



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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Holiday Issue



In March 2018, we held a memorial service and seminar to commemorate Furuya Sensei's 12th year since his passing.

In April, our dojo celebrated the 50th anniversary of O'Sensei's passing with a *meinichi* or memorial service and held a special practice on that day. Every year since our dojo was opened in 1974, we have been memorializing O'Sensei and remembering his passing.

In August, we celebrated Ken Watanabe Sensei's 30th year in Aikido training.

In October, many of us from Los Angeles joined guests from all over the world to celebrate Kodokai Dojo's 20th anniversary in Salamanca, Spain. Santiago Almaraz Sensei has been visiting our dojo since 1997 and was a devoted student of Sensei.

In November, we attended the celebration for Madam Sosei Kansuma who celebrated her 100th birthday and has been teaching Japanese classical dance for 80 years. Kansuma Sensei was a good friend of Sensei's and the Fujima Kansuma Kai performed the *Sambaso* at our 30th Anniversary celebration 14 years ago.

When I look at these illustrious milestones, I can't help but think that 2018 is somehow a pivotal year for tradition or traditionalism.

Japanese traditional arts are all experiencing a shift in popularity. Most schools and arts are seeing a shortage of students or a decline in popularity and some think that this weakening is signaling the end of "traditional" arts.

I don't think that the problem with traditional arts is the art itself, its philosophy, social media popularity or the overabundance of unqualified teachers. To me, the problem with traditionalism is people's understanding of what "tradition" means. The word tradition is defined as, "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way." Thus from this definition tradition could be attributed to a thing, a belief, or a process that is handed down from one generation to another. This definition is clear but it lacks meaning or substance to explain something as multifaceted as traditionalism.

In my view, for something to have tradition it is not about the tangible things like the physical techniques, products or the people, but rather it is the spirit by which those physical things are pursued. Based on this, for something to be truly traditional or have tradition, it must have the proper spiritual energy or *ikioi*. *Ikioi* is the thing which gives



something its true nature as it gives it its depth and meaning. When something has *ikioi*, it is imbued with a kind of power or feeling that can't be replicated or faked.

Tradition then is not something physical or tangible but the spiritual energy behind the tradition that is interwoven into every aspect of an art as well as the force behind the intention of the person practicing the art. We do something because of *ikioi* and that is what makes it or gives it its traditional aspect.

In the past, traditional arts were only practiced by a select few whose hearts were dedicated to the pursuit of that thing and therefore the pool of true "experts" was small. Today, there is a lot of rank inflation within traditional arts and with that inflation follows a deflation and we see this as a decline in its popularity. This decline is just the rhythm of nature correcting itself. In the end, only the truly dedicated, or those with real *ikioi*, will survive.

What then is tradition? Tradition is the spiritual energy which drives a person to dedicate their lives to something that others find hard, boring or too difficult to devote themselves to. Proper spiritual energy or *ikioi* gives something tradition and tradition gives something its true meaning.

In my opinion, traditional training and traditional arts are alive and well. We can see this with people remembering the founder of Aikido's *meinichi* after 50 years, dojos celebrating 20 year anniversaries, and a dedicated teacher celebrating a 100th birthday. With all that, I'd say that the traditional arts are in good hands.

Happy 100th Birthday, Kansuma Sensei. Best wishes Kodokai Dojo on your 20th anniversary.

Thank you all for putting in your *ikioi* this year and making 2018 a truly wonderful and memorable year. •



Real Warriors

by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz**
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

“Warriors are not the ones who always win but the ones who always will fight.” – Anonymous

Warrior is not a title that one gives to themselves but rather it is a moniker that others use to describe when a person displays great character in the face of adversity. The term “warrior” gets thrown around a lot and on a certain level the word has lost its true meaning. Today, when most think of a warrior, the image that is usually conjured up is some Hollywood tough guy who is physically invincible.

It is true that a warrior must be as physically strong as they can be, but a true warrior is not only physically strong but a person who has even more inner strength.

Having inner strength is having the fortitude to meet our personal challenges whether it be on the battlefield, on the training mat or in our private lives. When things are good, and we are strong and winning, it is easy to be a warrior but a true warrior excels in the bad times. These tough times and how we behave are what truly defines us not only warriors but as human beings as well.



On Furuya Sensei's 9 DVD series, he put an ancient incantation that warriors of old used to inscribe on their swords and other battle accoutrements which read, rin byo to sha kai jin retsu zai zen which roughly translates as "the best warrior excels at the front of the battlefield."

This year our dojo celebrated our 20th anniversary since we officially opened the Kodokai Dojo. We were all very grateful to have had the pleasure and honor of celebrating our milestone with a seminar with instructors from Los Angeles, San Francisco and Japan. It was a wonderful time but also a very busy two weeks, but we were happy to return all the kindness that we had received from our friends in the United States and Japan who came together to celebrate this important date with us. I was very happy that all of our students here at the Kodokai Dojo worked hard and displayed incredible teamwork to make our anniversary a success. Sensei's spirit was alive and well as everyone

from home and abroad demonstrated the true spirit of budo and I think Sensei would have been proud of everyone.

I think Sensei would have been proud because I am very proud. I am proud of how our students worked selflessly and tirelessly so that everyone had a good time, but I am also proud of our relationship to our parent dojo, the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

A true warrior is then a person who is willing to show up despite all odds or costs and from the incantation that strength, speed and power pale in comparison to determination, fortitude and courage.

I am happy that our dojo is full of "real warriors" who diligently work together, train together and help me keep this dojo going now and into the future. I thank you all—you are all true warriors to me.

Merry Christmas from everyone at the Kodokai Dojo in Salamanca, Spain. •



LOOKING BACK

by **Ken Watanabe**
Iaido Chief Instructor

Another year has passed. When we think back on any year, what do we think? What did we learn? Did our technique get better? Did our level drop? Were there any breakthroughs in our training or do we feel our training has plateaued?

Every year has its good and bad parts. 2018 was no exception. For example, earlier in February, I lost my father to old age on Valentine's Day, of all days; later, in October, we traveled to Spain to celebrate a huge milestone for our branch dojo, the Kodokai, in Salamanca – their 20th anniversary.

When we sum up a year, we might be disappointed in what we didn't achieve, yet often the greatest achievement is that we are still here. When Ito sensei and I discussed teaching the students, and providing the best quality instruction we can, he said that the reality is that the one left standing at the end is the winner, and whether or not that person is qualified, they will be the one who will end up being the final authority. It doesn't matter how great or skillful you were if you give up.

If all of a sudden the dojo somehow ceased to exist, all the work of our past teachers who have brought us to this level of skill would be for naught. All of our work trying to learn this thing called "aikido" would

be meaningless. Yet, as long as we have people dedicated to supporting the dojo and the practice, my teacher's legacy will continue.

This past year, like every year, we have worked so hard to do something not so extraordinary as we are simply trying to do what is correct, what is normal, what is standard.

Looking back on 2018, it was not a special year, it was just a year like any other year, with landmark events and struggles; students and teachers trying their best to teach aikido, practice aikido, improve themselves, and keep the dojo operating smoothly, efficiently and dynamically. The greatest achievement is that at the end of the year, we can say that we are still here.

Maybe you haven't perfected your breakfall, or your ukemi is still stiff, or you still find yourself fighting the technique, but you made it through the year to continue in the following year. There's the saying: I'll rest when I'm dead. It is your spark that keeps the dojo alive. Our job is not to get good, getting good is a byproduct of our resilience.

I want to express my gratitude to the students in the dojo for practicing hard this past year and for supporting our dojo. Without your dedication, this dojo would not exist. Without your eagerness to learn, there would be no teaching. Thank you. •

A Caring Heart

by Reverend Kensho Furuya



We use our senses to understand this reality we live in. Everyone knows we use our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our tongues to taste, our noses to smell, and our fingers to touch and feel. And, of course, without any one of these senses, our “contact” with this world is diminished.

What I don’t understand is that although everyone is in full control of their senses and these senses seem to be in perfect order, how are people still confused?

We go to see a movie and we still miss many of the fine points of the plot. We listen to a speaker and it is so easy to walk away without catching that person’s real meaning at all. We look at a wonderful painting in the museum and we have no idea what the artist was thinking. Sometimes, I am so surprised at how much we rely on our senses but how unreliable they are in our day to day activities.

Of course, we know that our nose, ears, eyes, etc., only receive sensory stimuli and that all that information is comprehended in the brain. Whenever we “need” to concentrate we always try to focus our minds to the task. I am always telling my students to “focus” or to “concentrate their minds in their training.” Still, many times, the results are not so great.

Somehow, I was thinking about this problem today and I think about the Japanese method towards understanding. In the Japanese method, where we need to concentrate or focus, they usually do not say, “focus your mind” although the mind or brain is where this processing takes place. They usually say, “put your heart into it,” or “do it with your heart.”

The heart is not where we process these external stimuli – it is the brain, of course. Our hearts do not work as part of our nervous system, but the heart is where we somehow get this “drive” or “energy” to bring our powers of perception together and to focus them.

As I think about this more and more, what I think this means is that what we do is not merely a function of receiving outside information and processing it in the brain. Using our heart to understand means that we bring a sense of caring or love in order to work or understand at our fullest capacity.

Often in class, it is not the most talented or strongest student that understands the most, it is the one who cares and is the most interested. Mastery has nothing to do with talent or strength at all, mastery is nothing more than the simple act of caring.

Many times, we are too full of ourselves to care about anything but ourselves. Many times, we are too stuck on something in our minds, to really appreciate anything else.

Caring also means to drop the ego – true caring is emptiness. When we care we become an empty vessel that is ready to receive. I think this is why when we say, “that person is really full of themselves” – they really are!

Please don’t rely solely on your senses but at the same time, please do not rely just on your brain power or intellect either. Everything in this world is determined by our “caring heart” because that’s where the true energy is and where our true power lies.

It is only through our own Aikido practice that we can truly realize this teaching.

Please train to materialize joy, peace and harmony within your own body, spirit and mind.

Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays •

Editor’s note: This article was posted to Furuya Sensei’s Daily Message blog in a slightly different form on December 26, 2003.

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

December 24-26
(Monday-Wednesday)
Dojo Closed Christmas

December 29 (Saturday)
Intensive practice 6:30 AM

December 30 (Sunday)
Mochitsuki at Zenshuji 6:30 AM

December 31 (Monday)
Osame keiko —
Last practice of the year 9:00 AM
End of the year party 11:00 AM

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays*

8:00-9:00 AM Iaido
9:30-10:30 AM Advanced class
10:45-11:45 AM Weapons class

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Iaido
9:00-10:00 AM Children's class
10:15-11:15 AM Regular class
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Fundamentals
12:45-1:45 PM Open practice

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced class
7:45-8:45 PM Weapons class

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals class
6:30-7:30 PM Regular class

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular class
7:45-8:45 PM Open practice

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Morning class
6:30-7:30 PM Fundamentals class

NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.

**Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar. By Invitation only.*

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM



The Aiki Dojo

is the Official publication of
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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.



Aikido World Headquarters

AIKIKAI® 公益財団法人 合気会

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official Hombu Recognition by the
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17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

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