymes, to form an identical DNA strand.

The key life functions of DNA means it needs very specific properties, having been thought of as a “Goldilocks compound”, the one and only that is just right to fulfil this role. This would mean that, as we see in life all over Earth, any one of these strands would have to have the same make-up to work; a backbone of phosphate (phosphorous bonded to 4 oxygens, negatively charged) and deoxyribose (a type of sugar containing 5 carbon atoms but only 4 oxygen atoms as opposed to the 5 in a standard ribose sugar) carrying a specific sequence of base groups made of the 4 bases adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G) and cytosine (C). This combination gives it the right electronic and steric properties for transcription.

A paper, published by Vitor B. Pinheiro, Alexander I. Taylor et al, in the journal *Science* back in April of this year has challenged this thinking. They targeted the sugar in the backbone of these strands and replaced them with a number of different groups whilst keeping the phosphate and base groups unchanged. Getting this reaction alone to work was impressive enough but what was most impressive – and possibly surprising – was that they could get these new strands to replicate. Grouped collectively as “XNA” some of these chains could achieve very similar rates of successful transcription to DNA chains themselves. Perhaps the most exciting part of this is no one is quite sure what this could mean – there is huge scope for further work in the fields of astrobiology, biotechnology, medicine and potentially even polymer chemistry based on this work.

An example of one of these structures compared to a typical DNA strand is shown below.



A typical DNA strand, with adenine and cytosine.  
Shamelessly taken from Wikipedia

DNA strand edited to show cyclohexene insertion.  
A molecule more commonly found in crude oil.  
This wasn't the most successful of the compounds used but could still transcribe.

Phillipa Smith, 5<sup>th</sup> Kyu grading

When I finished my undergraduate degree I decided to spend some time abroad in Japan, teaching English in a small elementary school near Narita. I found it a very fulfilling way to experience the country and while I was there I started learning Japanese with the first grade students which I tried to use whenever I could. As I learnt more it felt like I was discovering and understanding more of the country around me.

During my 18 months living in Japan I tried to spend any holiday time and weekends visiting different parts of Japan. One of my favourite places was Nara which I stayed in during the summer, it was very beautiful and peaceful and full of history it almost felt magical. I also really enjoyed visiting Himeji-Jo in the autumn, where the incredible white castle contrasted against the bright red leaves. Another aspect of Japan I really enjoyed was the festivals - the vibrant costumes and floats, the energy, the dancing, the music, and the food, and mostly how kind and welcoming everyone was. It was also the first time I tried sushi and I didn't realise how much I'd enjoy it. I found Japan to be such a welcoming and interesting place, there are many things about it I miss and I would very much like to go back and visit again.

I was introduced to aikido by a friend in my department here at the Open University and I was happy to be involved in the Japanese culture again. I find it relaxing and always enjoy training however bad my day has been!

On my Kuro obi there is the kanji for SHUGYO ... I asked what this meant ... I was told TRAIN. I know that things are never that simple, these things always have a deeper intrinsic meaning so I went to my martial arts library (yes my collection of books now would qualify as such!) tucked away in the back of a book published a decade before I darkened the door of our club the author wrote about SHUGYO. What follows is my understanding after reading the chapter.

## SHUGYO

In most physical pursuits when one is new the acquisition of skill accelerates rapidly. After time, a plateau in learning is reached, one with little effort will be overcome. As the aikidoka continues he will periodically encounter plateaus that are longer and longer. Progress becomes harder to recognise. The participant can convince himself that further polishing is unnecessary. He might be content to remain where he is, performing to a constant level. Eventually, he may cease training and find something else to do. He will then experience the same cycle of fast progress and repeated plateaus. For a serious aikidoka this is not so simple.

Eventually, no matter how dedicated the aikidoka is he will have doubts. Why is he spending so much time at this strange pastime with what seems to the layman to have little or no practical value or tangible reward? He might be encouraged by family and friends to give up this venture and find something more conventional. Injuries and boredom may tempt him to terminate his journey. Doubts can consume to the point of torment. They may come to a point where there seems little reason to continue. The teacher's standards seem out of reach. Out of desperation the aikidoka seeks counsel from the teacher. He met with the familiar and oft short reply - TRAIN. It is for the student to find a way out of this quagmire.

If the aikidoka continues he will enter a new horizon. He will reach a point - SHUGYO. This is where I will need to lift directly from the book, I do not wish to plagiarise but my knowledge of kanji is non-existent. GYO - this is a modified pictograph of CROSSROADS. SHU - this is a more complex character, it is written with quick dashes indicating delicate hairs like those of a calligrapher's brush. The other strokes act to express a hand grasping a stick. In common parlance SHU means TO PRACTISE OR ENGAGE IN STUDY though the history of the word is TO STRIKE WITH DELICATE PRECISION.

For the aikidoka to be at a SHUGYO level of training he finds himself at a crossroads. It has dawned upon him that his journey is difficult. He is also aware that the rewards he seeks are nowhere else to be found. Again he may be compelled to quit. Yet as he forges onwards with SHUGYO, he can not. His training remains the perfection of the outer form or technique yet with SHUGYO the development of the inner self is a priority of his practice.

The path taken with SHUGYO is arduous, it is trying and exacting; it will not allow the aikidoka to rest. Once the aikidoka has passed the crossroads of SHUGYO it remains the only way to progress.

## **Similarities between golf and aikido** **(main points)**

***Centre: You need good centre to play golf and do aikido to keep your balance.***

***Posture: You need good posture to build a strong base in aikido and to swing properly***

***Ki Energy: You need ki energy to swing powerfully through the golf ball***

***These are some of the main points of similarities between golf and aikido. Maybe someday I might even play in a hakama.***

***Shin Bateman***

僕はイギリスの田舎町に住んでいるのですが、気が付いたら日本を離れてから既に十年を軽く超える年月が経過していました。ここに居ても日本食材を手に入れることは出来るのですが、本当に美味しいものとなるとなかなか縁がないのも事実です。特に蕎麦。口に呑んだ時に蕎麦の香りがふわっと広がるような、そんな蕎麦には出会えません。稀に美味しい蕎麦を手に入れることもありますが、市販の合成調味料で仕上げた蕎麦つゆなんか使ってしまっては、せっかくの蕎麦が台無しになってしまいます。味も風味も消えてしまいますから。蕎麦粉の香りを殺さずに、逆にその香りを膨らませてくれるようなそんなそばつゆを目標に、今まで何度も何度も試行錯誤を繰り返してきました。あくまで僕の個人的な好みの味になるようになりますが。今の段階での僕のそばつゆの作り方を書いてみたいと思います。簡単です。

1. かえしを作る。醤油(大さじ6)、みりん(大さじ3強)、三温糖(大さじ1.5くらい)を全て鍋に入れ、中火にかける。時折砂糖を溶かし込むように混ぜながら沸騰させ、一煮立ちしたら火を止める。常温まで冷ましたらガラス瓶などの密封容器に入れ、冷暗所で最低1週間程度、出来れば1ヶ月程度寝かせておく。
2. だしを引く。鍋に湯1リットルを沸かし、鰹節(20g程度)を一気に加えられる。再度沸騰したら、ぎりぎり沸騰を続ける程度まで火力を弱め、ここから10分程度鰹節を煮出した後、さらしなどで漉す。
3. そばつゆに仕上げる。ボウルにかえしとだしを1:3の割合で入れ、しっかりと混ぜ合わせて完成。

素材には本物を使うこと。添加物を含まない本醸造の醤油、昔からの製法のみりん、人工甘味料ではなく普通の砂糖、削りたての鰹節など、加熱しても味のバランスが崩れないものを使うと良いと思います。また、風味の良い蕎麦粉に負けないように、敢えて鰹節のみでしかも煮込んでだしを引きます。こうすることで鰹の風味とコクが凛としたベースを作ってくれるようになります。

こんな関東風の蕎麦の付けつゆが僕の好みなのですが、ひょっとすると関西の方たちからしたら「何、それ？」などと思われるかもしれません。まあ、こういう蕎麦つゆが好きな奴も居るんだとご笑納ください。もしいつかせいぶ館にお邪魔する機会がありましたら、合気道は勿論のこと、みなさんの蕎麦つゆの仕込み方もお教えいただければと思います。その時には、何卒よろしくお願ひいたします。え？関西はうどんですか…。

# How I Came to Aikido

As a teenager I had decided, with as much thought and consideration that a teenager is capable of, to become 'a musician'. Reality soon set in. I needed to get the required education and exam results to be able to study a degree in music, I also needed to commit many hours a day to practicing the piano. During my A levels I increased my daily practice from one and a half hours a day to four or five hours a day. This was to prepare me for an even more demanding practice regime at music college. My part time work throughout all of this was playing the piano for a local ballet school.

So off to college to study music, composition and the piano. I had a great time.

After graduating in 1995 I was determined to play the piano for a living. Knowing that solo pianists who have the ability to play with your average symphony orchestra are in short demand I opted to play the piano for ballet. Before long I was freelancing at many of the professional ballet training establishments in London. My piano playing was now in the order of eight hours a day!

I have had this work load ever since and towards the end of 2008 and early 2009 my back started to suffer. Unable to take anti-inflammatory medication because of an earlier stomach operation I sought alternative treatment and went to an Alexander Technique practitioner. Originally developed by Frederick Mathias Alexander, an actor of around 1890, the Alexander Technique teaches people how to stand with a correct and natural posture, its purpose is to eliminate unnecessary tension in the body. It is not a relaxation technique or form of exercise, however it has proven very helpful for actors and musicians. The practitioner that helped me managed to redevelop some sensations in my abdomen that I had not felt since the abdominal operation I had some six years earlier. While she was working on my posture she could sense 'energy' or 'Ki', I had no idea what she was talking about but was very aware that she was fixing my posture, my back pain and had recovered sensation in my abdomen. Intrigued by her mention of Ki I looked it up on Google and within a couple of hours was looking at Youtube clips of Aikido.

Three years later and I regularly pass Francesca, the Alexander teacher at work. She is thrilled to bits that I have recently achieved my 3rd Kyu and when I get a bruise I can blame her in jest.

As for the piano playing in ballet classes. It all started twenty two years ago, I feel that now is a good time for a career change, so in the near future playing for classes will stop and training for a new profession will start.

The Aikido, I hope, will be with me for the rest of my life.

Stephen Dickinson