



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

NEWSLETTER

940 E. Second Street #7
Los Angeles, California
90012
(213) 687-3673

Volume 5. Number 4.
April 1, 1990

SENSEI'S MESSAGE:

"Counting Our Blessings Everyday"

On March 1, 1990, Mr. Sadao Yoshioka, a veteran Aikido instructor in Honolulu, Hawaii passed away. Recently, I heard one Aikido instructor in Florida got tired of the struggle to maintain his dojo and wanting to spend more time with his girlfriend and make more money, is closing his dojo for good. The students don't know what to do. I received a call just the other day from Delaware, asking if there are any black belts who might come to Delaware to teach Aikido. I think Aikido instructors, especially qualified, competent, instructors are hard to find.

In the last thirty years, there have been only four instructors officially sent by Hombu dojo to this country. I can only think of a mere handful of local instructors who have more than twenty years experience. Of these instructors, the ones who have maintained a close relationship with the Grandmaster of Aikido, Ueshiba Sensei, and Hombu Dojo, can be counted on one hand. I know there are many instructors of very little experience and training and without the proper authority to teach, but I am not counting these people.

I think we are very lucky to have our dojo and be able to practice Aikido seven days a week. We are not a properous dojo because we are not a business and we don't run our dojo as a business. I think we may have to become more business minded in the way we handle our finances in the future so that we can organize how we pay our bills. I am still not concerned about profit. When I decided to become an Aikido teacher as a small kid, my teacher told me that if I could not bear a life of poverty and hardship, I have no right to become a teacher. I have been prepared for my life style since I was very small.

We have many good black belts in our dojo who are doing an excellent job of teaching classes. Students are making excellent progress as well. I cannot take any credit for this. It is not that I am an exceptional teacher or have found out some secret or my "own" method of teaching. I only teach my students what I was taught by my teachers. I am proud to say, however, that I have had the benefit of only the best Aikido teachers in the world. This is the tradition I am trying to establish in our dojo. I hope all my students will pass down the teachings of my teachers to future generations of Aikido students.

Students must keep in mind that the operation of the dojo is a community effort which must be shared by everyone. Everyone should donate their talents, even if it is just a little time or effort, to help the dojo grow and continue to run smoothly.

"To continue running smoothly" is the most difficult discipline. Most instructors or dojos cannot stand the test of time. How to maintain a high level of instruction and practice over a period of many years so the student can continue to grow over a long period of time is very difficult. In any martial art, there are only a few well-established, well qualified dojos.

We don't feel the impact of this, however, because most students don't stay in one place long enough to really learn anything profound or lasting. Some students last a couple of years and then they are gone. A couple of years in martial arts practice is nothing.

And again, as soon as a person reaches first degree black belt, he usually disappears thinking he is very skillful and can teach. When this happens in my dojo, I only think that this person not only doesn't understand Aikido or martial arts but doesn't understand my teachings as well. I see many cases of people trying to get black belt in our dojo and running away to another dojo of lesser qualifications where he can pretend to be a great teacher. I feel sorry for these kinds of people. These people are called, "*meiwaku*," or "trouble makers."

In other traditional Japanese arts, you may not change teachers even if you don't like your teacher or find him incompetent. In addition, another teacher wouldn't accept you knowing that you are changing teachers, for whatever reason. In martial arts, we don't have this tradition. People run around all over the place. I, myself, am not sure which tradition is better. I don't think a student should stay under an incompetent teacher but I don't think students should treat dojos and their teachers like 7-11 convenience stores.

As I mentioned, Yoshioka passed away this month. It is always sad to lose an Aikido instructor when there are so few of us as it is. This month, Katagiri Roshi, the head of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center also passed away. As a Zen priest, I also feel how few Zen teachers there are in this country and he will be sorely missed as well. It is sad to lose someone. We should count our blessings everyday and be thankful for what we have.

The following are the first half of notes and reminiscences by Yoshioka Sensei just before he passed away.

Tuesday, September 12, 1989

New class at U.H. Sensei talked about Kimura (Koa) Sensei, one of his mean instructors years ago. Yoshioka Sensei was Kimura Sensei's otomo and was exposed to his philosophy, which was a rough one. He was the leader of the Kalihi gang in the nineteen-fifties. Kimura Sensei's hobby was punching down banana trees. The acid in the banana tree was used to strengthen fishing nets and had a toughening effect on the hands. The first time Kimura Sensei met Koichi Tohei Sensei was in the Aikido dojo. Tohei Sensei asked Kimura if he was interested in Aikido, to which Kimura Sensei replied, "No, it is all fake." Tohei Sensei invited him to demonstrate his skill, asking, "What can you do?" Kimura Sensei said, "I can crush you with one blow!" When Kimura Sensei struck, Tohei Sensei avoided the blow and took kotegaeshi, throwing Kimura Sensei to the mat. Kimura Sensei got up and tried again, but with the same result. Finally, Kimura Sensei gave up and asked to become a student of Aikido. He eventually became an assistant instructor in Hawaii.

"Back in the fifties when I was just a student, one of the other students was also practicing judo. Every night after Aikido practice, this student would go to his judo teacher and show him what he had learned at Aikido class. The judo teacher would then figure out a counter for each movement. This went on for a very long time, long enough for the judo teacher to write and illustrate a book about how to counter Aikido techniques. The judo teacher saw me one day on the street and asked me to come look at something. He showed me the book, full of drawings of counter techniques, hoping to impress him. But those are only drawings, not real life. When a judo person goes to grab an Aikido person, he gets nikyo, sankyo, or kotegaeshi and there is no more talk about counters. So one of the instructors of the Aikido dojo who was a judo champion found out about this book, waited for the student after class each night, and beat him up for his disloyalty. After a few beatings, the student quit.

"Some students are always looking for something better. They want to learn what one teacher has to offer, so they join, and practice, and then they see another teacher, with something else to offer, so they quit, and practice with the new teacher, until they see another teacher, and so on. Pretty soon, no teacher will have this person as a student, because they have no loyalty. They will not be around long enough to really learn what a teacher has to offer.

"Each person is a beautiful thing inside. Like a semi-precious rough stone, each person only needs to be polished for the beauty to come out. Tumbling and practicing Aikido is a way of polishing a person into a strong, wise, and spiritual person.

"Each lecture in Aikido is about things the students already know. However, the material is presented in a new way, to refresh our memory about things we already know." Sensei said he includes things he has learned through Aikido in relation to things we already know about, so our understanding of these things becomes more clear.

Tuesday September 19, 1989

"We must get rid of 'thinking mind.' Thoughts and thinking are like dust in a bottle of water. When the water is shaken up, you cannot see through the bottle, cannot see the truth. You have to let the bottle sit for a couple of days before the water will become clear again. This is like meditation. People meditate to clear their minds, but you cannot just sit down and have a clear mind, it takes time. And as soon as you stand up and start thinking about things that ability to see the truth is gone. You have shaken up the bottle again.

"We must also eliminate "reasoning mind" the kind of mind that asks 'why?' You just do what the teacher tells you without asking 'why?' and through training you will discover 'why?' Your experience answers 'why?.'

"The Founder of Aikido, while giving me a tour of his garden, showed me a pile of stones and a pine tree which commemorated a place where he had communication with the Aikido God. The Founder, because he did not have reasoning mind, was able to directly experience the truth. For years he had practiced Aiki-jitsu, but one day a light beam came down from heaven and drew a figure-eight on the ground in front of the Founder. This told the Founder that he must cut away the sharp corners of his movement and move in a figure-eight pattern. In O-Sensei's garden there were many piles of stones and pine trees showing locations of contacts with heaven. After the Founder's death, I went to visit his home, the garden had been cleared and all the rocks were gone. I asked where the rocks were and was told 'Ah, child's play.' How sad, that they don't know. These are Japanese now.

"When blocking a punch or strike, the edge of your hand must be forward, and the inside of the thumb must be showing, the same way you hold a sword. Your palm must not be visible from the front. Years ago I had a Professor of Palmistry come to my class for lessons. He asked if he could read my palm. I told him 'No!' and he got mad. But I didn't go to his class. If I wanted to learn what he knew I would go to his class and do whatever he said. If I wanted to learn math I would go to Dr. Little's class and do whatever he said. If I wanted to learn Archeology, I would go to Dr. Hammetts' class and do whatever he said. Dig here, so I dig here. Dig with a tooth brush, so I do that. But I don't want someone I don't know to read my palm. You see they are looking for your weakness. If your palm shows your past or your future, you don't show that to everyone. Maybe your close friends. But there are some things you don't want everyone to know. So you don't show your palm when you are blocking. This hand position develops the appropriate muscles so that when you go to take a sword, it will have no weight. All swords weigh the same, nothing. A sword is a part of you, like your arms. You cannot say 'Oh my arms are heavy' or 'My hands are heavy.' Not while they are attached to your body. Maybe if you cut one off and put it on a scale then there is weight. In the feudal days, if you met someone of equal ability in a sword duel, you might stand ready for hours looking for an opening. You cannot say 'The sword is getting heavy' and let it drop, he will kill you.

Page 4.

"At the beginning of class you bow when you enter the dojo, to show respect to the dojo, because it is like a church. Then, after you place your slippers properly, you turn and bow as you step on the mat. When the Founders picture going to be hung, you can bow if there is already an American flag on the wall, if not, then don't bow; just put up the Founders picture, back away, and everyone bows in respect to the Founder. The person who hung the picture then returns to his place, without bowing to the students, because class has not started yet. We should eliminate unnecessary bowing."

Thursday, September 21, 1989

"Ki is like water. Both have no color or form, but are very powerful. I say it this way because we should always relate new information to something the students already know, like water. Water is very powerful, like the rains in the recent hurricanes, but we are human beings and must control our power. We cannot go around smashing everything. Our minds are also like water. When water is still, you can see through it to the bottom. When our minds are still, we can see the truth. But if the water is disturbed, you cannot see through it. If our minds are disturbed, we cannot see the truth. If our minds are still, we can see the truth. This is important when we face an opponent with a sword. If we think 'I wonder if he's coming yokomein, shomein, tsuki...' we are finished.

"Attempting to still the mind by wanting to is like putting your hands in water to make it calm. Putting your hands in disturbs the water more, and then you have to take them out to see the bottom, and this only disturbs the water more. Putting your hands in and out of water is thinking mind. You have to take the water pan to a quiet, undisturbed place and leave it alone. The same with your mind. Do nothing. Leave it alone, and it will become calm. It's not easy, to get rid of thinking mind.

"The Founder said if you train hard and sincerely, nature will take care of you. When I first heard that I thought maybe a lightning bolt would come down and strike my opponent, but now I see that though hard training, your techniques become second nature, without thought. The Founder said self-defense is like taking candy from a baby. So easy."

Monday, September 25, 1989

"Sensei told us that the visitors from Japan (Osaka), who trained with us just before the seminar with Doshu, had written an article in an Aikido newsletter about their experience training with us, the Nuuanu Aikido Club. They said we were giants, whose practice was so gentle. They commented on how three of the 'giants' (Peter McNalley, Art May, and David Johnson) had taken them to the showers, gotten them soap and towels, called a cab for them, and paid for the cab in advance! They were amazed! Sensei didn't know what had happened that night because he was out to dinner with Doshu. I remember that night as the roughest practice session I have had so far. The visitors consisted of two roku-dans (6th degree), two go-dans (fifth degree), and one sho-dan (first degree). They are supposed to be sending an english translation of

Page 5.

that article to us soon.

"Randy Scoville also wrote an article after the seminar, about Doshu's visit. When Doshu proof read the article, he thought it was too short, and asked Mutsuko Smith, a Nuuanu Aikido Club member living and training in Tokyo who had been Doshu's interpreter during his stay, to add to the article, make it longer. Doshu felt the 30th Anniversary Seminar was important and should be well represented in the Hombu Dojo newsletter."

Tuesday September 26, 1989

"I taught Aikido techniques to the Honolulu police department members for about fifteen years. All the new recruits had to take a six week course in both Aikido and Judo. Back then all policemen had to be over five foot seven inches and over 150 pounds. All of them were bigger than me. This was a good experience for me because I could practice on them, and build my confidence in overcoming them. Huge Samoan men would laugh at me when they first met me. 'What's he gonna do against me?' they would say. Oh, I'm gonna kill this guy, is what I would say to myself. Eventually, they would talk to me with their hands held behind their backs, because if I saw their hand I would grab them and take kote-gaeshi, nikyo, whatever. I learned I could defend myself against anyone. This ability to defend oneself is so important in our training. We are training to become one with nature. We cannot be one with nature until our minds are at peace. We cannot be at peace unless we are not worried or afraid that someone is going to attack you. And you must talk to your subconscious mind when you meditate, and tell it that you are not afraid of anyone or anything.

"You cannot be afraid of dying. Everyone is going to Heaven when they die. I am going to Heaven when I die. I have trained my spirit by telling it over and over, 'When I die, I'm going to Heaven.' Your spirit doesn't have brains, so while you are alive, you must use your brains to teach the spirit, so it knows what to do when you die.

"The police used to use a choke hold on people who resist arrest. They called it the 'sleeper hold,' because it would knock a guy out in six seconds. One time a large Samoan man resisted arrest, and a policeman used his night stick to apply the sleeper hold. The stick broke the man's esophagus and killed him. When the news media heard about that, they came to my Aikido dojo and wanted to film a demonstration of the lethal 'sleeper hold.' I told them I don't teach that technique. Go see the Judo teacher, he teaches it to the recruits.

"So they went to the judo teachers' dojo and asked for a demonstration. The teacher called one of his students to help him demonstrate and proceeded to apply the hold on the student. While choking out the student, the judo teacher was explaining all about the hold, what to be careful of, etc.. meanwhile, his student was knocked out cold. The teacher was asking him, "Do you feel anything?" but the student was already unconscious. They showed that demonstration on the news that night.

"When training in the dojo, we take it easy with our partner, so he doesn't get hurt. But in the street, when someone is attacking you, you must give it to them. Throw them so that they

don't come back after you. Throw one, he's finished, on to the next one. You cannot afford to let an attacker get up and come after you again. When an attacker is down, you can kick them in the ribs or face. No one has to teach you this, anybody can kick someone when they are down. Techniques like kicking someone when they are down are necessary to learn, but we don't show those techniques. You keep them in your pocket, and only take them out if you have to. When demonstrating Aikido, we show only the circular movement, harmonizing with our partner. Other techniques are necessary so that other martial arts respect Aikido, so they don't call Aikido a 'dance.' Some people call Aikido a dance, so I say 'You want to dance with me?' And they back off.

"When my teacher broke away from Hombu dojo, I was really upset. But he his attitude had changed. He wanted to be the top guy, number one, so he could collect all the dues. He came to my dojo and said 'Give me all your dues.' He was my teacher, what could I do? For years our club was always broke because we had to give the teacher all our money.

"We give a gasoline allowance to all the instructors. The allowance is based on rank, \$10.00 per degree of black belt. Ten dollars for sho-dan, twenty dollars for ni-dan, etc...We cannot afford seventy dollars for me every month, so I donate my services, and I receive money for the gate here at U.H. to park. I have a pension from the Post Office and also receive social-security benefits so you don't have to worry about me. When another teacher comes as a guest instructor, you must give them an envelope, so they will come back. This is the tradition. We must give them a stipend to offset their cost in visiting us and helping us or they will not come back. I teach the instructors that so they will know what to do when a guest instructor from Japan or wherever comes.

"When the Founder came to Hawaii, he refused to go to places like Ala-Moana shopping center, or Waikiki beach, because of the crowds of people. With all those people close to him, inside his ma-ai, he could not be one with nature."

Thursday, September 28, 1989

"Some people say Aikido is moving zen. You see zen is to be in a state of nothingness. In Aikido we strive for that same state throughout our technique. I didn't know much about zen, so I took a group of students and went a zen school. The teacher didn't say anything, just "Sit there, look at the wall!" Every once in a while if a guy was falling asleep, he would get a whack on the back to wake him up. So we sat there for an hour and a half. After the meeting the students and I would get together and talk about what we did. The teacher told me to come on Sunday, and he would give me private lessons. He didn't know I was an Aikido instructor, just thought I was another student of zen. He told me he would take me to Japan to meet the Roshi. He said, "I can make you famous!" I don't do Aikido to become famous, so I didn't like that, and I stopped going. Zen is good training, like Aikido, but sometimes there are teachers who are not doing what they are supposed to do. So you see it is hard to just do what you are supposed to do, teach what you learned. In Aikido we have a lot of high ranking guys, but many are not doing what they are supposed to do.

Page 7.

The second half of Yoshioka Sensei's notes will be published in the May, 1990 issue of this Newsletter.

SPECIAL LECTURE OF JAPANESE WAR HELMETS - KABUTO.

On April 13, 1990, Friday evening, the second class at 7:30pm will be cancelled. In its place, we will have a combined meeting with the Southern California Sword Society which usually meets at this time at the Zenshuji Temple.

We will have a special lecture on Japanese war helmets and a video showing of the art of iaido by Master Nakayama Hakudo of the Muso Shinden Ryu and Master Risuke Otake of the Katori Shinto Ryu. The lecture and showing is scheduled to end at 9:00pm, afterwards, refreshments will be served.

Dojo members are welcome to attend.

O-SENSEI'S MEMORIAL DAY

On April 26, 1990, we will be commemorating the passing of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba O-Sensei with a traditional service. There will be regular class from 6:15pm to 7:15pm. From 7:30pm to 8:00pm, there will be a special memorial service by the priests of the Zenshuji Temple. They will recite the Heart Sutra. Each member may then offer incense. This will be followed by a short lecture. From 8:00pm, we will have dinner at a nearby restaurant. The dinner will be about \$10.00 to \$15.00 per person. The place has not been decided as yet. Everyone is encouraged to attend to show their appreciation to the Founder of Aikido for this great art.

SPECIAL INVITATION TO CURACAO

Sensei has been invited to Curacao, Antilles, next year, in June, to lecture on Japanese culture and Japanese American relations. The lecture is sponsored by the Curacao Museum Foundation.

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles Newsletter is published monthly for its members.

Non-members may subscribe to the Newsletter for a donation of \$25.00 a year.

The Newsletter is copyrighted/ all rights reserved.

HANAMATSURI DEMONSTRATION

On April 1, 1990, the members of the dojo conducted an Aikido demonstration in the plaza of Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC) in Little Tokyo on the occasion of the Hanamatsuri Festival. Hanamatsuri means "Flower Festival" and is the celebration of the Buddha's birthday. The members performed very well.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations are in order for Kanai Sensei of the New England Aikikai. He just had a baby girl in March last month.

We would also like to offer our congratulations to Yamada Sensei of the New York Aikikai on his promotion to 8th degree in January.

In our own dojo, Iaido Section, Douglas Firestone has been promoted to 3rd degree black belt in Iaido and Gary Myers has been promoted to 2nd degree black belt in Iaido. Congratulations.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mitsuko Yoshimoto just returned from her trip to Japan. She returned to Japan to visit her parents and take care of her visa. She visited several dojos in the Kobe area but says she likes our dojo the best.

Henrique Morimura has also returned to Japan for a one month period. He will be returning to the dojo in May.

Morgan Weisser is working on a movie now and plays a teen-age psychotic killer with co-star Corey Haim. We all look forward to seeing his movie when it releases. Although I don't approve of teen-age psychotic killers, I suppose it's better than being a teen-age mutant ninja turtle.

Robbers Beware! Mark Francis now works part time as a guard for the Museum of Natural History on exposition Blvd. in Los Angeles.

Junko and Ron Hill are expecting their first baby. That's why we haven't seen them around the dojo lately. We wish them the very best.

Ken Watanabe has changed jobs from Bristol Farms in Pasadena to Mitsui Bank in Little Tokyo.

Adam Balzano has relocated to New York. We will miss him in the dojo.

Page 8.

PROMOTIONS as of April 26, 1990

These promotions will be awarded on O-Sensei's Memorial Day Observance.

Congratulations!

First Kyu

Adam Balzano

Third Kyu

John Easton
Daryl Akamichi
Lorraine Rowan
James Sims

Fourth Kyu

Kevin Chiu
Jon White
Eric Rodriguez

Fifth Kyu

Jeff Bey
Michael Mitani
Ronald Waddy
Greg Williams
Keith Perske
Armand Bytton

Sixth Kyu

Mustafa Abdul-Wahid
Monika Alvarez
Jose Farinas
David Foster
Kenneth Furuya
James Hemsath
Patrick Lane
Mark Page
David Peck
Hiram Perez
Gary Chang
Albert Provencio
Shannon Taylor

Children's Class Promotions

Third Kyu (Purple Belt)

Malcolm Quon

Fourth Kyu (Green Belt)

Kevin Kawa
Christian Rocha
Timi Ito

Fifth Kyu (Blue Belt)

Jonas Youngstrom
Gabriel Youngstrom
Daniel Rocha

Sixth Kyu (Orange Belt)

Marcos Mitrovici
Milena Mitrovici
Kristine Lew
Douglas Lew
Jesse Saavedra
Suzette Saavedra
Hailyn Chew
Allen Chew

Page 9.

SEMINAR

**WITH YAMADA SENSEI,
8TH DAN, CHIEF INSTRUCTOR OF
THE NEW YORK AIKIKAI**

May 2nd through the 3rd, 1990.

Details about the seminar will follow. He will be teaching one class per evening on Wednesday and Thursday, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

On Thursday evening, we will plan a small party for Yamada Sensei to celebrate his promotion to 8th Dan by the Aikido World Headquarters.

The seminar is \$25.00 per person. The dinner will be \$15.00 per person at the Regent Restaurant in Chinatown.

For further information, please see any of the Instructors.

Zendeko Seminar on Etiquette

On April 7, 1990, Sensei and our Assistant Instructors are invited to conduct a seminar on etiquette and proper manners for the members and parents of the Zenshuji Zendeko Drumming Troup at the Zenshuji Temple. The seminar will be from 2:00pm to 4:00pm. Members of the dojo are also welcome to participate.

We received a letter of appreciation from the Los Angeles Buddhist Church Federation for our participation in the Hanamatsuri Festival on April 1, 1990, at the JACCC Plaza.

We also received many compliments for our demonstration. The members of the dojos conducted an excellent demonstration.

Thank you.

Rev. Kensho Furuya