

Dear Friends of Mary Heiny Sensei,

Mary Heiny Sensei needs a hip replacement and we are writing to ask for your help. Heiny Sensei's intense training in Japan as a young woman and all the years of dedicated teaching have taken a toll on her body. Those of you who have had the opportunity to see her in the last few years are undoubtedly aware that she has been struggling with the pain of a failing left hip. Cortisone, alternative therapies and sheer willpower have kept her on her feet until now but the situation has reached a critical point. If she does not have her hip replaced she will lose her livelihood and we will lose access to one of Aikido's most passionate teachers.

Heiny Sensei's situation is difficult at best. She, as you may know, has led a non-traditional life (see attached bio for more details). Her career as an independent teacher of Aikido has never earned her more than a modest living and she is not eligible for the highly subsidized employment-based health insurance that gives many of us peace of mind. Although she has recently obtained minimal health insurance through the State of Washington, it is not all clear if that policy will cover a hip replacement, or how soon; the policy has a nine month waiting period for pre-existing conditions and hip replacements are not automatically covered. Heiny Sensei is currently struggling with a large and indifferent bureaucracy trying to obtain answers.

Since obtaining the hip replacement in Seattle is far from guaranteed, Heiny Sensei is pursuing a second option as well; having the surgery in Thailand. Although that may be surprising to some of you, it turns out that Thailand has become a prime destination for people in Mary's situation. An entire health tourism industry exists and state-of-the art facilities with highly trained staff are available. Moreover, as they work routinely with non-residents, they list all-inclusive prices for procedures.

Regardless of which approach turns out to be successful, Heiny Sensei needs our help. In addition to the out of pocket medical expenses other costs include travel, rehabilitation, and all her expenses during her recovery. Based on this information we have set a fund-raising goal of \$30,000 by May 31 st , 2008. Although that is a daunting sum for an individual, it is not that much when divided up amongst all of us who have been touched by Mary's aikido teaching.

To contribute please make out checks to "Mary Heiny" and send them to the following address:

Friends of Mary Heiny
c/o Tara Meyer
5248 Beeler St.
Pittsburgh PA 15217

Tara Meyer will be in charge of collecting and documenting donations. All donations are private gifts to Heiny Sensei and she will determine how it is spent. Please include contact info and a sentence or two explanation of who you are, where you practice, and how you know Mary. This information will be passed onto Heiny Sensei unless you indicate that you would prefer to remain anonymous. If you have any questions about the donation process contact Tara at tmeyer@pitt.edu .

Mary has never been wealthy in money, but she has touched all our lives, befriended us, and taught us. Please join those of us who have signed this letter in showing her how rich she is in people.

Sincerely,

Denise Barry, Kumakai Aikido
Robin Cooper, Aikido of Madison
Linda Holiday, Aikido of Santa Cruz
Garth Jones, Allegheny Aikido
Chris Jordan, Bond Street Dojo
George Ledyard, Aikido Eastside
Tara Meyer, Allegheny Aikido
Greg O'Connor, Aikido Centers of New Jersey
Charlie Page, Baltimore Aikido
Susan Perry, Musubi Dojo
Kimberly Richardson, Two Cranes Aikido
Danielle Smith, Aikido of Monterey
John Stone, Aikido of Madison
Joanne Veneziano, Emerald City Aikido
Chuck Weber, Baltimore Aikido

P.S. Visit www.FriendsofMaryHeiny.org to track the fundraising progress and to get updates on her hip surgery.

Mary Heiny Biography

For more than thirty-nine years, Mary Heiny Sensei has followed a path of physical and spiritual inspiration as a student and teacher of Aikido. She started this journey in 1965 after watching O'Sensei teach a class at Hombu Dojo in Tokyo, Japan. The effect of this first encounter has inspired her through long hours of training and study.

"As I watched, a part of me could not believe what I was seeing and sought a rational explanation while another part of me understood immediately that this man had attained a profound understanding of nature and possessed amazing power."

After studying at Hombu Dojo from 1968 to 1973 with O'Sensei's direct students and with Hikitsuchi Sensei, 10th dan, in Shingu, Heiny Sensei returned to the United States and began teaching at the University of California in Santa Cruz. In 1976, she went to Seattle and opened Seattle School of Aikido. After nine years, she turned that dojo over to her students and left to begin another journey.

"I worked to develop an atmosphere in which students would, with me, approach Aikido as a living process to be engaged in rather than merely a series of rigidly unvarying forms to memorize. I emphasized that the techniques of Aikido are intended as tools for us to use in examining the nature of power, to engage in uncompromising self-scrutiny, and to realize our potential as powerful, compassionate, creative, self-aware human beings. I also emphasized that good technique is necessary to accomplish this. Diligent physical training must be combined with a thoughtful examination so that lessons of one's life inform one's training."

Heiny Sensei was invited to the Ottawa Aikikai in Canada in 1987 where she worked for three years developing the club into a full time dojo. When the school had grown to her satisfaction, she handed it over and embarked on another period of personal training and increased activity in teaching seminars and workshops in Canada, the US, and Europe. In 2001, Heiny Sensei returned to Seattle.

Heiny brings to every class, workshop, and seminar she teaches not only her years of aikido training and teaching, but also her extensive experience and study of Japanese culture, language, Shinto and Buddhist philosophies, and Non-Violent communication. She strives always to communicate the beauty and challenge of O'sensei's desire that we use Aikido to become empowered as creative, compassionate beings and learn to appreciate each other as members of one human family.