**Introduction to Weapons Training at**

**Aikido Eastside**

I have prepared this manual to help students memorize and practice the various weapons forms and exercises which we use at Aikido Eastside. The majority of these were taught to me by Mitsugi Saotome Sensei, my Teacher. One sword form was developed by Tom Read Sensei of Arcata, Ca. and is labeled as such. There is a sword exercise by Obata Sensei and two parts of a jo form developed by Chiba Sensei.

It is very important that the student not misunderstand the point of learning these forms and exercises. Merely memorizing a large number of forms without really understanding their content is a waste of time and has no meaning. The reason that these forms are on our requirements is to allow the student to acquire the "tools" necessary to make further progress. Once a form is memorized in its basic form and understood as originally constituted, it becomes just such a "tool". At that point the student can begin to take the form apart, bit by bit, try it full speed, examine individual movements as if under a microscope, see if any movements won't work for you at full speed. This kind of training will make these forms your own not merely imitations of someone else's movements.

Some of these forms contain movements which I worked out myself to solve certain problems which I discovered as I intensively practiced these forms. Other Instructors I know encountered the same problems in the forms but worked out their own unique solutions. The student should expect to see some variation amongst the senior students of Saotome Sensei in how these forms are executed. There are no single "right" answers to the situations as presented in the forms. Instead, the student must find out what really works for him or her.

Weapons training is crucial to the preservation of Aikido as a valid martial art. It develops great precision, improves posture, fosters an awareness of openings and how to close them, and encourages the student to rely on movement and positioning rather than physical strength. The two sword forms are a fabulous way to lose some of the "sidedness" of left and right hand which we all have. And finally, weapons training is a way that even students who are older or have some injury which prevents them from doing empty hand very hard can keep their edge with demanding training which does not require hard ukemi.