

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

Dear friends

One of the greatest leaders of Aikido Kenkyu Kai has passed away. Bob Gibbon, aged 45, has died in his sleep probably on Friday 7 June, 2002.

He is irreplaceable and his death has left a big hole in our lives.

Yours, Stewart Letford

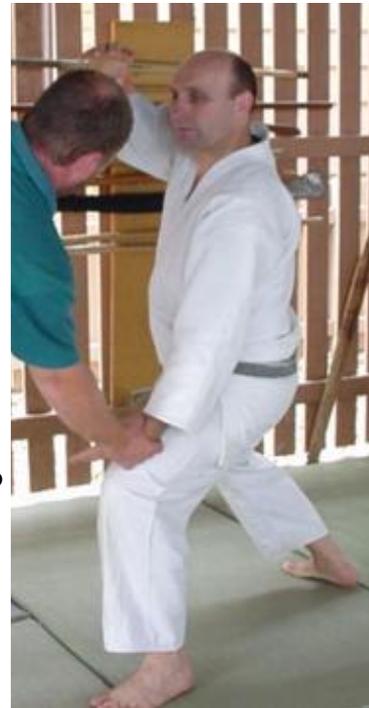
Bob Gibbon was a founding member of AKI in the 1980's, he established dojos in Newcastle, Canberra and Brisbane, made many trips to Japan, and was a leader in developing Aikido Kenkyu Kai in Australia.

After founding Newcastle dojo in the late 1970's, Bob moved to Canberra where he founded Erindale dojo and developed Turner dojo after Stewart Letford moved to the Gold Coast. In 1995 Bob moved from Canberra to Brisbane and followed a path of Aikido, Kyudo, Karate, and Zen. Before he died, Bob received his 5th Dan in Aikido.

He led a remarkable budo life, fusing many concepts and always challenging those around him to look for more in their daily training experience. He has touched many and was loved by all who strived for genuine understanding. He will be sorely missed.

Just understand that birth-and-death is itself nirvana. There is nothing such as birth and death to be avoided; there is nothing such as nirvana to be sought. Only when you realize this are you free from birth and death.

Dogen, "Moon in a Dewdrop"



FUNERAL & AIKIDO TRIBUTE

Bob's funeral was held on Saturday, 22nd of June 2002, St Peters Church, William Street, Maitland NSW

Stewart Letford Sensei gave an eulogy at the funeral and praised Bob's generosity and love toward others. He stated how he felt Bob had never been happier and more centred or enlightened than in the few months before his death. Peter Dixon (Bob's brother-in-law) gave a précis of Bob's work and academic achievements: Bob was an Human Relations officer with the Australian Taxation Office and was studying for his second Masters course at the time of his death.

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It was extremely sad when a selection of Australian Aikidoka carried Bob's coffin out to the waiting hearse and we all said goodbye to his body. Bob's family have requested tributes be in the form of a donation to the National Heart Foundation: cheques made out to the foundation can still be sent in an envelope marked "in honour of Bob Gibbon".

A memorial aikido tribute was held at Broadmeadows PCYC in Newcastle later that afternoon. Newcastle members set up a beautiful shrine with flowers, a large bowl of water with five tealight candles in it, and pictures of Bob. Attending members also placed their own pictures and memorabilia on the shrine.

Each dojo/region was asked to conduct a 15 minute dedication to Bob, which included:

- Dave Dempsey from Adelaide reminded us of Bob's sayings and (with help from Pip Cody of the Melbourne group) Bob's many wonderful training methods;
- Newcastle members undertook a demonstration and remembered Bob for all the times he travelled to Newcastle from Canberra and Brisbane to help them;
- Steve Seymour and Sydney members undertook an aikido demonstration, and then Steve discussed the depth of history that Bob and he shared;
- Steve Nugent read out a poem to Bob;
- Chris Guthrie from Japan gave a speech on Bob's kindness in introducing him to AKI, followed by a short demonstration;
- The Canberra Region members did a demonstration and remembered Bob's influence on AKI's aikido;
- Bruce Lowes read out some messages from overseas, including one from Y. Takeda Shihan;
- Nigel Carruthers-Taylor did a meditation and Ikebana in remembrance of Bob's "left-field" training;
- Mike Dunne got everyone involved in a group visualisation meditation dedicated to Bob;
- Japanese representatives undertook a demonstration and read out messages from Japan, imploring Australian members to keep the connection with Shonan Aikido Renmei strong;
- The Gold Coast group undertook an aikido demonstration, and Perry Lugg showed the strong irimi movements that Bob had been exploring prior to his death. Perry also went on to say how important it was to tell people how you feel about them before it was too late;
- Numata Hideo Sensei gave an iaido and aikido demonstration, and expressed his sadness in Bob's passing.

Finally, all members filed passed Bob's shrine, bowed to his soul, and said their final goodbyes. It was a very sad but touching and special event.

Regards, Nigel Carruthers-Taylor

**In Memoriam -
Sentiments from around the world**

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[Tribute from Bob's work, the Australian Taxation Office](#)

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To all teachers and members of AKI,

It has been just over a week since we said farewell at the funeral and tribute of Robert Gibbon (Bob). My heart was broken as were the hearts of many of us.

I just wanted to say to you all how proud I am to be part of such a wonderful group of people. Often we don't say much to one another because our training runs deep and communicates at a very sincere level. The demonstrations and tributes to Bob were wonderful and straight from the heart and hara. So many communicated their feelings from around the world. So many came from Japan and all parts of Australia to show how Bob had personally touched their lives through his teaching and warmth of his friendship.

We may only be a small group of people as an organisation but I feel we are closer and stronger for it. It was demonstrated so clearly at Bob's tribute how important it is for us to stay together with one heart mind and spirit. Living apart does not make it easy but the pure spirit of ki binds us never the less.

We give a special thank you for our friends and visitors from Japan. All the letters and communications from the sempei, friends of Bob and the wonderful letter from Takeda Sensei. The personal attendance of Miyuki San and Nakamura San from Yasuyuki Suzuki Sensei's dojo and Takahashi Sensei to keep my heart strong when I was feeling so weak. The visit of our old friend Chris Guthrie representing Higashitotsuka Dojo, the beautiful demonstration by Numata Sensei who came all the way from Japan to calm and relax our emotional pain.

I know Bob's spirit is with you all and thanking you for the way you all played a part in his rich and creative life. Bob's last words to me were, "this too will pass" but his spirit and the spirit of you all will continue. It is this spirit that binds us together.

Bob's parents and family thank you for the attendance at his funeral and tribute. They would also like to thank you for the flowers and many kind, healing words from around the world.

I also thank you on Bob's behalf for being the people you are and for being part of this special group of individuals. From Japan to the U.S.A and Canada to Australia you have showed the true spirit of Aiki.

Yours Stewart

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Dear Bob,

From the first stage of Aikido cultivation in Australia, you enlightened people's mind not just in Aikido practice but whole life for them, you were a very natural instructor who is enjoying it without noticing what you are doing.

You were just reflecting your way of life to your surroundings like a big light house without asking any return, just giving, giving, giving....

Though, you suddenly departed to the next world, I can heartfully catch your message that you are showing the next stage for Aikido friends of Australia, "Practice, practice, practice".

You and your other friend's great enthusiasms and endeavour of many years has grown many branches, new seeds and flowers making new world, but, I feel that you are re-noticing the deepest but simple instruction of

Ueshiba Morihei sensei's saying; "All is one family in this universe, even enemies".

Many strifes may disappear if your embraceful spirit permeates all around the world. Please watch from your new stage and think of us.

See you again! Yoshinobu Takeda [Kamakura, Japan]

p.s. Through almost 20 years relationship with us, you were very embraceful for cultural exchange activities, variation of Aikido philosophy. Do you remember the K-Day event in Gold coast theatre? You were wonderful speaker to the audience (1,200 person) but took much of my time of Aikido demonstration because you thought longer speech doesn't harm precise time schedule. Unfortunately, event was organised by very precise promoter of Japan.

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Eulogy For Robert Gibbon Sensei, by Stewart Letford

The Circle

Before speaking about Robert or Bob as he was called by his many friends. On behalf of all Robert's friends here and overseas, I would like to express our great sorrow for Robert's parents, sister & family. For Robert's parents, his passing has left a huge hole in their lives. Robert loved his parents and family very much and often spoke to me of wanting to care and provide for them. I feel sure everyone who knew Robert have their heart's open for his family. His mother Gwen, father Bob and sister Ruth and to all his family members, we feel deep sympathy for the loss of such a loving person.

Bob's life became a completed circle. Although he passed away at a young age he had found a quiet and calm wisdom. He spoke to me about his acceptance of things and feeling the true value of being in the moment aware of life's richness, the mind being free of the regrets of the past and fears of the future. It seemed he had reached an acceptance of the circle of life with its seeming changes and uncertainties and had completed the circle with one smooth brush stroke.

I met Bob when he was eighteen or nineteen years old at Canberra University and over the years of our long and deep friendship, I saw Bob change as he grew in his wisdom. He was ten years younger than I and our relationship began with me being his confidant and advisor. In recent years those roles were reversed with Bob guiding me through my problems. He always knew what to say and what to do to help me. He helped many others in this way.

From the sometimes confused and angry young man of nineteen he had completely changed to a calm and completely understanding man who never felt anger or fear. He saw life's big picture all around him.

In another more ancient time he could have become a priest or spiritual leader. From the first day I met him he was obviously searching for a spiritual way through his life's circle and was attracted to others with similar paths in their lives.

He had been through marriage, divorce, and other relationships that fell apart. He never felt anger or regret at these unhappy endings and always cared for those who had been with him and touched his life. He was a very powerful man to train with in aikido, a martial art Bob reached great heights in. He never used his power to hurt anyone. His great power was a gentle one and was the source of his great creativity in the art of aikido. He studied Zen meditation, Kyudo and prayed. His mind and heart were spiritually open in all directions. This gave him his great sense of compassion, always holding out his helping hand to those in need. In this way Bob touched the lives of all those here and many others around the world.

He was an educated and hardworking person constantly searching for new ways to help people within his work. For Bob, his work was not just a job but a vocation.

He was the first in Australia that realised that the art of Aikido did not lay in techniques but came from a formless freedom within. At first I didn't understand what he was doing but later his influence was the vital

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spark that transformed my own understanding. This spark is still burning and is bringing a new realization to many in his group. His creativity has brought a new, refreshing worldview to his friends and students.

Robert Gibbon wasn't a man that you could just like, he was a person you loved. Now it's a great shock to us because we always expected Robert Gibbon to be there, solid as a rock. We often never showed him how we felt and took this special person for granted. Now that his circle is completed he has moved on and we realise that we loved this person. He was not just a friend, his circle of life surrounded us all and his circle was full of love and compassion.

A day or two before Bob's passing I telephoned him for help with some of my problems. His answer to my questions was as simple and complete as his circle. He simply said, "What ever happens this too will pass." This was the last time I spoke to Bob and I feel his answer for me is in someway an answer for all of us.

The circle is complete.

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Bob is gone. My job was scold him. I lost job. What shall I do?

Your friend, Yasu [Yasuyuki Suzuki Sensei, Japan]

Bob had a driving passion to find the 'way'. His infectious enthusiasm for training and life in general will be missed by all who knew him.

Bruce [Bruce Lowes, Canberra ACT, Australia]

[See also below 'Memories of Bob Gibbon' by Bruce Lowes](#)



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Dear old bobbington. how can it be that we won't see him again?

a number of people have shared memories, and i have been very heartened to read them. in return i would like to share one or two as well. for example, when i left australia bob presented me with a pair of red braces as a going away gift to keep my trousers (and my spirits) up. it was a wonderful gesture, and i'm really sad now that i never got to tell him how much i appreciated it.

thinking back on the early training days i also remember "mad dog" gibbon, as he used to be known at that time. to take bob's wrist in training then was to hit a brick wall, and it went on like that for years and years. one day, for no discernible reason, i took his wrist during a training session in canberra, and got a real shock. instead of being confronted with the usual defensiveness i felt the complete opposite. there in my hand was a hollow space, with a little thin spirit running down the middle of it like a stick of peppermint rock. i asked him what had happened but he didn't want to talk about it. he never did. over the next few weeks, however, that little brittle stick gradually expanded until it filled out the entire space inside bob's wrist and became more flexible. at which point bob was entirely present. why, i will never know, but he had come to join us at last. he was "mad dog" no more.

he was dear old bobbington instead, spiritual explorer, aikido pilgrim, and true friend to the world. "vici ergo estes: I conquer, therefore you exist." bob conquered us all, and therefore we exist. thanks, bob

Ralph [Ralph Pettman Sensei, Wellington, New Zealand]

How does one speak of the loss of someone so dear. He was as much a part of my life as Aikido itself. The two are inseparable to me. We started under Sugano sensei together and my progress to Takeda Sensei was nurtured and shared by Bob.

My first foray to Japan was with Bob and my entire aikido life developed along with Bob. He was always one step ahead because of his drive and discipline. He was a wonderful friend and brother who shared all that he had, both mentally, emotionally, physically and economically. His spiritual pursuits were always to the fore in his life and his discoveries were there to share with those who were interested. He was a shoulder to lean on and a smiling face amongst the apparent pain that I encountered. He was always available even though at times he appeared tormented himself. A generous man who had an infectious and lovable laugh and a great sense of fun. He was a pioneer in many ways especially the way he broadened his study of aikido through zazen, karate, kyudo etc. Out of that came a freedom of movement which was really the freedom that he sought within so seriously. In that respect he was a man driven by the desire to be free, at peace, and to understand. He was certainly not satisfied with what life had dealt him.

He collected for a while the name Budo Bob by our senpai who really became his big brothers and confidantes. Over the years this love and respect broadened, and Bob became more loved by our aikido family both in Japan and Australia. Whenever I visited Japan everybody asked of Bob's wellbeing. His

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character was known and treasured. One could fill a book on stories and anecdotes of time spent with Bob.

Here in Australia, Shonan Aikido Renmai was developed with a huge input from Bob which eventually became Aikido Kenkyu Kai and is as much a product of Bob's input as it was Stewart's. Bob moved to Canberra in the early days to be near Stewart Letford, Ralph Pettman and Yasuyuki Suzuki Sensei. This was the beginning of the group. Bob then moved to Brisbane again to be near Stewart and to assist in the development of the Art under Takeda Sensei. Bob was always there for the people and for the Art. Bob has left a hole that can not be filled. The hole in our hearts will only be filled with memories and a lost love which are a poor substitute. Treasure those memories as they are so rich and full of a wonderful human being who has enriched us all.

Bob you were a brother and a dearly loved and treasured friend. Part of my life has passed on with you though I know we'll meet again. But I miss you NOW. Through your discipline and desire I'm sure your next embodiment will be to your advantage, but MY sadness is deep and difficult at this time. May you be at peace.....Farewell, Dear Dear Bob, Farewell

Stephen Seymour [Sydney NSW, Australia]

I was deeply shocked to hear the sad news of Bob's passing, not only because of his youth but for the energy he had to put into the important things in his life. Bob was truly unique, as a person and in his Aikido. Who for so many years put his whole heart into AKI Australia as well as his own Aikido. Bob was never afraid to experiment with his Aikido and to share that with us. For me, my memories of AKI Australia will always have Bob right up front.

My heartfelt thanks to you Bob for sharing your time with us.

Chris Guthrie [Japan]



I clearly remember some years ago, in Barry Lind's house in Canberra, where I was living, and Bob was

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staying for an extended period. He and Michael Horan would be sitting up at 1am drinking beer and laughing outrageously. I missed my sleep at the time, but I will miss that laugh far more.

I will also miss the opportunity to practice 'Bob-waza', which we all in Canberra have missed since he went to Queensland.

Tony Butt [Canberra ACT, Australia]

So much already said of grief and loss.
Of qualities, of relationships, of ways of
Bob's
That bore a gift;
Subtle trip to make us stumble.
Find new balance.
Mark our past

What person Death to 'issue' the ultimate
atemi
must have smiled at Bob's ukemi.
In that roll a role is left.
A model of grace,
of giving.
Gentle Bob.

A tear should not seal that one life's
archives
'read only' - no - they are working files.
Creative conflicts,
open awareness.
The Bobness
in each of us.

Mike MacGregor [Queanbeyan, NSW,
Australia]



Bob, I will always remember your loving kindness, gentleness and generosity over the years.

Julie [Julie Manley, Canberra ACT, Australia]

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We will all miss Bob, his unique style and energy. Bob's contribution to our group has been huge over the years in Canberra and more recently in Queensland. We will remember him.

Tony Cooke [Canberra ACT, Australia]

Bob touched so many people and left a lasting impression, even if people only met him once. I will miss him deeply, he was a great teacher and a beautiful soul. Bob is my reminder that I lived in a dream (and often still do): I was asleep, and Bob came along and woke me up. His intensity and sheer presence showed me what it means to live.

I will always remember the intense sessions at Turner dojo - ones where I was sometimes afraid to go! But I always did, because I was searching for true awakening, which Bob kindly gave me! Even though Bob's methods were often intense and bewildering, he strived through true love of his students to help them become real.

Thank you, Bob, for making me real....I will always continue to strive to awaken.

the bokken strikes
I move without thinking
Bob is already there

Nigel [Nigel Carruthers-Taylor, Canberra ACT, Australia]



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... the "In Memoriam" page ... It's a great idea and one important way of acknowledging Bob's life and immense contribution to his Aikido family. I feel I've lost a loved family member and every now and then another wave of sadness and regret surfaces.

The process of looking through [photos of Bob] brought to mind many memories:

- Training with Bob in our lounge room at Rozelle ... and the souvenir bokken hole left in the lightshade.
- Training with Bob 'under lights' on Birchgrove oval.
- The feeling of release from habitual patterns that Bob's teaching brought with it.
- Bob's infectious laughter and loving smile (which often seemed tinged with an inner sadness).
- Bob's regular exhortations for us to strive for more from our training and to not settle for self satisfaction.
- Training with Bob under his house at Brighton and walking with he and Christine along the boardwalk (just over 12 months ago) - a time when he seemed as settled and happy as I have ever known him.
- A short but memorable conversation I had with Bob at the Newcastle camp in January - the last time I saw him.

Thank you Bob - my life has been immeasurably enriched for having known you.

Stephen [Stephen Nugent, Orange, NSW, Australia]

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Steve's poem to Bob:

BOB

You burned brightly
but way too briefly
even in passing
you teach us
reminding us of life's big lessons

Huge of heart
wide in vision
long in loyalty
deeply spiritual
solid as The rock
our family's Uluru

You dwelled on the fringes
as explorers often do
but remained at our centre
feeding us
even when hungry
teaching us
even when tired
leading us
while putting yourself last

Friend and inspiration
teacher and student
laughter and tragedy
strength and vulnerability
you enriched our lives and remain with us
and we with you



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I don't know what to say. There's a hole in my chest and a whirlwind of thoughts, memories and regrets in my mind. I feel that I want to write something and in some way connect with our Aikido family. I need to grieve with you all. Now is the time to tell you all that I love you and you are so important to my life - it's too late for me to tell that to Bob. I should have done so years ago.

I didn't understand half of what Bob said about life and Aikido, but he spoke from and to a deeper understanding. I am deeply marked by him. I don't know what to say. Thanks Bob. I love you and I'll never forget that half mast hakama.

Fiona [Fiona Hawke, Orange, NSW, Australia]

I was driving to work at the University of Wollongong on Wednesday when Stephen Seymour called me to tell me the news of Bob's death. I think I spent most of the rest of the trip screaming to myself as I drove to work - for the sad loss of a dear friend.

Thanks be to Bob for blessing this earth and our aikido community with his love and spirit, his crazy complexities and even crazier and occasionally more wonderfully irreverent training practices. He was a formidable teacher in our dojo for years in Canberra and then again throughout Australia and his contribution to Aikido in QLD.

I have always felt honoured and blessed to be among those who Bob held as friends. It was great to spend time with him at summer camp in Newcastle, sad to miss him at Easter in Canberra.

Deepest sympathy to all who knew and loved him. Particularly his family, who he loved so dearly.

Adam Kronenberg [Wollongong, NSW, Australia]

Bob became an early and much respected teacher of mine soon after moving to Canberra (15 years ago). Patience, enthusiasm, joy, generosity and curiosity were hallmarks of his teaching. He encouraged us to extend our practice, to "go inside", to let go, to "just move", and to work and look beyond the obvious. He was authentic - he walked the talk.

I often draw on movements and practices which Bob taught. We were doing a "leaning heavily" example in Adelaide just last week.

His legacy is just such as this. I wish I could have done more to repay the generous sharing of his time, knowledge, wisdom and home. Bob's well centred answers from "left field" will also be sorely missed ;-)

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They caused us to think and look at things in new ways, and to acknowledge and value difference.

He was my teacher and I loved him.

David Dempsey [Adelaide, SA, Australia]

I'll go along with everything Dave says about Bob. I started Aikido in Bob's sensitivity classes on Saturday mornings at Turner - my wife still stirs me about coming home with a black eye after walking blindfolded into a wall - and it was only when I started weeknight classes a couple of years later that I realised that the throws and locks actually had names that I had to learn.

I learnt a lot about being with the world from Bob and, even though I haven't seen him for some years, I find myself feeling the loss of a great spirit.

Ray Hunt [Canberra ACT, Australia]

Bob scared the hell out of me. He was so honest and real. In his presence I felt like a liar and a fake. Whether facing him on the mat, or chatting over a beer, Bob's intensity - his presence - was the same. When Bob was there, Bob was there.

Bob stood in the world, awake and open-eyed. He faced his own fears and foibles, and encouraged others to do the same. When my attention wandered, when my intention was vague or absent, Bob would pounce. It took me a long time - too long - to learn to welcome that.

To learn that when he did something that scared me, angered me, humbled me, confused me (or all of the above), he did it out of love.

Thanks Bob.

For being scary
For being honest
For just being.

Scot [Scot Burns, Canberra ACT, Australia]

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I haven't made sense of it yet.....bob gone.....

Stanley Dupont [Australia]

The members of AKI Pennsylvania, USA, are very sad to hear of this loss. We never got a chance to meet Bob, but we feel connected to all of you in this sad time. We announced this news tonight after our keiko. Our dojo is quite small here, but we always feel very close to AKI members everywhere. We always tell our new members stories about Takeda Sensei, Seino Sensei, Yasu Sensei and other members, and their adventures in Australia. The Australia AKI members are very famous to us here in Pennsylvania USA.

We want you to know that you are very important to us as we continue to train aikido. We hope you are all well and our hearts are with you.

AKI Pennsylvania, USA: Matt Bridi, Ian Trinkle, Steve Trinkle, John Smythe, Gene Buryakovsky, Daniel Folkinshteyn, Rob Fisher

Fudoshin Aikido Dojo sincerely regrets the passing of Robert (Bob) Gibbon.

The memory of the Man and His deep searching through the Beauty of His Aikido will echo in the Spirit of All dojos. He will be respectfully remembered always, and the Nature of His Personality will be forever missed.

May God Bless You Bob Gibbon

Chicko Xerie and Fudoshin Dojo [Noosa QLD & Sydney NSW, Australia]

My heart is heavy at the realization that we will never see Bob-san again. It is almost impossible to grasp. What a warm-hearted, large-spirited human being he was.

It had been many years since I had seen him, but his brief e-mail message of April 8 "Hope things are well" instantly brought back the memory of a charming man. How can we know that our delight at the kindnesses of someone, the smile that comes to our lips when we think of him or her, is actually a feeling of love?

Perhaps it was only on one trip he made to Japan that I talked and practiced with him. I remember his keiko feeling so well -- full, heavy, rounded, sensitive; challenging but with no hard edges. The first time we met he was standing at a ticket machine somewhere in Yokohama, trying to figure out what to do. He and his

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friend were dressed in very short shorts and T-shirts, and they stood out from the crowd. I helped them get their tickets, and Bob made me laugh. Then I hurried off. What a surprise to see him enter the Kanazawa Hakkei dojo later on! It was during that visit perhaps that he took a dan test. We were sitting in seiza next to each other at Higashi Totsuka, having a pleasant and lighthearted chat -- he was very relaxed, and I remember so well a feeling of happiness -- until he was summoned to take his place in the middle of the dojo.

Dear Bob, I hardly knew you but always thought we would meet again. But we can never know when death will come. Each moment is a gift. Each moment could be our last. With your passing, I realize how precious were those minutes spent in camaraderie, laughter, and conversation; that such simple and mundane events could now take on an inestimable value -- inspiring gratitude to the Fates who let our paths cross, and grief that they have taken you from this world -- is a testament to your pure and generous spirit. Be free and glad on this next journey, Bob. Be filled with joy and light. You were well loved by many, and you always will be loved.

My heartfelt condolences to Bob's family, friends, and fellow Aikidoka.

Meg Seaker, British Columbia, Canada

This is terribly sad news, and though I didn't know Bob all that well (or thought I didn't), I couldn't help but weep out loud for his passing and our loss.

Aikido Kenkyukai has become one of the treasures of my life, and Bob was right in there, a rare gem near the centre where he shone, together with my other irreplaceable teachers. I will miss him and I will always remember him.

Requiescat in pace, Andrew Bettison

I'll miss Bob doing early morning meditation in an empty dojo at aikido camps. I'll miss him cornering me at bbq parties to muse about the hidden significance of basic stances. I'll miss the way he looked off in the distance like he was looking at something none of the rest of us could see.

I'll miss his constant presence at the heart of our aikido group and his generosity of spirit. He extended his whole self when he trained and taught and talked. He was inspiring and funny and passionate. I'll miss Bob but I'm sure now he has found what he was looking for, and his spirit will live on in each of us.

Tasha Sudan [Kamakura, Japan]

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

On Saturday, June 8th, at the end of keiko, I recounted to my students a story, which I hoped would be motivational. I told them how when I would say to Suzuki Yasu Sensei that so-and-so trained so hard and with such enthusiasm, he would often reply in his dry style, "Of course. Soon he will die."

I told my students how he usually said this not of elderly people, but of those in their 30's or 40's. This surprised me and made me laugh the first time I heard it. Then I asked my students if they found out that they had only 6 more months to live, what would they do. Would they train everyday...? Would they take time off from training and spend every last minute with friends and family...? Would they try to combine the two...? What...? "Whatever your answer," I concluded, "when we DO train, let's try to train as if 'soon we will die.'" Then we bowed out, did some ato geiko, and went for a beer.

We trained again on our usual Tuesday. I tried to keep this idea in mind while I was teaching and it seemed that my students were doing the same. I got home feeling invigorated and refreshed. Then I checked my email.

I couldn't stop crying for quite some time and more tears have caught me off-guard quite a few more times in the past week. The man who always trained as if "soon he would die", died at 45.

Lia Suzuki [California, USA]

... a sad and very unexpected occurrence ... I was one of Bob's very first students in Canberra. I remember many happy, if totally exhausting, sessions when there was just Bob and me. Rarely have I meet anyone so committed to and enthusiastic about his Aikido, or in fact most things in his life. Although I lost contact when we moved to the UK his memory has always lingered. He was always kind and tolerant towards me. My life is most certainly better for having known him ...

Best Regards, Doug [Doug Mein, UK]

I only met Bob twice and spoke briefly to him on both occasions. In reading all the tribute Emails, I am amazed the influence Bob had on his fellow aikidoka both on the mat and in everyone's hearts. It's an irony of life that one doesn't realise how much someone is loved until something like Bob's passing hits us.

Jason Nyilas

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

It's now been a week since I heard of Bob's passing, and it still seems all too surreal. In the twelve or so years since I first met Bob, I never lived in the same town so I was used to only seeing him on the odd occasion. Those occasions will now seem very odd indeed without Bob there. I have found reading and sharing everyone's memories and impressions of Bob very cathartic - thank you to all. I relate so strongly to those feelings of being daunted by Bob's intensity (especially at first), overwhelmed by his training - (I don't know what he was doing, but I want to be able to do it) - inspired by his level of dedication and commitment to "the way", touched by his warm smile and genuine interest in me at a personal level whenever we were reunited, and humoured by his quirky eccentricities. Although I have feelings of great loss and opportunities missed for myself, I have a feeling of peace for you now Bob. I trust you are reaping the rewards of many years of committed hard work.

I love, miss and thank you Bob. I shall cherish the memories.

Jeff Standen [Sydney NSW, Australia]

Bob was my first Sensei. I recall his love of broadening his student's understanding by introducing them to related arts. I remember clearly two classes at Erindale - At one Bob started by introducing us to a Karate teacher who then took our class. The second occasion was when Bob introduced a friend of his, who was a full blood North American Indian, and she taught us a traditional indian dance and song to welcome in the spring - it was truly delightful. With Bob training always had unexpected dimensions.

Diana Wright [Canberra, Australia]

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

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Remembering Bob

I didn't know Bob in the way most of you all did. I knew him best as a house guest as he stayed with me on three different occasions here in Kamakura. Of course we would go to the dojo and train together and then go out for substance to a place or two with the dojo diehards, but then we would return home and stay up into the wee hours and Bob would share his ideas and feelings about aikido, zen, aikido, relationships, aikido, life, and of course aikido. It is surprising how many stories I have about Bob considering how little time we actually spent together. The last couple of weeks, however, I have not been able to share too many of them. It seems everyone has too many to share. Since we have heard of his passing there have been several gatherings in which all expressed their feeling for Bob and shared their memories. Of course after keiko at Takeda Dojo we got together with Yamamoto-san, and Chris Guthrie, Berin Mackenzie, and Tasha and everyone shared their stories of Bob. On Sunday, Seino Sensei, Takahashi, Sensei, Yasu Sensei, Kirisawa-san and a number of others got together to remember Bob. Yasu Sensei brought pictures of Bob from some twenty years ago. Now everyone here will only drink Kirin beer because it was Bob's favourite. Then again this evening, after keiko at Takahashi Sensei's dojo in Kanazawa Hakkei, one of Bob's favorite places to practice when he was here, Shriaki-san brought along his photos of Bob, Ashizawa-san, a student of O-sensei, shared her memories of Bob. He was a fellow that truly cut a wide swath; he touched so many lives.

I remember one of the times he stayed with me, he went up to Tokyo on one of his mysterious outings, I don't remember if it was for zen or kyudo or what, anyway. He met a European woman on the train who just happened to be an aikido teacher in Europe. Of course Bob wanted to dive to the bottom of the matter immediately and posed to her a number of questions of philosophical and spiritual import to all of which she could only reply, "I don't know, it is just a job." The response dumbfounded Bob. I believe he challenged her for the rest of the hour of their train ride together with the same question he asked me for the next three days in exasperation and pique "How can anyone think that teaching aikido is 'just a job'?" To this day I feel sorry for that poor woman. Bob could put one on the spot and there was no escape. Although he is gone he will remain an inspiration, and a challenge. He could inspire the complex, disparate emotions of compassion and annoyance.

Bob, god damn it!

Ken Schultz [Kamakura, Japan]

Memories of Bob Gibbon

I first met Bob close to 20 years ago at Turner PCYC Dojo in Canberra, and thinking back now, to a

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

stranger his concentration on the mat and his serious dedication to practice was a bit daunting. But, once you got to know him, his smile, his belly laugh and gregarious nature quickly dissolved any apprehension.

Even then he had a depth of training experience he was willing to share. Having spent several years training in Sydney with Australian Aikikai while also fostering an Aikido club at Newcastle University later joining with Stewart Letford, Ralph Pettman and Stephen Seymour to support the formation of what is now known as Aikido Kenkyukai under Takeda Sensei. Not long after I met him he established the Erindale PCYC Dojo in Canberra. The training was first conducted on acro mats in Richardson Primary School for months while the current club was built.

Bob pursued his training with a passion, often spending weekends driving to Sydney, Newcastle and later Gold Coast or Melbourne to conduct general training and support all the Summer or Winter School events. I remember his trademark silver Mazda 323 he carefully drove for so many years, he always had a dogi and a couple of bokkens in the back along with a container of oil to top the motor up. In those days there was a bunch of us who got together for adhoc lunch time training, there were backyard dojo's and the occasional Sunday afternoon training in the forest. Bob was always had a big part in those.

At his own personal expense in time and money Bob visited Japan on many occasions to attend training events and maintain our link with senior teachers. When Japanese Aikido visitors came to Australia, Bob extended selfless hospitality to teachers or students alike. He liked to entertain and socialise, always keen for a coffee or drink after training with a desire to chat with his students to know them personally rather than just relating to them as training partners.

His search for inner development also led him to pursue other 'dos': shin taido, iaido, karatedo, kyudo and zen. Bob was always prepared to expand the boundaries of his practice by mixing his training with other arts and attending training schools by visiting masters. However, this search was not just a selfish pursuit, Bob was always keen to share his insights and discoveries and apply these back to Aikido. His classes were famous for the unexpected. He influenced and cultivated many new students and those that were inspired by his practice have continued to train and in turn take on the responsibility of teaching themselves. There are a surprising number of 'new generation' Dan grades that first started training with Bob.

Bob's dedication was demonstrated in his practice, he trained with a solid harmonious feeling ever mindful of his movement and despite his tendency to the unpredictable always careful with his partner. I always had complete trust training with him knowing that he would never exploit a fully committed attack. I expect I'll never train again without him coming to mind.

Bob often worked on bringing his practice out of the dojo, which he did in so many ways. Not just by the outdoor classes or training in a pine forest but into his spiritual life, into his workplace and into the community. Bob gave more than he received. Many people have benefited from his spirit and although he may now have left a hole in many peoples heart, through his generosity he has left behind a depth of lasting feeling.

The last time I spoke to Bob he rang me a few weeks ago to invite me up to his house in Brisbane for a few days, it was something I had always intended to do for years. Now with sad regret I wish I had made more

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effort to do so. I can still clearly remember his farewell party when he left Canberra, but counting back that must have been at least 7 years ago. How could those years have just slipped away?

I would like to believe (perhaps naively) that there must be something positive to come out of death. For me this has been another hard reminder of how easy it is to take our lives for granted. The everyday things we tend to lose sight of like our health, food on the table and those who care for us.

Bob, you were a loved and trusted friend, you were an advanced teacher yet you treated me like a peer. I'll surely miss you and never forget you, may your spirit now be totally free.

Bruce Lowes, 19 June 2002 [Canberra ACT, Australia]

I am saddened to the core, and can not write anything that is satisfactory. Attached is some history about the Newcastle dojo, which I wrote 2 years ago but never completed. I want to share it now to show the absolute importance he is and the fact that without him, there would have not been such a group. This aside from all the other aspects he brought to our lives which I cannot express here. My apologies for any inaccuracies or omissions. He was my mentor and good friend.

Chris Rodgers

The History of Aikido in Newcastle

Aikido began in Newcastle in 1977. My first experience of this then obscure martial art was in March 1977 when somebody had a poster at the University of Newcastle inviting people to attend Aikido classes at the Teachers College gymnasium. Myself and a friend Dave, walked into the gymnasium one afternoon where we saw two people engaged in a fluid exercise which appeared to have no purpose except to cause a lot of heavy breathing. I later realised (about ten years later), that this was a form of ikkyo. After a few minutes, one of them came over and said "Hi, I'm Bob. Would you like to join in?" So for the next two full sessions my friend Dave and I rocked back and forth doing something called backwards ukemi.

The rest of the seventies was spent attending weekend training sessions with Brian and Roger from Aiki-kai in Sydney by squeezing five people into Bob's beetle and driving down to Sydney at the breakneck speed of about 45mph. The Sydney dojo also visited us on a few occasions. Also, we had a visit from a stout bearded man known as Sugano Sensei- I don't remember much about that visit. We did other things in the seventies as well, like wearing body shirts and flares.

In about 1980, Bob Gibbon, our teacher from Newcastle sat for his First Dan grading, and I sat for my fifth kyu grading. It was at this time that Yasuyuki Suzuki Sensei, was in Australia for study and began teaching Aikido in Canberra. Stewart Letford, who was training in Canberra with Aikikai, was so impressed with Yasu Sensei, that he invited his Master, Yoshinobu Takeda to Australia. In 1981 Yoshinobu Takeda, and his wife visited Australia for the first time, conducting a summer camp at Canberra, followed by recreation at

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Batemans Bay. Stewart, Bob and their few students took the decision to train under Takeda Sensei.

Each year after that, Takeda Sensei would visit often to help us train. His training was so unique and admirable that his visits shortly became very popular. These early visits were well organised and supported with the devotion of Ralph, Bob, Steve, Mike, Bruce, Barry and others. Alcohol was consumed only in moderation of course. Many of Takeda Sensei's top students also came out with him. There were such notable characters, such as Seino Sensei, Yamamoto Sensei, Shiraki Sensei, Numada Sensei, Yasu Sensei, Hirano Sensei, Kadoya Sensei and Satoshi Sensei.

It was at about this time that Bob moved to Canberra for work. This left the Newcastle dojo with only three students, myself, John Foster, and Paul Kalore, (who really did think that he was Musashi.). Fortunately I outranked them all at being 5th Kyu. We started classes at the Toronto YMCA and struggled on for a number of years this way, attending summer camps and winter camps trying to improve ourselves and looking for the path. It was very hard to find new students at this stage. It was around this time that Neil Kelson joined us.

Without the regular visits from Bob on weekends, who would drive from Canberra, we would have folded. He would come up and train with us, anytime, anywhere. In long grass, in dust, on the beach, and sometimes in the dojo. At the end it was always a relief to finish training, but it left you with an unfulfilled need to do more, and the enthusiasm to keep practicing, passed on from Bob.

John had become so keen on Aikido, that he was taking most of the classes. It was at about this time that I left training for 6 months to try other things such as Judo, Tae Kwon-do and Kung Fu. Well, I couldn't get into them. When I rejoined, the group had expanded and they were training at the Mayfield Police Boys Club. There were some new key students. These were Bob Jones, Meryl Harding, and Ken Lee.

We then moved into the Tighes Hill YMCA venue in Elizabeth St. There we were joined by such famous names as Gabrielle den Hollander, Peter Allsop, Roger Wakefield and Mark Malmberg, and were treated to six months training with Noriko Tanaka from Kumamoto in 1984.

Peter had been training in Sydney with Ken Maclean who had his own unique, admirable style. We then developed a long relationship with Ken's Dojo, visiting and training with each other, as well as the regular visits from Stewart Letford and Steve Seymour.

Around 1987 we moved our Dojo to the Windale branch of the Police & Citizens Youth Club where we all tried our hand at taking classes and were joined by Rica with her teaching input. This was in addition to regular visits from senior students such as Mike Macgregor and those involved in training camps.

In about 1988 Yamamoto Sensei, came to stay with myself and Mark Malmberg. During this time we were treated to many training sessions from Yamamoto, with a big influence on our style. This was in addition to the regular visits from Japan by Takeda Sensei.

In 1991 I started a class at Maitland Police Club with great support from Gabrielle, Fiona and the other

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students such as our visitor from France, Philippe. Again Bob would travel up from Canberra to train with us. Such was the enthusiasm that Neil continued training after tearing a toe -nail out on the mat.

After this Dojo flooded several times I stopped classes there. Peter and Gabrielle have continued on ever since at various venues and that is their story to tell.

Chris Rodgers

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

Bob Gibbon - 1956 to 2002 Tributes from his work, the Australian Taxation Office

The following is an extract from the July 1 edition of the ATO Intranet newsletter

It was a sad day when we learned our friend and colleague Bob Gibbon had suddenly passed away. His colleagues would like to express their great sorrow at the loss of such a loving person.

Bob was a 'people person' who always brought his personal philosophy to bear on his work. Amongst many educational achievements, including a Bachelor of Arts from Newcastle University, Bob had a Diploma in Teaching and for a while taught in the NSW Department of Corrective Services before joining Veterans' Affairs in December 1980.

In August 1981 he moved to the Department of Defence. Bob joined the ATO Corporate Services Group in 1990 and moved on to the Small Business Income Human Resource Unit in 1994. In early 1995 Bob relocated to the Chermside Office in a national Human Resource role within Small Business Income. Consolidation of the ATO's Human Resource resources in 1999 saw Bob's final move to ATO Corporate. Bob was appointed team leader of the ATO Skilling Queensland team early this year. A remembrance for Bob was held on Tuesday, 18 June, attended by his colleagues, his National Management team and Ruth and Peter Dixon, Bob's sister and brother-in-law.

"Bob was a hard working, driven-to-achieve person, always polite, courteous and kind. We all learnt positive things from our involvement with him."

Thoughts from Bob Gibbon's colleagues at the ATO

Gerald Byrne
Assistant Commissioner
ATO Relations, Brisbane

I am sitting at home very sadly and reflecting on the energy, joy and 'Bobness' that Bob would bring into any gathering. His simplicity and complexity at the same time; his view of the world that was so often different in its approach - often challenging and always positive and with the best of intentions; always seeking something better for all.

Bob was Bob. He was a wonderful person.

Martin Crowe
Design Facilitation

In Memory of Bob Gibbon Sensei

Integrated Tax Design, OCOM, Canberra

I never thought that I would be at a loss to say something funny or give everyone the impression of anything but aloofness or impassiveness at times like this, but this has hit me harder than I would ever have imagined. Maybe it's because Bob was such a genuine person. Bob was the most passionate bloke I have met about nearly anything in his work life. He never bitched or moaned. I know people sometimes used to give him short shift on issues, but he carried on regardless. When I first met Bob, I thought he was from another planet. Bob spoke and wrote a language that was so foreign to me that I didn't have a clue at all what he was on about. I was not alone. I remember people's faces at the SB HR Coogee conference when Bob gave us an Aikido demo. When he entered the room in all his paraphernalia, jaws dropped. He won people's respect by the end of the demo though.

Over the years, I learnt about Bob. A couple of years ago, Bob was working for me on field stuff and it was then that I truly saw Bob's value. He could get things started where I couldn't. He saw things from a perspective, I just struggled with. And that's how I used Bob. Don't leave him on an issue too long, but throw him in when you want things shook up a bit. People later came to me expressing concern or reluctance about employing Bob, but I can honestly say, I always recommended him highly in the light of what I just said.

Anyway, I'll be having a beer for Bob - I just wish that it was with him....

Allyson Dutton
National Director,
Excise, Wollongong

I can remember one of the funniest times with Bob, when we were recovering from the skills audit and consulting with parts of SB/WHT about their results. Bob arrived from Brisbane, with his usual baggage - which at that time was a very large suitcase on wheels with not much in it - and proceeded to drag it around National Office in the discussions with staff. While that was pretty funny and very Bob, around the same time, I noticed him walking funny, always with his briefcase in front of his pants and I asked was there something wrong. Bob explained that he had busted his fly and didn't have time to get his pants fixed but was continuing on throughout the day, in interviews, with his briefcase always strategically placed. Very Bob.

On a serious note, I will always remember Bob for his enthusiasm and sheer hard work. I

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know at times he copped a bit of flack, but he continued on - undeterred. On a personal side, I think he was one of the few people I have met who genuinely cared and believed that they could make a difference to people's working lives.

Karen Morton
Project Manager
ATO Skilling, Melbourne

Over the last few days quite a few of us have been remembering Bob.

Conversations have frequently been about how we respected him for his dedication to his work. Frustration that sometimes arose when working closely with him is something that we've reflected on with a smile and fondness - his thought processes were unique.

He was a hard working, almost driven to achieve person - always polite, courteous and kind. We have all learnt positive things from our involvement with Bob.

Laura Beck
ATO Skilling, Brisbane

A few of us managed to slip behind Bob's barriers to discover a truly beautiful person. I am one of those lucky people. I have known and worked with Bob for nearly 4 years - a relatively short time really - but those years gave me a colleague, a mentor and a true friend. His constant support and encouragement helped me through more than one personal crisis in the last couple of years and at the same time he taught me how to survive in the ATO. Bob was a complex person - work, self-achievement, goals, his love of Eastern philosophy, Buddhist teachings and Aikido instruction - but that was Bob the Builder, Bob the Teacher. When Bob stepped out of that particular square, he was an enthusiastic learner. He would make time for other down to earth stuff - dinner parties with friends, day trips to Stradbroke Island, the annual baseball picnic and not forgetting the very lively ATO Skilling Xmas parties. This year in particular, Bob, Heke, Brian and myself have laughed a lot and I will miss that most of all.

Mitch Harper
OCTC, Brisbane

Bob's passing marked a watershed for me as he epitomised my time in ATO skilling . 14

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months ago he was the first person I met and spent time with and on my last afternoon in ATO skilling just 2 weeks ago I spent 3-4 hours with Bob. We often talk in our profession about experiential learning and that contact with each other provides an extra dimension to our learning - so what did I learn from time spent with Bob?

I learned that the journey with Bob from Point A to Point B was usually by the most circuitous route possible - for the impatient like me this could be maddening but I learned a lot on the scenic detours - I learned about other options I hadn't considered and to read situations from some very different angles but mostly I learned the patience to enjoy the journey as much as reaching the end.

Bob also taught me about trusting myself - he knew from the beginning that I disliked up front delivery and needed to over-prepare myself - so he always threw me in at the deep end - at all our co-joint presentations, and there were many, Bob constantly surprised me by handing over at the most unexpected point to cover material he knew I knew but hadn't prepared - I learned this was deliberate and I learned to trust in my own skills and not be afraid of risk.

Bob had a love of learning new things and exploring new areas and this was our major common ground - he was always genuinely interested and from Bob I learned about sharing - I always believed I truly shared my knowledge and information with others - but Bob taught me that to share knowledge is not just about telling others how to or what to, but it was about making yourself a conduit for others own discovery - thus playing a much humbler sharing role

I think back to the myriad of conversations I had with Bob over the last 14 months, and reflect how much about me, normally carefully hidden, Bob discovered- In our conversations on Psychology, marriage, child rearing, chaos theory, cognitive restructuring even the philosophy of cooking I learned more about me through his gentle inquisitiveness. In fact I often amuse myself with visions of Bob in the roles we discussed - having a Socratic Bob-length conversation with a 5 year old on why sharing will make him a better person.

I also believe that in giving himself to the team he enabled us. How generously and happily he was a foil and victim to my sense of humour - he played the straight man well and I believe intentionally - providing a chance for us all to keep up our spirits and laugh.

Overall what I learned from Bob changed me just a little, subtly and slowly as when you are

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guided by the best of coaches (without even realising it) - not surprising when you consider his name Bob means shining.

Well Bob, I will miss your genuine warmth, enthusiasm, caring and even your quirkiness - the world will be a slightly colder place without you