

U. of C. prof debuts first Peace Dojo in Hyde Park

By NKEYA WOODS
Staff Writer

After opening aikido dojo classes all over the world, one University of Chicago professor headlined his first Peace Dojo festival in Hyde Park Sunday at the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club, 5480 S. Kenwood Ave.

Third-degree black belt aikido sensei Donald Levine, a professor of sociology, said that he has been offering classes at the university for U. of C. staff and students, but ran into problems when people from the neighborhood also wanted to participate in his classes. It was then, just a few months ago, that he decided to move his classes to the Neighborhood Club and open them to the public. His Aiki Extensions is sponsoring the event.

"We started this as a very modest fund raising event to help pay for the mats we had to purchase which are very expensive," Levine said. Aikido, the martial arts of peace, combines, aerobics, meditation and self defense. Activities included aikido and women's self-defense, a circus performance by CircEStem. Since 1948, all but six years have been spent living in Hyde Park after Levine moved from Pennsylvania. He spent 44 years with the university, earned three degrees, including a Ph.D. in Sociology and was once the dean of the undergraduate department. It was at the univer-

sity in 1979 that Levine discovered his love of aikido.

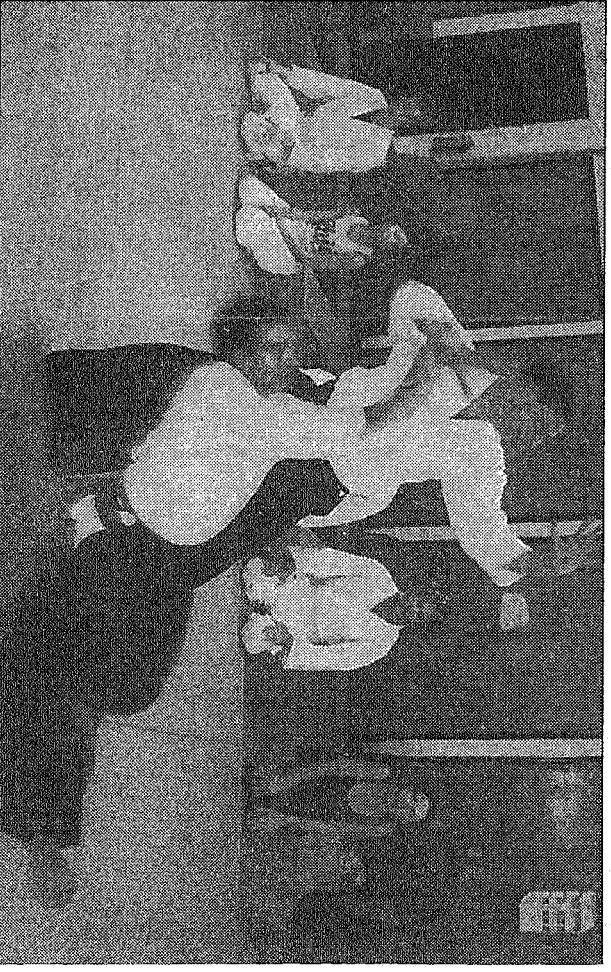
"This incredible practice offers a way between the hawks and doves. It's the way of the owl," Levine said. "It doesn't believe in violence. People have to see it in order understand how it offers a third way in ideas."

Two years later, he headed the university's aikido club. During his experience at the university led to create a "unique" course called conflict theory, a combination of aikido and sociology.

"That work led me to found Aiki Extensions in 1998," he said. Aiki Extensions was developed to support and enhance communication among those who apply the practice and principles of aikido in venues outside of conventional dojo settings.

His most memorable experience with aikido involved bringing together conflicting religious factions, including Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians on the island of Cyprus by teaching the martial classes.

"It was a transforming experience," Levine said. "I feel confident that despite this outbreak of warfare, that our participants will continue to uphold what aikido represents."
His organization established an aikido program in Jerusalem and Israel to ensure that people have the opportunity to continue with the sport.



Instructor Aviv Goldsmith demonstrates aikido techniques as students look on during Sunday's class at the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club. Owen M. Lawson, III

Besides helping people in the Middle East, Levine is looking to help children battling AIDS in Africa. A percentage of money raised from this event will be donated to Awassa Children's Project. The rest will go to the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club and Aiki Extensions. Medici on 57th St., Cedars of Lebanon and Seven Ten donated food to the event. For more information on Aiki Extensions, visit aiki-extensions.org.