

SHARON TIFFIN/WEEKEND EDITION

Sensei Fred Haynes demonstrates a submission hold on student Dean Rebneris as Ted Pashley looks on during a class at Island Aikido in Saanich.

Aikido: Martial art for all ages

Size, strength not necessary to excel at this 20th century martial art, says instructor

Mark Browne

Weekend Edition

Aikido has proved to be the perfect martial art for Fred Haynes.

A sixth-degree black belt in the Yoshinkan type of aikido, Haynes is the chief instructor or "sensei" for Island Aikido, which operates out of the Prospect Lake Community Hall.

Haynes originally took up the Japanese art 33 years ago in London, England when he was hoping to develop some self-defence skills.

It wasn't the first time Haynes had studied a martial art. He briefly practiced judo when he was 11.

"I was too small for judo — I used to get squished all the time. I was very small as a child," he says.

After coming across an ad in the paper for aikido classes, Haynes, who's always had an interest in Japanese culture, discovered a martial art where size doesn't matter.

While self defence was initially his primary concern, he discovered aikido to be a lot of fun, not to mention a great way of improving his level of fitness.

Aikido is a defensive, non-aggressive martial art that involves circular moves that aim to redirect the energy of the attacker.

Rather than hitting or kick-

ing an opponent, aikido movements typically end in a pin or throw.

The circular aspect of aikido renders physical strength and a person's age non-factors in terms of excelling at the art.

"It's an ideal activity for people of all ages... Some of the other arts tend to have shorter career paths," says Haynes, who studied the art in Japan for six years.

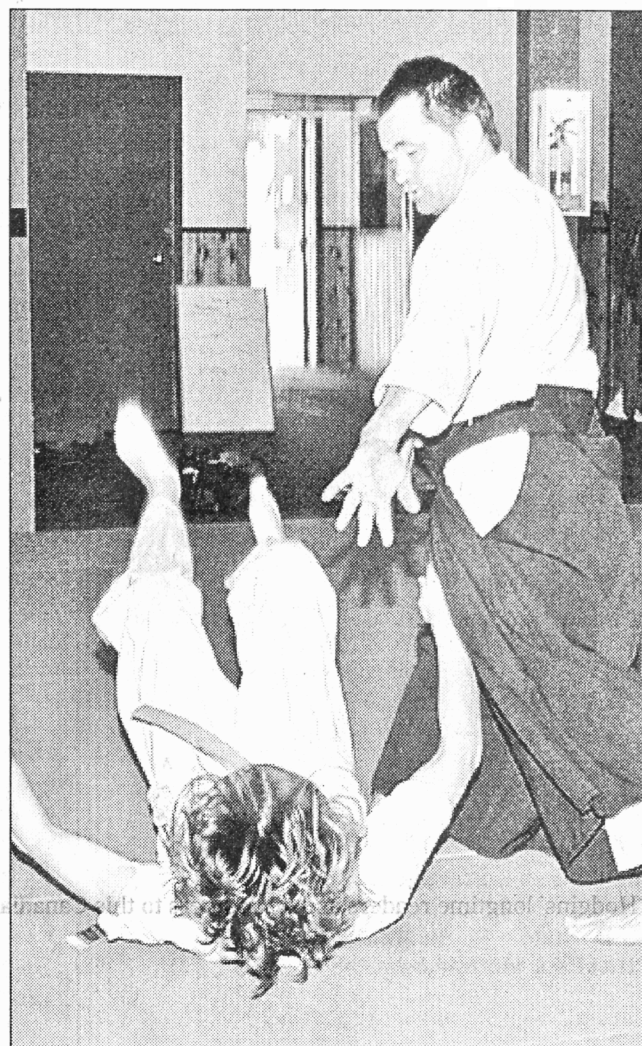
Punches in predominantly striking arts, such as karate, are essentially "shadow" strikes in class to prevent injury, he points out. On the other hand, the throws taught in an aikido class are full contact yet controlled, he says.

As well, the circular moves used in aikido aren't as hard on the body as other martial arts. That said, people who've practiced other martial arts are often attracted to aikido when they get older, says Haynes, now 53.

That became apparent at the club he was previously a member of in Ontario before Haynes moved to the Capital Region a year ago and established Island Aikido.

"We got a lot of people coming to us who had done karate or judo previously. They were now in their 40s and wanted to get back into a martial art but just couldn't take the aggressive pace of the younger people," he says. "We have a lot of people starting aikido in their 50s."

A typical 90-minute class at Island Aikido begins with a 15-minute calisthenics warm-up based on Yoshinkan aikido



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Haynes finishes off a throw on Brock Littlejohn to show the effectiveness of a move.

moves and a 15-minute cardiovascular warm-up. The remainder of the class is largely geared toward instruction in the art.

There are a number of types of aikido including the Akikai

style, which is taught in a number of clubs in the Capital Region. The Yoshinkan style of aikido differs in that the novice practitioner can develop effective self-defence skills much sooner than other styles of

aikido, Haynes says.

"It's the speed with which we can take someone from a novice deeply into the art and give them the tools such that they can explore and refine their aikido by themselves," he says.

More than half of Island Aikido's 22 members are women. One is Haynes' wife, Cathy, who is relatively new to the Yoshinkan style but earned a second-degree black belt in Akikai aikido.

"I like the whole combination of it improving my coordination, my confidence — I was much shyer when I first started," she says. "I like the aspect of it being non-competitive, which differentiates aikido from other arts."

It's compulsory for women who are police officers in Tokyo, Japan to practice the various types of aikido, Fred Haynes says.

"Why? Because it allows the person who is smaller in stature in size to control someone who's bigger in size," he says.

Ikuo Watanabe, a seventh-degree black belt and the highest ranking female instructor in Yoshinkan aikido, will be teaching a seminar at the Island Aikido club on Sept. 21.

Island Aikido is a not for profit organization. All money raised from student dues go towards the Prospect Lake Community Centre. Classes are taught on Tuesdays (7-8:30 p.m.) and Sundays (10:30-12 noon). For information, call 708-0702 or go to <http://www.islandaikido.com>.