



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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

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June 1, 1991

SUGANO SENSEI'S SEMINAR May 11-12, 1991

From May 11th through the 12th, Seiichi Sugano Sensei, 7th Dan Shihan, from the New York Aikikai, conducted another successful seminar at our dojo. This is his second visit. About twenty members attended and everyone enjoyed his instruction. Sugano Sensei is a direct student of O-Sensei and is credited for introducing Aikido into Australia and Belgium. Currently, he teaches daily at the New York Aikikai.

Children's Day Demonstrations May 4-5, 1991

On May 4th, members of the dojo presented a very well-attended and successful demonstration at the Japanese American Community and Cultural Center. We also had an information booth all day long. On May 5th, there was another demonstration at the Japanese Village Plaza. Children's Day refers to the traditional Japanese festivals of Girl's Day on March 3rd and Boy's Day on May 5th. On Girl's Day, young daughters are given their special day with beautiful displays of dolls representing the Emperor and Empress and their court. On Boy's Day, displays of armour and swords are displayed and most notably of flying of the famous kites in the shape of carp with represents bravery and courage.

Many thanks to the following members who contributed their time and energy for the dojo: Ken Watanabe, Jim Hemseth, Kaz Nishida, Dan Wong, Richard Elorriaga, Jim Graves, Manuel Almaguer, Yasushi Matsuki, Ann Enomoto, Chris Prejean, David Ito, Steve Tarango, Joe Quinn, Mitsuko Yoshimoto, Mark Moore and Mark Page.

We conduct these demonstrations every year as a part of our community service to the Little Tokyo and Los Angeles Downtown area.

We invite top instructors from around the country to the dojo for your training experience, everyone is encouraged to participate and attend these seminars. At the same time time, we conduct many demonstrations throughout the year as a part of our community service. Please support these as well.

Message from Sensei:

LIFE AND DEATH

I heard of two tragedies this month on the news. One is Willie Shoemaker the famous horse racer who recently retired. He crashed his car while drunk, returning home from a party one evening and is now paralyzed from the neck down. Another is Michael Landon, the well known television actor, who publicly announced that he has cancer of the colon and pancreas.

I feel great sorrow for both of these people. It is a great shame that Willie Shoemaker could have such a distinguished and successful career and then, after a glorious retirement, see it all come to a tragic end simply because of too much drinking. At the same time, Michael Landon is cut down in the middle of his career through illness. It is simply because these two people were on the news recently that I mention them, but this is the reality of all of our lives whether we are famous or not, rich or poor.

Everyday, we think of our lives and what we want. But we never think of our own deaths. We know it will come and we don't know when. It could be in fifty years and it could be within the next minute. It is part of our reality but we just don't come face to face with it. It is easy to say: "Well, when it comes, it comes. Why worry about it?" This is true. We shouldn't worry about our deaths but we should understand it as a part of our lives. In martial arts and in our training, it is of great importance to deal with this problem.

Many misunderstand this aspect of our training and martial arts thinking that it is simply a nihilistic aspect of Buddhism or the Japanese mentality. Some even say, "Japanese love death." I'm Japanese but I don't "love" death. Why should we come to terms with the problem of death?

We don't understand death as part of a negative view of life, we try to understand death as a way to understand how precious our lives are. When we understand the value of our own lives, we try harder to live life more fully, more meaningfully and more profoundly. This is the essence of our Aikido practice. Please think about this.

Congratulations

Our warmest wishes and congratulations to Tom and Elaine McIntyre on the birth of their son, Bryan Ruark McIntyre on May Day, 1991. Eight pounds, six ounces.

Tom is a black belt at our dojo. He is a world famous hunter and editor of a sports magazine. He is also the author of a book on world wide game hunting.

PROMOTIONS

There were errors in the last promotion and these are the corrections. It is very important that you make sure your name is in the proper position under the correct rank on our name board. I apologize that we have not kept it up to date. The following are corrections, all other ranks are correct.

New Candidate for Black Belt Examination

Ismael Araujo, 1st kyu

1st Kyu

Hieu Nguyen
Shawn Pak
Eric Rodriguez

3rd Kyu

Gary Chang
Robert Masuda
Sam Onate

4th Kyu

Kevin Arnold
Johan Bey
David Ito

New Promotions as of June 1, 1991

Candidates for Black Belt Examination in August.

Brigido Anaya
Ron Hill
Henrique Morimura

1st Kyu

Curtis Westfall

NEW TRAINING SCHEDULE

Beginning and Open Classes

**Monday thru Friday
6:15pm to 7:15pm**

**Monday-Wednesday-Friday
7:30pm to 8:30pm**

**Tuesday & Thursday Afternoons
1:00pm to 2:00pm**

**Saturday
10:15am to 11:15am**

**Sunday
10:30am to 12:00 noon**

Advanced Classes (3rd Kyu & up)

**Tuesday & Thursday
7:30pm to 8:30pm**

**Saturday
11:30am to 12:30pm**

Children's Class

**Sunday
8:00am to 9:00am**

Iaido & Battodo

**Wednesday
8:45pm to 9:45pm**

**Saturday
9:00am to 10:00am**

**Sunday
9:15am to 10:15am**

Remembering a Great Teacher

Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei, 9th Dan

It is with great sadness that I must announce the passing of a great teacher, Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei of the Aikido So-hombu Dojo this month.

I had known that he had been ill for several years and recently he had undergone surgery and was released from the hospital. Some reports said that he was feeling much better and that he had resumed teaching classes. Somehow I had a bad feeling about this and that is why I suddenly went to Japan this month from May 21st through the 27th. I wanted to see him for the very last time. Unfortunately, it was too difficult for me to stay in Japan for a longer time because the dojo was so busy here. Hombu Dojo was also very busy with the All Japan Aikido Demonstration held on March 26th and they had many visitors from all over the world. As a result of this, I was unable to see him. When I returned to Los Angeles, I had found out that he had passed away while I was in Japan. This made me very sad. Somehow I believe that a teacher and student can communicate like this over thousands of miles. I knew he was getting close to the end; I felt it in my heart.

Of all the many famous Aikido teachers you hear about, I am sure that few of you had heard of Ohsawa Sensei. He was a quiet, humble man which made him an even greater teacher. He never wrote a book, he never publicized himself and he never did anything to create attention to himself. During my training in Japan, I stayed exclusively at Hombu Dojo. The only time I went outside was with Doshu to visit the Aiki Shrine in Iwama and when I heard Ohsawa Sensei was teaching in another dojo.

I took his ukemi at Hombu Dojo and always folded his hakama. When he asked me to fold his hakama, I thought it was the greatest honor in the whole world. He often taught the 10:00am morning class and it was necessary to let his hakama dry out before his evening class at 6:30pm. During the summer in Japan, it rains quite often and very unexpectedly, so I used to spend the afternoons watching his hakama dry making sure that it would not get wet in a sudden summer rain.

Although I was quite young at the time, Ohsawa Sensei asked me to teach his son. So several times a week, when his son attended class, I would spend my training period with him in the corner. One day, his son asked me, "What rank are you, you must be a 3rd or 4th degree." I was so happy: I was only a 1st degree at the time.

Years later, I found out that Ohsawa Sensei's son is now one of the top instructors at Hombu Dojo. Although my part was very small, I am very proud about this.

When you attacked Ohsawa Sensei during practice, all the power seemed to drain out of your body and you became powerless. Oftentimes, he seemed to simply disappear out of sight. When it happened to yourself it was just too surprising yet watching him disappear in front of his ukemi was very funny. The ukemi would stand up and be looking all around for him and yet we could see that he was just standing there right behind him! It was simply amazing! When he grabbed you, his touch was very soft, yet it was impossible to move. It was a very mysterious experience and I know it used to frustrate many young students because they were so strong and he was so old and frail looking.

Sometimes, he used to treat me to a cup of coffee and a scoop of ice cream. He loved this after practice. I always treasure these moments with him. Although he never spoke directly about Aikido, I always felt that I was learning so much from him everytime I was by his side.

One day, I was watching his demonstration and I happened to be with a very high ranking teacher. I turned to this teacher and asked him: "How do you explain Ohsawa Sensei's Aikido?" He said: "I don't know. He is just enlightened."

Ohsawa Sensei was in the navy during the war and his ship was bombed. He spent fourteen hours in the sea hanging on to a piece of wood. He watched his friends die and be eaten by sharks. He said that those who swam away from the shipwreck were never found again. When he was rescued, he said he felt that he was given a second chance at life.

A good friend told me that, years ago, he was to meet Ohsawa Sensei at a train station. But he was detained and arrived five hours late. He said he was so worried that Ohsawa Sensei would come to the station and wonder why he didn't arrive. Yet, when he arrived, Ohsawa Sensei was still there waiting for him. My friend said was so impressed that such a great teacher would wait for him. This is Ohsawa Sensei's greatness.

Ohsawa Sensei studied Zen for nineteen years under Sawaki Kodo Roshi. I was sure that this must be the secret to his Aikido so I began to study Zen as well, especially the Zen of Sawaki Roshi which I am still doing to this day. Maybe, because of Ohsawa Sensei, I became interested in Zen and finally became a monk.

Ohsawa Sensei continued:

I have tried to preserve what I learned from Ohsawa Sensei in my own Aikido and I hope I can pass this on to you. I always hope to keep his memory alive and I will always appreciate what he did for me. He is one of the greatest masters I have ever known.

Correspondence

From J. J. Hartford, Staten Island, New York:

May 15, 1991

Dear Rev. Furuya:

Thank you for your "Ancient Ways" column in MA Training, July '91 issue.

The minor amount of "survival" judo that was taught to me in the army, 20 years ago piqued my curiosity about the martial arts. Not being an aggressive or competitive person I never had the desire to high kick traffic lights or break bricks with my ear lobes so I really couldn't find a style for me. Then a friend, who studies Wing Chun told me about Aikido, the concept of non-aggression, not striking blows but rather grappling and using your opponents strength against himself appeals to me, but more so the spiritual side of Aikido maybe what I need. Since my divorce 4 years ago I've been depressed, just working and coming home and not much else. I believe that a martial arts discipline could re-focus my life and give me the mental and physical alertness that I know I've lost. But the stigma of the "black belt" and earning belts and degrees was always there. I thought there was something wrong with me, in that I have no desire to collect belts, but to train, learn, for my mental health only. Your article has shown me that I'm not as selfish as I thought. When a person of your stature in the martial arts community says its okay to wear a white belt, forever, then maybe my outlook on the "belt system" has been on track.

As Tae Kwon Do (far too violent) is the fad fighting system in the New York area now, Aikido instructors are scarcer than hen's teeth. But at last your article has given me the incentive to try to beat one our of the bushes.

If I find that Aikido is what I'm really looking for and I stick with it, and sometime in the future I have someone ask why I'm still wearing a white belt,

I'll hand him a copy of your article, and let you enlighten him, as you have me.

Again, thank you, very much.

James Hartford, Jr.

From Steven I. Miller, Ph. D.
Professor, Philosophy of Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy
Studies
Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Rev. Furuya:

I very much enjoyed reading your article, "What Does a Black Belt Really Mean?", in the July 1991 issue of Martial Arts Training.

The article struck a responsive note in me and in the purpose of my martial arts training. I am a professor of the Philosophy of Education, and although I am acquainted with some aspects of Eastern philosophy; I only began my martial arts training about three years ago -- I am now 47 a relatively late age to begin.

Although I have enjoyed my training in Tae Kwon Do, I have increasingly come to realize that my instructor, who is technically very proficient, does not fully understand the spiritual aspects underlying true martial arts training. I have begun to realize that Aikido, with its emphasis on Ki and the Zen foundations of the martial arts, is perhaps what I should be pursuing.

Even though I am trained in western philosophy, I have tried to pursue Eastern philosophy over the last ten years. I fully realize, however, that much of my understanding still remains at an "intellectual" level; and this is where I believe Aikido would provide a valuable balance.

Consequently, would it be possible for you to recommend someone with whom I could study. I am located in the southern suburban area of Chicago, and to date have not been able to locate a competent school/instructor. Could you recommend someone? I would be very grateful!

Again, thank you for your enlightening article; I really learned from it.

Steven I. Miller, Ph. D.

Correspondence continued:

From David J. Samer, Brockport, New York
May 8, 1991

Dear Rev. Furuya:

I recently enrolled in an introductory course in Isshin Ryu karate. My reasons for taking karate are not only to improve myself physically and be able to defend myself but to learn what I can that will help me spiritually and in my everyday life.

After having read Zen in the Martial Arts by Joe Hyams and your article: "What Does a Black Belt Really Mean?", I am very interested in learning more about Zen and the martial arts.

I would be thankful if you could send to me a list of suggested readings on Zen and the martial arts as well as the application of Zen to everyday life, and any advice for a novice in the martial arts. I realize you have many responsibilities and wish to thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

David J. Samer

LOOKING FOR A GOOD TEACHER

From Zen Seeds. By Rev. Shundo Aoyama.

Zen master Dogen wrote in his *Gakudo Yojinshu* (Points to Watch in Buddhist Training): "A disciple can be compared to a good piece of wood, and a master to a carpenter. Even good wood will not show its fine grain unless worked on by a good carpenter. Even a warped piece of wood, in the hands of a good carpenter, shows the results of good craftsmanship."

Dogen showed the importance of finding a good or a true teacher by comparing the master-disciple relationship to a carpenter and his wood. He even went so far as to say that if we could not find a good teacher, it would be better not to study at all. This is severe, but true.

Liking or disliking a subject in school often depends on the teacher. I am struck by the importance of a good teacher and the difficulty of finding one, whether it is a teacher of the tea ceremony or flower

arrangement, one who teaches on the job, or a teacher of life itself.

Good teachers know from the bottom of their heart the depth and the boundlessness of the Way. They also know their own pettiness and lack of compassion as compared to the height and breadth of the Way. Accordingly, good teachers do not put on airs. True teachers cannot be recognized by appearance. Only true teachers tell us things we do not like to hear. Without assuming any authority, they dress plainly and live in a simple dwelling, making the Way their teacher, the Dharma their teacher. Single-mindedly, they continue to seek and practice the Way.

We are supported in our search by the warm words of Zen Master Dogen: "Even though it's painful, even though it's lonely, draw near and practice the Way." Encouraged by the idea that what we earnestly wish for can be accomplished, we have to rub the sleep from our eyes and go on looking for the good teacher, the right teacher.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Furuya Sensei will be attending a Kung-fu Wushu Exhibition in San Francisco in June 22nd and 23rd as a guest of Master Hsu Chi.

Igarashi Sensei, 6th Dan and Chief Instructor of the Hashimoto Dojo, a student of Yasuo Kobayashi Sensei of the Kodaira Dojo in Tokyo, will be visit us towards the end of June. He is on vacation with his family.

In October of this year, Furuya Sensei will accompany his Zen master, the Reverend Bishop Kenko Yamashita, to New York. The Bishop will speak before the United Nations on the topic of "Zen and World Peace." Furuya Sensei will act as official translator.

Yagyū Nobuharu Sensei, 22nd Grandmaster of the Yagyū Shinkage Ryu will be coming in October, 1992. We have changed his schedule from the Spring to the Fall of next year.

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It is free of registered members of the ACLA. For non-members, the annual subscription fee is \$25.00 per year. News items and articles are welcome. Please submit them early in the month.



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Ancient Ways Column
May 13, 1991

By Rev. Kensho Furuya

"OUT WITH THE NEW AND IN WITH THE OLD"

Can we keep the martial arts tradi- tion alive?

We often say, "Out with the old and in with the new." This old American proverb has especially influenced the growth and direction of martial arts in this country over the past twenty or thirty years.

Although I still consider myself rather "young," or at least in my prime, at one point or another, I really don't know when, I have become part of the "older" generation of martial artists and now look at our "younger generation" of which I no longer seem to be a member, and think about how to continue to teach martial arts as best I can and in the most effective way. Why this particular subject must undergo continued evaluation and re-evaluation is not because my outlook on martial arts has changed over the years. Quite on the contrary, over the last thirty years of my training, I have come to understand a little more of the value of my teacher's instruction and revere it as a great and important body of wisdom and knowledge. As much as possible in its purest and unaltered form, I believe that it is my duty to transmit these teachings to my students and future generations.

What has happened is that the attitudes of the students and people who come to seek out martial arts has changed drastically over the last several years.

Change is a natural, acceptable and necessary part of the evolution of martial arts as it spreads across this country and throughout the world.

However, some changes have been deliberate and a matter of personal convenience. For the most part, I cannot agree with many of these alterations because we have lost or sacrificed the profound meaning and depth of martial arts and the benefits of its training and discipline for short visioned personal convenience.

Nowadays, people who seek out martial arts want it "fast and easy." They want it "right now" and in no way must it interfere with their lives or take up any valuable time and energy from their personal interests or pursuits.

I talk and correspond with many teachers of many martial arts all over the world and most seem to agree with this. Unfortunately, they also see the end of the age of martial arts when great masters were produced. Should we give in to the prevailing times? Just because everyone else is doing it, I don't believe it is right. Somehow, although I may be fighting a losing battle, I believe we must do what we believe in, not in current fads and what is personally convenient. In some ways, it may be necessary to "throw out the new and bring in the old" again.

Master Uchida Anshin, a master of the Noh drama and designated as a "living national treasure" in Japan once said, "I don't feel like a teacher, I feel like a shopkeeper at the mercy of my "customers." Students treat me like an "employee." One great Zen priest recently declared, "People, for the most part, don't see me as a teacher anymore, I am just another fancy decoration in the temple." These are great men talking.

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In China, martial arts has been stifled by the huge bureaucratic mess of the People's Party. In Japan, attitudes have changed drastically as Japanese want to become more and more "Americanized." In the past, martial arts teachers were always looking for young blood to train as experts and future teachers. However, one notable teacher from Japan recently displayed this point of view which really shocked me.

The master said, "We don't seek out young people anymore, they don't have money and they don't have the time. After training for many years, they either graduate school, get a job or get married and we never see them again. I like senior citizens, they have lots of money and time, besides Japan is becoming a nation of much leisure time and money now." We can't develop a person of sixty years old to become a future teacher, the logistics don't permit that, but, this is the easiest way and who wants to suffer and be poor all their lives teaching martial arts?" This is becoming a popular attitude among modern teachers today.

Before, we expected the training to be tough. There was no other way to become good. The tough training meant some sacrifice, endurance and patience but it was the only formula to master the art. Today, it is not so much a matter of "training" as it is, "enjoyment." Today, we don't ask the student, "Are you training hard?" We ask, "Are you enjoying yourself?" This is how recent attitudes have changed martial arts in general.

We as teachers think that if we're too hard, the students will just run away to another school. If we are too hard, no students will come and we can't pay our rent. Who wants to teach martial arts and be poor? Unfortunately, that is the life of a teacher. And, unfortunately, students do run away and we can't be concerned with it. The student who quits can never understand what martial arts really is.

Great masters that we recognize today were all born around the turn of the century and matured into great masters after the war. Through age, they began to disappear from the early sixties on. In the nineties, not many, if any, are left. Their students are the recognized masters today. This is the generation of students who came into training right after the war as youngsters to these masters.

Now, this generation are all in their fifties and sixties and probably thinking of retirement as well. In the next ten or twenty years, they will all be gone or, at least, in their eighties. Who will come after them? Who will transmit the great teachings or the true art? As far as I can see, at this very moment, no one. Because, a person who is only concerned with personal convenience and his own interests, a person who has not initiated himself with the sacrifice and hardship that is an essential part of the training, a person who cannot put others before himself, cannot ever have the qualifications to become a true teacher. Again, in this respect, we must "throw out our new attitudes and bring back the old."

Once, a student told me this, "If I go drinking every night with my friends, she doesn't mind. But, if I go to Aikido every night, she gets upset." If I had a mate, I am sure that I would prefer that she practice every night rather than spending all her time in a bar drinking booze.

Indeed, our lives are much more complex and stressful than past generations. However, if you were to talk with the old timers, I am sure they would say, "Young people today have it so easy compared to when I was young!"

There is one essay in Chinese which speaks about how young people today are incorrigible, don't listen to their parents, don't study their lessons well and always dress like hippies. This text was written in 500BC.

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Martial arts training must always be a part of one's life not separate from it. We can't butcher our lives into meaningless categories of work, play, private, public. When am I playing and when am I working? When am I happy and when am I sad? We are a total entity, an individual, and everything in our lives is a part of our lives. There is an old saying in martial arts: "Everything in our life is training. Our life is one big dojo."

If it does not directly relate to how we live, think, act and behave from one moment to the next, it is not martial arts training, it is a delusion we create to blind ourselves to the reality of our own existence. As long we are blind, we can never see what our lives are about and more specifically, what martial arts does for our lives.

We indulge ourselves and think only of what we want right now, our lives become superficial and our practice becomes mediocre and shallow and, all the time, we must keep trying to tell ourselves that this is "enjoyment." This is what we think we want. Somewhere along the line, we open our eyes and become surprised and discouraged. It is a tragedy to finally come to the conclusion that, "oh, I have just been fooling myself all along."

We have jobs and we have families and we have all of our obligations in our complicated society, yet, if we truly have the will, there is a way in which we can still pursue our training. This is no different from one hundred years ago. This is no different from one thousand years ago. And, as much as possible, we must find how our martial arts practice enters into, contributes to, cultivates and elevates our lives. This is the way of the true masters.

In one conversation with another teacher, he declared, "Well, it can't be helped, what are you going to do? Just let them do what they want." My reply was: "Well,

that is all well and good, but they will never understand what martial arts is really all about and they will never become like the great teachers of the past." The other teacher could only say: "It is the end of the age of great martial artists after all, isn't it" I worry that it may really be the end of the age of great martial artists. I am afraid that it is more up to the readers of this column than it is up to me.

As an Aikido teacher, I know martial arts has great wisdom which we need to save ourselves in this society and in this world today. It preserves something of a wisdom and knowledge which we have lost or forgotten as modern human beings. I believe young people today can find great hope and purpose in traditional training. It has always been so for the last thousand years.

Indeed, I may be the biggest fool of all in a battle of little hope, but truly, without "throwing out some of the new and bringing back some of the wiser, older traditions," we may be in danger of witnessing the end of a great age and tradition of martial arts today.