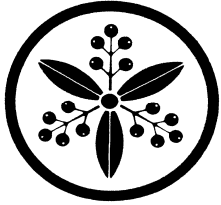


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# The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

## 道の為、世の為、人の為 合気道

# The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan  
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai  
The Furuya Foundation

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*Six years on: ACLA students turned out to attend Sensei's memorial service officiated by Kojima Sensei and Toho Sensei of Zenshuji Soto Mission on March 9, 2013.*

### Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich

Editor, The Aiki Dojo

March has come around again, and as time marches on, we take a moment to pay our respects to Reverend Kensho Furuya Sensei, the founder of ACLA, who passed away suddenly while chatting with his students after class six years ago on March 6, 2007. This issue of *The Aiki Dojo* demonstrates not only that Sensei's spirit remains strong within the dojo and among its members and friends, but also that so many people made the effort to share at least a bit of their experience of Sensei, firsthand or otherwise. I think Sensei would have felt very touched that several years later, his students continue to strive towards an understanding of what he taught them, pass along that knowledge, and pay it forward.

I always find myself waxing nostalgic this time of year: putting together the memorial issue makes it impossible for me to do otherwise. Yet while I might experience a moment or two of sadness, this year, perhaps for the first time, I've noticed that appreciation has defined my emotional response to memories of my teacher: appreciation for his dedication and sacrifice, for his unflinching focus on proper mindset and execution, and for his in-

spiring some senior students enough that they accepted the mantle of leadership with all of its headaches and responsibilities in order to continue Sensei's mission. What's more, I feel so happy that subsequent generations of students who never even met Sensei have shown themselves committed to his legacy just as much as those of us lucky enough to have had him as our teacher. Though I say it myself, we have as fine a student body here at ACLA as I could wish to meet anywhere in the world. They have a keen interest in developing their technique while evolving as people alongside that technique; this attitude makes all the difference, I think, and it humbles me to have the good fortune to train alongside them. I hope I can fulfill my responsibilities to them as a *kohai* and *sempai* to help ACLA move forward into the future.

I would argue that we can glimpse the future by observing how our contributors this month recount the past; some offer a shared past, some reveal an intensely personal history that might seem unique. Yet the common thread here weaves a distinct trail we can follow, if we so choose, into the next day and the next. I'd say the future from here looks bright. Many thanks to these authors for their generous contributions of time and talent to making this issue stand out as a remarkable monument to a remarkable person. I hope you enjoy it, and I hope to see you on the mat!

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### **Truly Human**

by Frances Yokota, *Aikido Ikkyu*

In class, I had always expected Sensei to critique me during practice, and occasionally, stopping class to use my inadequacies as a “teaching moment”. There were times when I thought, “Am I ever going to get this? Why does he keep picking on me? Am I really that terrible?” Then one day, as we scurried back into formation before bowing thanks to one another for another good practice, Sensei gave insight into that day’s lesson.

“I’m not picking on you,” he said. (Was he talking to me?) “If I didn’t correct you, and let you keep making mistakes, then that means I don’t care.” He was talking to all of us. “I could be like other teachers and let you keep making mistakes and just take your money. That would be easy. I would be rich.”

Sensei always had a way with words. He explained things so simply that a four year-old could make sense of his teachings. It was never his intent to hurt my feelings, or trod on my self-confidence. He simply guided me in the right direction, setting me back on track when I fell off the path, all because he cared enough to do so.

To this day, I use this lesson with my employees. It has taught me to manage and to lead with the betterment of others in mind. I continually remind myself that we are all susceptible to getting our feelings hurt, our egos bruised, and taking things personally. That day in practice, Sensei’s only intent was to teach us Aikido, and his lesson that day left a deep impression in me. Sensei taught us expecting nothing in return. Not only did he teach us technique, but he taught and practiced Aikido in its entirety. In the Spirit of Aikido, *budo* is said to teach us to be free of ourselves, while attaining no self, thus letting us realize what is “truly human”. More than I could ever hope to be, Sensei was in fact, truly human.



*Sensei looking with a watchful eye as Frances takes ukemi*



**“This Is Not a Game”***by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor*

Recently, I gained a different perspective and appreciation about my experience training under Sensei. The poet Robert Morgan once quipped, “Distance not only gives nostalgia, but perspective, and maybe objectivity.” Former students often use the word *strict* to describe training under Sensei. For many years, I resented my training under him because it felt harsh and I didn’t understand how it transferred into my daily life. Today, I finally realize that training also serves as practice for life. I first recognized the correlation between my traditional training and life while caring for my son Michael, who was born in January. It began innocently as people complimented me on how well I took care of him; I felt kind of confused by their compliments, because I just did what came naturally. In the midnight hours while changing diapers and washing bottles, I began to see how my training under Sensei had really prepared me for life and that, in the end, no distinction between the two exists.

In the dojo we were taught to keep diligent, plan ahead, and execute everything thoroughly because a dojo requires a tremendous amount of upkeep and preventative maintenance. Likewise, babies also require an enormous amount of busy work; it seems like my wife and I are always washing something. In the dojo, we strive to bring the element of “no-mind” into our actions so that we can act without thinking. I observed this phenomenon of “no-mind” very early one morning where, at 2:30 a.m., I finished feeding Michael and felt very tired. As I put his bottle in the sink, I noticed that all of his other bottles were dirty. No sooner did I notice this than I started washing them all, prepped them, and set them out for the next feeding in three hours. As I got into bed to go back to sleep, I realized I did all that without thinking. In training, any thought that arises creates a gap, and those gaps become the openings that caused us to get scolded by Sensei or struck by our opponents. At home, not being diligent means dirty diapers, no bottles for feeding, or simply a screaming child. A good student, like a good parent, does the right thing at the right time. In order to do that we must remain diligent, think ahead, and keep aware of our surroundings at home, the dojo, or wherever we find ourselves.

Sensei taught us Aikido as a martial art. Therefore our actions always had to be deliberate and, thus, we also had to take responsibility for those actions. Everything demanded careful handling, from how we held our weapons to how hard we closed the front door; every movement required mindfulness. If the door slammed or we stepped over someone’s weapons, we got in trouble for our carelessness. The other day, Michael had scratched his face with his fingernail and so I wanted to trim his nails. Of course he fussed and, as I hurriedly trimmed one, I cut his finger and it started to bleed and he screeched out with glass-breaking intensity. I felt really bad and I remembered something that Sensei once said about Aikido: “This is not a game.” We must always act or move with a sense of purpose or deliberateness, whether caring for our children, carrying an antique, or striking at a person’s face – these examples all amount to the same thing from the perspective of training. If we have respect for ourselves, we can have respect for someone or something else, and then we will act deliberately, respectfully, and responsibly.

*Continued on page 6...*

*Sensei looks on as David Ito demonstrates suwariwaza at Pasadena Buddhist church's Obon festival*



*Sensei with Ichizuka Sensei getting ready to demonstrate at Japanese Village Plaza's Cherry Blossom Festival*



*Sensei with Taitetsuo Unno and Dr. Cheryl Lew*

*“Great potential equals great hardship equals great achievement. Even today, I still find it so true.”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

## Sensei's Dream and Sacrifices

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

One thing on which all of us who studied under Sensei would agree: he was a great teacher. For those of us who didn't study under him, both Ito Sensei and I try to convey his teachings in our own humble ways. In addition, there is usually one of his past excellent articles in the newsletter in order for everyone to get a sense of his vast knowledge of martial arts and Japanese culture. For those who never met him, I don't think we adequately express how special and unique an individual Sensei was or how much he sacrificed for the sake of teaching the arts he loved so much. I am sure that even after this article, it will remain under-expressed. I remember Sensei one time remarking on the evolution of commentary after a great teacher dies. It went something like this: for the first several years the memory of the teacher remains vivid in the minds of the students; after about three years, the specific memories of him begin to fade and the teacher becomes more iconic; then after being placed on an iconic pedestal, the critics then begin to chip away at the pedestal. He said it was just human nature to do so. It has happened to all great teachers, including those to whom we owe our martial arts lineage.

Those of us who were his students marveled at Sensei's genius, not only in his knowledge and teaching of martial arts, but also his knowledge of Japanese and other Asian culture. It is hard to imagine how he accumulated so much information and that it was so readily retrievable. I often wondered if Sensei had a photographic memory, because it was hard to imagine how anyone could retain so much knowledge. It was his scholarly approach to Asian culture and martial arts that was the most impressive. He was an excellent and prolific writer, producing what was essentially an article a day in his Daily Message, plus also answering a barrage of people's questions on his message board. At one time, he was producing at least three newsletters a month, one for ACLA, one for the Southern California Sword Society, and several others for Zenshuji temple. Writing came easily to Sensei and he expressed his knowledge through the written word in a way that we could understand. His writings were for teaching, not just a showing of how much he knew.

It is rare to find this combination of martial arts teacher, scholar and writer, which set Sensei apart from others. When his book *Kodo: Ancient Ways* was published, I brought him to an interview with Larry Mantel on KPCC radio, whose radio program includes his interviews with authors about their latest books. One of the reasons we were successful in getting the interview was that we highlighted Sensei's scholastic background to the producers. Had Sensei been perceived as "just" a martial artist and not a scholar,



the interview would never have happened. When we got to the radio station, we met another author who was going to be interviewed first. This gentleman, dressed in a pinstriped suit, was the Gordon Gecko (from the movie *Wall Street*) type of guy. Although I don't remember his name, I remember his nickname: "Chainsaw Al." His book was about buying companies, selling off the assets, putting people out of work, and basically exploiting the companies for all they were worth.

There could not have been more polar opposites in the room that day, Chainsaw Al, the overly aggressive cut-throat businessman, versus Reverend Kensho Furuya, the calm martial artist/scholar/Zen priest.

Sensei had a hunger for knowledge that few possess; he enjoyed being a student as much as being a teacher. I am sure that we students frustrated him because we all did not have the same passion and capacity for knowledge that he had. I still remember his words: "You better ask me the questions now, because I'm not always going to be around to answer them." How sadly those words were true. Obviously, he was a master at Aikido and Iaido, but we were doubly blessed because he did have this scholarly background and could expound on many topics at many levels. I really miss the study groups that he would conduct. Whether it was examining the meaning of Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, or Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*, or sword study classes, Sensei would freely give us the knowledge that he worked so hard to acquire.

Sensei was the most impressive when he was talking about swords. For his sword study groups, he would walk down stairs carrying a



couple of swords and talk about a particular sword making tradition for an hour. His knowledge of swords was truly amazing to witness. I had the privilege of watching him appraise swords (*kantei*) on several occasions. One such a situation was an appraisal he did for the Los Angeles County Assessor warehouse in Pico Rivera. There were about 40 swords of an estate that the LA County officials wanted to auction; they had no idea what swords they had or their worth, so they asked Sensei to do an appraisal.

For most people, it would have taken them all day to appraise the swords. When we arrived, the swords were lined up for his inspection and laid out on two long tables. Sensei walked down the line, examined each sword, and dictated all the information on the sword for me to write down. I had a hard time just keeping up with him. When he finished it had only taken an hour to complete the appraisal. He was fine; I, however, felt exhausted. At other times, I have seen him just pull the sword out of the scabbard a few inches, and he could tell where it was from, when it was made, and who in all likelihood made it.

*Continued on page 24...*





### Aikido and Antiques

by John Stevens, Aikido 7th Dan

Besides Aikido, Furuya Sensei and I had a few other things in common – we were both Soto Zen priests, we loved antiques, and we liked to eat. When I had a chance to visit ACLA, we spent the morning discussing scrolls from his collection and then went to have a delicious lunch. We talked about Zen informally throughout the day. To my regret, I only saw a small portion of his huge collection of scrolls. I found a couple of things for him – a Heart Sutra brushed by Nakayama Hakudo and a calligraphy by Jigoro Kano that read, “A hundred blows but no retreat!”



*A hundred blows but no retreat!*

Furuya Sensei’s dojo was as much of a museum of Japanese antiquities as a training hall. Aikido and antiques were the two great passions of Furuya Sensei’s life. Sensei understood that the beauty of a well-executed Aikido technique is on the same level as the beauty of fine art.

# 氣

### Sensei’s Compelling Chi

by Stan Sung, Aikido Shodan

One of the things I remember most about being Sensei’s student is that I always felt that I was being gently but firmly pushed to go beyond my limit during Aikido practice. I also remember being pulled and drawn to meet strict expectations in other areas surrounding Aikido practice.

I would describe the feeling as both frightening and motivating at the same time. Starting out with *ukemi*, I was not at all comfortable about the thoughts of slamming either the front or back of my head on the mat. I was also uncomfortable being thrust into practicing many techniques that seem basic now, but felt so threatening and intimidating back then. As uncomfortable as I was, when Sensei said “Okay, try. . . .” after demonstrating a new technique I found myself feeling compelled to go against my fear and just do the technique. Before class, I would find myself racing to the dojo from school or work, fearful that I would be late and miss something important. The intensity was present throughout practice and even outside of practice.

When I reflect on how things were back then, I realize that there was something about Sensei that compelled me to push myself to the limit. As I practice Aikido and remember Sensei’s references about *chi*, it dawned on me that this could be the same thing that has been compelling me to push my limit. It makes sense as I think about it, as the *chi* while practicing Aikido acts like an invisible part of us, sensing and guiding our partners at the same time. Thinking back, Sensei must have had very strong *chi* as he was able to guide me without ever touching me. Now that’s some compelling *chi*!



*“It only takes about nine months to create one human body, it takes thousands of years to build one soul . . . it is the same with Iaido. Please keep up your training at all costs. . . .”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

“This Is Not a Game” continued from page 3...

Training teaches us to face our fears. Before I studied Aikido, I was always an introverted and apprehensive person. Over my 23 years of training, where I had to participate in countless demonstrations and face opponents who seemed larger than life on the mat, I learned how to face my fears, control my emotions, and get the job done. I never really gave it much thought, but I become conscious of it when my wife Katy’s water broke two months ahead of schedule in the middle of the night when Michael was born. Admittedly, I have never felt more scared in my entire life than when we raced to the hospital, but I was able face my fear with courage and repose so that we could remain calm and deliver our baby successfully. There is a saying, *mushin ni shite kumo, onozukara nodoka nari*, which means, “The cloud moves with no mind, everything becomes calm.” Because I could keep my composure I helped keep everyone and everything else calm, and Michael was born without any further complications.

Control in Aikido, as in life, is an illusion; this truth feels very difficult for me because I am one of those “Type A” people who tries to control everything. Michael gets the hiccups very easily and it takes a while for them to subside. Hiccups are more unsettling for parents than babies and essentially they will go away on their own, but that didn’t stop me from trying all kinds of folk cures. Nothing worked and I felt really helpless. And I felt helpless because I was trying to control them and just as in training, when I try to control my opponents, I come up short. There is a tenet in tea ceremony which states, “Prepare for rain.” I always thought that I was sup-

posed to plan ahead to control the situation, but sitting here with my son incessantly hiccupping, I recognized that we plan ahead so that we have an option – nothing more, nothing less. This is something that Bishop Yamashita once told Sensei, “Nothing turns out the way we think it will.” In Aikido we strive for *ki no nagare* in our techniques; however, we don’t just try to flow with *ki*, but with everything else in our lives. One of the last admonishments that Sensei gave me was, “You always think you are right!” Now I understand what he meant, because control or thinking that I am right is only an illusion and will impede my ability to be present in the moment and meet each challenge with an open mind. The song “Let It Be” came to Paul McCartney in a dream where his deceased mother told him, “Be gentle, don’t fight things, just try and go with the flow and it will all work out.” This, I think, is the secret to life as well as Aikido.



Just the other day as I sat holding Michael one night after he woke up crying, a smile spread across my face. In that moment, I realized all that Sensei had given me: He gave me the gift of Aikido. Sensei used to talk about training when he said, “Mastery is the extent to which Aikido permeates into your daily life.” I am by no means a master, but I can now see the path more clearly because my teacher taught me how to see. Seeing in this way enables me to appreciate everything as a learning experience. There is a saying, *jikishin kore dojo* (“With the right mind everything is learning.”), and with this right mind we can understand that wisdom is nothing more than knowledge gained through experience, which gives us the ability to keep objective in order to gain perspective. With perspective we can eventually find the right path in life.



“To do marital arts does not mean you become invincible, immortal, or acquire super powers. It means you live correctly and justly according to your beliefs and ideals. You can get sick, get old, and die like anyone, but it is very different.”

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

I think Robert Morgan’s assertion that I shared at the beginning of this essay seems quite true: our narrow view of our past experiences changes over time. When that distance couples with experience we can see things in a different way and, in a sense, grow up. The list of benefits that I have acquired from my 23 years of training feels innumerable. They were always there for the taking, but brought out and polished through training, and especially training with Sensei. I can never know exactly why Sensei taught me the way he did, but for me, the only thing that matters is that I changed for the better and that my life and family are better for having known him. Thank you again, Sensei, for everything, wherever you are.



## Take Out the Pauses

by Maria Ferrari, Aikido Shodan

I was eating with Sensei at Paul's Kitchen after practice one day, when he looked at me and said, "Say something funny."

Boy do I hate that. When people find out you write comedy they always go, "Say something funny," just like when people find out you practice Aikido they always say, "Oh, try to hit me!"

So I paused for a bit and I said something to the effect of, "Well, you would have to pay me first," which is a lame sort of half-joke, but the part I regret the most is the pause. Because in comedy, as in Aikido, hesitation is death. In practice there is a moment when your partner begins to move and if you are thinking about this moment when it happens it is TOO LATE, you should have been moving already. And while you can catch this moment and still fail at whatever you're trying to do, fail completely and spectacularly, if you don't catch it that's it, you're going to end up with your face in the mat, plus you will know while you're down there that you never had a chance. At work it is not necessarily the funniest person that gets to the joke we are all looking for, it's the fastest, the person who is so in the flow of the scene that they often aren't thinking about what they're going to say when they start to speak.

When I knew Sensei I was green in many ways, but now I am a professional, and I like to think that if he asked me that question today I would vigorously burp in his face. Because no matter how badly that might go over, I wouldn't let him see me just sitting there again. Not after all the time and effort he spent trying to teach me to move. You have to do something.



*"When we try to prove we are strong or someone else is weak, we're just being silly human beings again."*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya



*Sensei and his students eating at Paul's Kitchen*

## We Are Family

by Leonard Manoukian, Aikido Shodan

Sensei could come across as a harsh man. His off-the-cuff comments and unapologetic criticism drove many students away. But some stayed; I stayed. But why?

I remember something he used to say when he didn't think we were listening, or rather watching, attentively enough in class: "If you don't observe, you're not human!" To make his point, and to make matters worse, he would move his index finger in the air, in the shape of an X. And the look on his face. . . .

Once, we went to a Chinese restaurant after some special event. We took our seats and began to eat. There were many dishes at the table and we ate family style. Someone went to take some food from one of the plates and, to be polite, turned his chopsticks around so as to use the ends which hadn't touched his mouth. Suddenly, a stern look of disapproval came over Sensei's face as he roared: "We don't do that here! We are family!"

So to answer the question I asked at the outset: we didn't stay because his words didn't sting, we stayed because we gave his words time to sink in. And once we did, we realized that the act of observing, that is watching and remembering, becomes indispensable if we want to grow, in anything. We also noticed that formality, though a necessity in some circumstances, creates artificial walls in other situations and should be avoided. But we can realize these things, and the truth in many of his other remarks, only with time. I wish more people had given his words time to sink in.

*"Like a tiny seed, you will never see the pretty blossom without a lot of caring cultivation, proper nourishment, time, and patience."*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

## A Little Bit of Everything

by Paul Major, Aikido 2nd Dan, Iaido Shodan

To consider Sensei's qualities as a teacher, and to reflect on the brief time in which I was his student, I find I have to define the very words *teacher* and *student*. Some teachers are direct and authoritative, others are more passive but no less important. Some teachers are not people at all, but observations and experiences. Sensei embodied all of these things and has been, to me, an on-going internal discussion. Be patient with me for a moment, if you will, and I'll try to illustrate what Sensei represents to me.

I trusted my parents with my life, and they guided me through my initial experiences. Because I trusted them without question, if they told me the stovetop was hot and dangerous, I never touched the stovetop (even if I was curious). I only found out what would have happened by observation and inference, but I was granted the initial knowledge readily. My parents were teachers in a concerned and giving way; they made some demands of me, but also gave me space and allowed me to develop based on experiences apart from my life with them. In other words, they let me grow up. This type of teaching is something I've always been grateful for, and I still consider them my primary teachers in life.

When I was around 19 I had notions of becoming a famous actor. I was fortunate, then, to come across two men who would radically change my ideas about who I really was and what I wanted. They were actors who had begun teaching, both close friends of each other but with different ways of achieving the same results in their work. By then I lived away from home, and was unsure of what path to take in life. In seeing the quality of their respective work, and allowing myself to trust their guidance, these two teachers molded me, authoritatively but never too aggressively, into someone who cared more about the real practice and work of acting than in acquiring fame. But neither was a father figure: I was clearly a student, in the typical Western sense, and they were clearly teachers, in the typical Western sense, and eventually we would become peers of a sort.



Sensei was like my acting teachers and my parents, but at the same time he was neither. To some students (those that began with him at younger ages, I suspect) he was more parental and he allowed himself to dictate elements of their lives off the mats. There's a great danger there, of course, and I think Sensei recognized that. Other students, however, would very rarely have any interaction with Sensei off of the mats, aside from group functions. I could see him being strict with himself in terms of how and with whom he would associate, in a ceaseless effort to provide students with the most appropriate guidance. With some students he was very successful, while with others he occasionally stumbled. But he never stopped making the effort.

Sensei was not a parental figure to me, but like my parents he granted me initial knowledge, each time I was on the mats, in the hopes that I wouldn't have to touch the stovetop. He did this directly by telling me exactly what to do, and also indirectly by allowing me to observe his humanity and his teaching of others.

Like my acting teachers, Sensei challenged me to grow beyond where I was and past preconceived notions of myself and even, broadly speaking, of life. But, unlike my acting teachers, we could never be peers. He enforced a distance to maintain the teacher-student relationship strictly, and frankly the chasm between his knowledge and experience of martial arts, and mine, is too great. And I'm comfortable with that.

I haven't mentioned specifics of his Aikido because the truth is that, despite my feeling that he was an unparalleled martial artist, and taking his *ukemi* in class was like receiving a month's worth of practice in one moment, what he taught me on the mats will always be secondary to the lessons he offered me simply by letting me know him a little. For me Sensei was a little bit of everything, and a great man – one of the greatest I've known, in many respects. To have been his student was an honor, and a unique experience that resists classification. Each time March rolls around, I remember him this way.

## Questions/Comments?

We welcome all questions and comments. Please send us a letter or an e-mail and our team will do our best to come up with an answer. We reserve the right to edit questions and letters for clarity and length.

Please e-mail submissions to:  
info@aikidocenterla.com





## The Importance of Living

by Maria Murakawa, Aikido 3rd Dan

When Sensei passed away it was the first time I knew what loss felt like. My relationship with Sensei was never very personal, and I would say there were never any deep conversations between us. But at some point in my training I did see him more than I saw my own family, as I was training almost every day at the dojo.

His presence and teaching were pivotal in my growth as a person during that time. They aligned with my desire to put my full attention into something I believed in, and at the time, Aikido was the center of my world and seemed to give meaning to other areas of my life. So to have that person taken away one night came as quite a shock to me. *This is what true sadness feels like*, I thought. The question, "What happens next?" was on the minds of all the students, left with a dojo with no teacher. Many students left at that time, but a few stayed, and so thankfully, we are still here today.

I think Sensei has taught me how to deal with loss, both from his own passing as well as his life as an example. I still practice Aikido today, mostly because of the efforts of my fellow students to keep the dojo alive, for which I feel grateful. But through the



years I've realized it's also because I'd like to keep Sensei's teaching alive, and his memory, just as Sensei had treasured his teachers before him. So I'm thankful that after six years, we are still practicing Sensei's Aikido today. I am hoping that what I lack in skill,

I will make up for in consistent intention to keep his Aikido growing for future generations of students who wish to practice it. I've learned that the person may have gone but we are still alive, with the ability to keep that person's spirit alive by our actions. I guess you could say from loss I've learned the importance of living.

Sensei lost a lot of things during his lifetime: his parents died at an early age, for example, and his health failed soon afterwards, which prevented him from taking *ukemi* and executing certain techniques. But he still fulfilled his dream of establishing his own dojo, and he was still able to move at lightning speed on the mat, despite his heavy frame.

Most of all, he was a teacher who miraculously taught techniques he couldn't physically do to his top students, who in turn taught the students after them. Only now, years later, having begun to teach in his footsteps, do I realize how hard this might have been. And I admire Sensei even more. I always want to remember Sensei's love for Aikido, which enabled him to accomplish so many things. Although he is gone, his life is still an inspiration, hopefully even to those who never had a chance to know him.

## Life as a Work of Art

by James Doi, Aikido 5th Dan, Iaido 4th Dan

Sensei once said he liked the idea of trying to live one's life as a "work of art". At the time, I thought that he meant that as a teacher, each of his students was to be a product of this "art". We can think of art in many ways: as a system of skillful techniques or as a means to reveal beauty. Combining these ideas becomes skillful techniques to reveal beauty, which is a nice definition of teaching. How well his students learned Aikido was part of his "art", but his other writings and the special way he taught Aikido can also be considered parts of a life, grand art piece.

Teaching something like Aikido or Iaido is difficult because one is not simply instructing students on particular movements, but also concurrently preparing them to learn, psychologically and physically, things that they didn't even know existed. It is like training



a child to be a world class athlete: you start training young, but carefully monitor natural physical and mental growth to be able to teach what the child is ready for at the right time. This sort of education is enormously demanding on both the students and the teacher. Each of us had different needs and abilities and so he taught us accordingly; Sensei spent a lot of time thinking and planning how he would teach each student.

One technique, traditionally used by many cultures is planting "time release pills" of knowledge. Some sort of story or saying is memorized, but not understood by the immature student. Many, many years down the road, this story or saying will become meaningful. It is like learning the "ABC" song. When you first learn it, it is not much more than a fun little song. But the reason you are taught it and its importance only becomes apparent much later in life.

*Continued on page 20...*



*Sensei demonstrating Aikido at the Natural History Museum*

### Shaping Results

*by Mohammed Anwar, Aikido Ikkyu*

It was a bit of a surprise thinking back and realizing it has already been six years since Sensei's passing. Then again, that realization came while searching my memories for experiences with Sensei, which have grown a little cloudy as now I only clearly remember his challenging classes and periodic meetings to discuss the dojo. I followed the messages he published online fairly regularly however, and it was there that he expressed his enthusiasm for Aikido and the sword, his frustrations with his path and the unaware, and his concerns about the future of the art.

A couple of weeks ago there was a favor I was trying to do for a relative – a trivial thing, but circumstances weren't agreeable and it left me feeling weary and exasperated. I considered the time I had left and resigned myself to the fact that I wouldn't be able to pull it off. I surrendered it as a lost cause and moved on to other things I needed to do. Later I discovered I was very close to meeting that deadline and if I had been a little more persistent I would have made it. I found myself recalling the time Sensei wrote that a person hasn't really failed until they've decided they have. While not exactly a universal law, it reminded me of how much drive, intention, and mindset plays into approaching obstacles and shaping results. In our training, we are regularly encouraged to push our limits, even after we think we've reached them. If we decide we have failed and stop trying our odds of going forward become zero, but if we keep at it, our odds become, if nothing else, better than zero.

These thoughts feel quite relevant to even the very words I write. Originally, I doubted I had anything new to write about Sensei; nothing I felt confident in bringing up no matter how much I thought about it. Then after the events above took place and I began mulling over why things happen quite the way they do, some words from the past finally surfaced.

### A Mat as Wide as the World

*by Jacob Sisk, Aikido Shodan*



Six years ago Sensei passed away. That event, and the years that led up to it, remain a galvanizing time in my life. I can remember several times in my life when I felt that I had it all figured out: The end of high school. A magic, shining year spent in Buda-

pest in the early Nineties, playing chess on the steps of the Hapsburg palace, and vowing never to come home. When I finished graduate school in Boston and lived alone for the first time, in a tiny basement apartment on the backside of Beacon Hill. And finally in those happy, sweaty days, starting around 2004, when I'd come to the dojo and tried very hard at Aikido, something I was very bad at, but found to my surprise (and perhaps not to Sensei's) that I loved. There have been, to date, no more such times, although my daughter is now a year old and we will all move to Switzerland in a few weeks' time. Perhaps the time of my galvanizing is over and it's her turn.

The time with Sensei felt different than the times before. In each prior period, it seemed like the clouds had parted and the cold sunlight came down on the morass that had been my life before. I could frame what had come and what (I presumed) would come next with the wisdom of that period. With Sensei, it was different: it was clear I had figured out nothing, and probably wouldn't ever. It didn't really matter, since as long as I tried hard enough and was fearlessly honest with myself, the difference between "figured out" and "not figured out" mattered very little.

In other words, Sensei taught me a practice, a *do*. Enlightenment wasn't something that just showed up one day, like solving a Rubik's cube by chance, but was a process, and the process had more intrinsic merit, and simply felt better, than waiting around hoping that life would one day just make sense. Sensei gave me a tool to go and find clarity rather than waiting for it to find me.

I don't practice very much any more (cue the litany of usual excuses) but I try to see *do* everywhere I look. Childrearing is certainly a *do*, perhaps the ultimate one. I see the *Hassidim* in the neighborhood just to the south of me and I admire them, since they make every waking moment of their lives a *do*. This habit, of trying to frame life as a set of practices, is Sensei's lasting legacy in my life. None of the *do* I have found or observed are as pure (for me) as was Aikido, and my real hope is that in Europe I will have time and quiet to rekindle my practice and recapture some of the joy of those now long-gone days in the dojo.

In the mean time, I honor Sensei with all my heart. He was the finest teacher I've ever had, and taught me the finest lesson I was ever taught: that all of life is a practice and the mat is as wide as the world.

Thank you, Sensei. I miss you.



## Sensei's Teaching Style

by Louis Lee, *Aikido Shodan*

I joined ACLA in 1987. July, I think.

Sensei was not yet 40, and there were many senior students who had trained 10 years or more. From the start, senior students told me that there are hardly any verbal instructions given, and I need to learn everything from watching and copying. *Fine*, I thought; any type of mimicking always came easy for me. Well, not quite, it turned out. So much of Aikido movement seemed counterintuitive, illogical, and some didn't make sense to me at all. The only thing that kept me going was the confidence I had in Sensei. I do not know what that confidence was based on, but it did not matter – although I still can't explain it, it simply felt right.

And I really loved the hour-long classes during which neither Sensei nor the students spoke. We didn't even say *hai* ("yes") back then, we just bowed. This approach gave us an hour-long liberation from the noise of life and turned class into a true moving meditation, at least to me. So I trained three to four hours a day, seven days a week, copying and copying. I was hooked.

Sensei rarely showed his Aikido in classes: what he did show seemed carefully designed, by himself or by his teacher maybe, and most basic to say the least. And he did it over and over, exactly the same way each time. We never went to any other dojo or seminars, so I never saw any other Aikido but ours. And that went on for five years. Once in a while, during public demonstrations, he did his thing, his personal Aikido, drastically different from what he taught in class. Until the end of Eighties, he favored very quick, direct, in-your-face techniques that ended in a single pass.

I wondered about this teacher with the two drastically different styles. Why doesn't he teach what he does? I was dying to know,



but didn't dare to ask You-Know-Who. . . .

Once in a long while he would talk to us a bit and explain thing at depth, but then he withdrew immediately. It was only much later, perhaps 10 years or more, that I started to understand what that



was all about. However, before I go on, I also want to tell you that this is all my personal interpretation of my experience.

As I see it, Sensei had put forth all his effort in preservation of a traditional curriculum, trying not to alter, modify, or inject his personal style into what he taught. He had a sound teaching foundation of Aikido he had received from his teacher, Second Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, and fiercely guarded it from not only all outside influence but also from his own ego. He was well aware that his own points of views were continuously evolving, and what seemed to be an absolute

answer one moment can turn into something of no significance later. He valued giving his students untainted blocks of the fundamentals for the first few years, knowing that these fundamentals would become essential cornerstones for the blossoming of individual refinement in later years. On his own, I think he must have contemplated, theorized, and evolved his own Aikido in depth, which he kept at bay during class time.

Last year, I saw the last interview of the late Tamura Shihan, where he said, "What is taught in dojo classes are only a foundation, a framework, for a student to start from. It is only a beginning." I think this statement eerily matches Sensei's action word by word. And I wonder in this world of such fast pace and change, how many such dedicated teachers of this kind remain in any field with such discipline and personal sacrifice. And for that reason, I find myself feeling incredibly fortunate to have received Sensei's tutelage during the most active and creative period of his life.

Thank you Sensei!

### Untitled

Win or lose, there is no need to chose,  
Wrong or right, there is no need to fight,  
Weak or strong, there is no need to wrong.  
In Aikido, there is no enemy,  
Only the enemy within, within one's mind and soul,  
Train hard each day, to follow those masters of old. . . .

**Editor's note:** Sensei posted this to Aikiweb's Aikido Haiku forum on October 19, 2003.

## Paintings in the Hallway

by Ken Watanabe, Aikido 5th Dan, Iaido 5th Dan

When we think of Sensei, we think of a demanding taskmaster or recall the hard training under him. However, his stern teaching style, or learning how to do a correct *iriminage* was only one facet of practice. Anybody who has trained under Sensei for a decent length of time realizes that traditional training is more than learning the form but also a demanding practice for our mind and spirit as well.

Many years ago, I helped Sensei host Kajo Suzuki Sensei, a sword expert from Japan. He was invited by Sensei to lecture on the different shapes of Japanese swords through history. Suzuki Sensei was the General Director of the Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai (The Society for the Preservation of Japanese Art Swords) and the executive director of one of Japan's most prestigious sword museums. He was very eminent, and in the sword world, renowned (and somewhat feared) for his expertise. His stature was such that it required a very high level of protocol and, as usual, our plans for hosting him required flawless execution.

One of our students practicing at the time happened to be a member of the Jonathan Club, so with his connections, we planned to take Suzuki Sensei and his wife there for a nice lunch. As I stayed close to Suzuki Sensei and his wife, I remember Sensei hurrying ahead of us, anxious to get to the dining room. No doubt he was worrying about our lunch reservation.

The lunch went smoothly but later, back at the dojo, Sensei lamented that when he reached the dining room and turned back to look at what happened to us, he realized he thoughtlessly dashed

past all the artwork displayed in the clubhouse hallway. As Sensei waited for us to catch up, Suzuki Sensei stopped and briefly admired almost every piece of artwork displayed in that same hallway. People probably pass by these paintings and works of art hundreds of times without a second thought, leaving them unseen and unappreciated.

To Sensei, the right spirit or the correct attitude was almost more important than having a strong technique, and anyone who trained under him knew that showing an incorrect attitude or an inattentive mindset would be quickly followed by a long lecture. Anybody can learn how to throw people down. A bad person can learn to throw someone down as skillfully as a good person, so strength is not the only quality traditional training hopes to impart to the practitioner. Through the training of the body, mind, and spirit, students train to discover their own humanity.

Traditionally, the *samurai* were not only highly trained in the use of weapons and strategy but were also encouraged to develop all of their senses, including their aesthetic sense. One of the many balancing qualities that kept the warrior class from becoming brutal, killing machines was this appreciation of beauty.

To Sensei, this very small, seemingly mundane act of enjoying a painting did not demonstrate Suzuki Sensei's knowledge of *plein air* painting; it demonstrated that his skilled eye realized that these works of art were something worth noticing. It demonstrated that his appreciation went beyond Japanese swords to include anything that exhibited quality, regardless of the medium or country of origin. To most people,

somebody pausing to look at a painting wouldn't merit a second thought, but to Sensei, that moment held so much value as a lesson that it became worthy of reflection.



*“The teacher’s first duty is the best interests of the student. Yet, most students never think, ‘What is best for the teacher?’ or ‘What is best for the art?’ This is why the element of respect is so important. Most people see respect as a political tool and this is a mistaken understanding. Respect opens the door to knowledge of goodness and this is why it is such an important aspect of all training. Respect does not only apply to our art, our teacher, our classmates, our family, or our friends; it even goes to a single blade of grass and the air we breathe which we cannot see.”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya



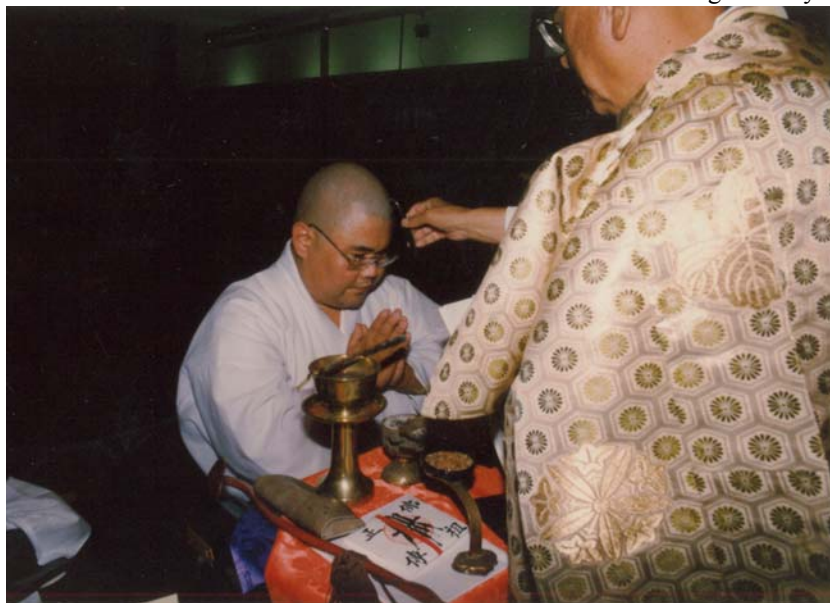
## What It Means to Carry On

by Shaun Menashe, Aikido Shodan, Iaido Nidan

The term *sensei* is a common Japanese honorific used for teachers and high-level professionals. In the old Chinese usage, its Kanji can be literally translated as “first born” or “person born before another” and implies a level of accumulated experience. Most of us have distinct views of what makes teachers perfect and how they should personify this term.

Sensei truly embodied the teacher persona. He was strict, aloof, often terse, intimidating to speak with, well respected, learned, and certainly capable. He was serious and professional about his dojo and the training that took place there. He pushed himself to understand his areas of study as well as how best to teach a Western audience while preserving traditional training methods. He was indeed a *real* teacher; this set him apart from many of his contemporaries, and even today I am continually in awe of the breadth of his expertise. For those of us who decided that Sensei offered something of true value, the task before us becomes how best to preserve the spirit of his legacy.

It is interesting that, following the death of the Buddha, a rather pessimistic prediction reflecting the fate of his teachings came to be incorporated into most of the Buddhist traditions of East Asia. The first thousand years after the Buddha’s death constituted the period of Perfect Law (*Shō-bō*). During this period, monastic discipline would be perfectly observed and the Buddha’s disciples would uphold the teachings. The second thousand years constituted the age of the Copied Law (*Zō-bō*), in which true faith in the Buddhist teachings would decline but piety would be evidenced in the building of numerous temples. The third and final period, the Latter Law (*Mappō*), would last another 10,000 years and would be an age of complete degeneration, full of vice and conflict. It is believed, that although the Buddha’s teachings maintained their validity, many people would no longer follow them as intended and access to them would be limited. Although some of us may not take this prophecy literally, I think it quite succinctly highlights the difficulty and fears in continuing an oral tradition that maintains its original spirit and impact.



*Sensei at his Shukke Tokudo ordination ceremony*

Although the desire to remember is strong and ingrained within human experience, much detail throughout our history has been lost to the ages, despite our inventive means of accumulating it. Remembering Sensei is not just a matter of storing bits of information, but one of personal development and responsibility. Perhaps this is the difference between a historian and a practitioner, for Sensei’s memory becomes forever linked to the type of lives we lead and not how much we can remember of his. In this way, Sensei becomes a sort of living memory through action and not simply memorization.

The true gift left by those whom we want to preserve and copy is their diligent development of their abilities and insights. Sensei’s life revealed the benefit of traditional training methods that indeed yielded a level of expertise seldom seen in our modern age. He proved it was possible for a Japanese American to become fluent in modern and ancient Japanese, to practice brilliant Aikido, to understand the secrets of the sword and swordsmanship, and to live humbly as a full-fledged professional martial artist and scholar.

Sensei laid out before us the path to gaining insight into ourselves and realizing the greatness of our human potential through relentless practice and effort. He proved that understanding produced through training differs from the learning we might expect from a book or school. This inner knowing offers us greater stability, I think, and, perhaps, greater intuition or emotional intelligence than any purely cognitive exercise. The approach seems universal and easily communicated to others regardless of their personal belief system and can spread vastly beyond the dojo. It is only through countless practice hours that we can begin to create a proper context for what Sensei and others achieved. Sensei and other great teachers worked hard; we, too, can work hard, and by doing so become capable of realizing their same greatness.

There is a popular Chinese Medicine teacher who asks his students, “If you had the opportunity to be anyone you wanted to be, whom would you choose?” If we do not instinctively answer ourselves, perhaps we have not yet glimpsed the vastness of our potential. It is by facing these very doubts within the context of our training that we will preserve Sensei’s legacy in action and make a true difference in our own lives and the lives of those around us.

*“I would like to caution my students to make a clear distinction between ‘self-reflection’ and ‘self-judgment’. They are not the same.”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya



### Honoring Sensei This 2013

by Carol Tanita, Aikido Shodan

This month marks six years since our teacher, Reverend Kensho Furuya, passed away. I remember the year because it was the same year I received an award, and that evening was the night of Sensei's funeral. I anguished over the fact, as my friendship with Sensei of over 30 years was quieted by his death. The news still shook me, and I did not want to be anywhere but the funeral: every member of the dojo helped that night, and I could not be there. I rushed back from the event to help in any way I could to find that the reception was almost over, but was so relieved to see that people were mingling and reminiscing about Sensei. Sometimes, sad events like this bring together a "family", and this is now what I consider the dojo.

It took Sensei's passing to meld our membership together. Along the way, we have had many trials, many challenges, many moments that could have dissolved ACLA. During those times, the students who we thought would become leaders, left, while those who had stood in the background stepped forward to take up the reins and build, step by step, a dojo that I truly believe Sensei would be so proud of. Sometimes it is not who we think will be a good leader, but someone who cares about the dojo and believes in Sensei's mission. What was his mission? I used to think it was to make sure Aikido and ACLA carried out the true art form of Aikido as a martial art – not a sport, not a fad, but the Aikido that was taught by Second Doshu, our founder's teacher.

It has been a long while since I have practiced Aikido, partly because of my knees and foot surgery, and the circumstances of just plain life. But I still remember Sensei very fondly, and my memories of him are just like I was practicing under his loft only yesterday. Since I had a very traditional Japanese upbringing, undergoing

training that was very rigid and repetitive was no different than going to one of my other cultural hobbies. But those were hobbies, not a martial art, and I found practice to be challenging, tiring, and frightening. I had known Sensei for many, many years as a customer of Rafu Bussan, the shop I manage in Little Tokyo, and as we got to know each other I found him to be funny, likeable, and a man of good taste who understood the quality and cultural richness of Japanese art. It was another thing to become one of his students, and not to be able to laugh, joke, or hug Sensei hello or good-bye while inside the dojo. It was all about respect, tradition, and the spirit in which we practiced Aikido. I had wanted to learn Iaido at first, but Sensei felt it would behoove me to learn Aikido instead. Never did I know until much later that those same moves we did on the mat transferred into many of the sword movements I was also learning in *bokken* practice. What a revelation that was!

I feel very fortunate to have practiced at the old dojo in the Arts District of Little Tokyo, where Sensei would come down from his loft, and sometimes teach a class or two. He was a big man, but when he would teach a movement, it was almost as if his huge body became like the wind, and I could never figure out how he did it. It showed in my practice, and many, many, many corrections later, Sensei would just say practice, practice, practice: Come to practice more, train hard, practice. It was through those same moves every day that, although I found them monotonous at first, I finally understood and came to become "enlightened" as to why we executed the same moves over and over and over again. Those moves connected, interconnected, and started to make sense. As my body started to accept the rigors of practice, it wanted more understanding of what is Aikido. The practicing became a little easier, the moves started to make sense as I could see myself connect more easily. What amazed me the most was how fast Sensei was. When he threw a student, I couldn't even see the flick of his hand and *boom*, the student was on the floor. His foot movements were so fast and yet, it was like a Japanese classical dance movement: every pose, every foot placement made a huge difference! It was a wondrous and beautiful sight to see! Sensei used to tell us that if the movement was done right, strength did not matter.

I hope to return to training someday, but even if I don't, whenever I do get to visit there or participate in one of our events, I can feel Sensei's spirit in all of the students. Train hard, train often . . . practice, practice, practice . . . and realize the good fortune that we have to be a part of Sensei's legacy that lives on here within our family of his students.



## The Aiki Dojo

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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 also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.*

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**Start and End**

by Lucas Plouviez, Aikido Shodan

White & purple flowers promise to blossom.

There are memories I would rather keep for myself:  
pure, undebated, uncontested.

I start & end with OM; alongside the sound of his  
meditation bowl I sit.

In the kitchen friends marvel at & appreciate his beau-  
tiful plates. They feed us so nicely.

Outside my bedroom I can see twice the *nanten*: the  
window & the mirror.

I step outside my office & before I go, I breathe  
& water Sensei's yin-yang trees.



*“We cannot tell the color of the flower until it blooms. Some knowledge cannot be comprehended until it matures and completes itself within us.”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

**Precious Moments**

by Jeff Wheeler, Iaido 3rd Dan

I remember quite clearly a number of occasions during the last several years that Sensei was teaching when he would admonish his Iaido students during class: “Learn all you can from your teachers while they are here. When they are gone, they are gone forever.” He clearly spoke it with strong emphasis and while we all heard the serious tone in his voice, I often avoided conscious consideration of the stark truth his message carried. Of course his passing and the time since has richly imbued his words with a particularly poignant significance that in present time I recall often.

Now and then on rare occasions – usually towards the end of a very long class – Sensei would call the Iaido students to gather, sit, and listen at a corner of the practice floor. He used these times to teach about swords, swordsmen, *samurai* ideals, feudal history, and Japanese culture as it existed in ages past. He also designed these sessions as opportunities to spark personal introspection of our own spirits, intentions, and motivations. I always cherished these lessons as they felt steeped with his insight and perspective. By design, they often created the opportunity to examine my inner self more deeply (and more often) than would have been common for me otherwise.

During one such session Sensei spoke about the Japanese phrase *ichi-go ichi-e*. I have never forgotten it and in my more self-aware

moments, I attempt to engrain the concept as a guidepost for my own living. I have seen a handful of loose translations of the phrase using differing words – perhaps most often “one time, one meeting” Regardless of the specific English words used, the spirit of the phrase remains the same: every moment shared with another may be the only one, or even the last one we may have. This simple phrase reminds us, even compels us, to recognize that every encounter with another person is precious and unique. No moment in time can ever be recaptured or recreated in exactly the same way. Sensei took great care to make sure we understood



its significance: *ichi-go ichi-e* illuminates the reality that life truly is fleeting and we therefore must treasure each meeting with others as if it were to be our only one. Although short and simple, the phrase has the power to inform our actions and reveal the precious character of the limited days of life each one of us has.

We can see this principle of transience in Buddhism. We can see this principle manifested in the great care of the tea ceremony and in the deliberate, irrevocable actions of all martial arts. We see the truth of *ichi-go ichi-e* taking active form in the presence, and certainly the absence, of those whom we love and are important to us. I see this principle in Sensei's admonishment to learn all we can while our teachers are still with us. To treasure and treat each moment, each opportunity to learn, as if it were the only or the last one we might have. Given what he said and taught, I would imagine Sensei would encourage us each to think on this prior to our classes, and for that matter, throughout all aspects of our lives.



On March 6th, members of the Aikido Kodokai dojo held a memorial service for Sensei.

### Courage

by Mike Van Ruth, Aikido 2nd Dan

Having the opportunity to teach in my own dojo, I often thought about Sensei and his teaching style. I would ask myself how he could develop so many people to such a high level so quickly. I would think back to his classes and how he taught them, but he gave more than just instruction on technique; I think it had a lot to do with the environment he created in the dojo. An atmosphere of deadly seriousness pervaded ACLA that seemed palpable. Looking back now, I treasure the time I spent on the mat learning from him. But at the time, I wouldn't have considered it fun. It was a lot of hard work.

Now, having tried to follow his example, I see the level of courage that he had in exercising such strict discipline. He was more concerned with what we needed than what we wanted. I think he knew that a serious training environment would push us to focus and dig deeper into our training. He had that way of goading us to stretch our awareness and keep us vigilant.

In this day and age, where keeping students and revenue seems the priority in many martial arts schools, I now realize the courage and the uncompromising commitment it must have taken Sensei to hold to his priority of the teaching of Aikido to the best of his ability. I am sure he could have had many more students and financial success if his method of teaching had come across as kinder and gentler, but that wasn't his way. And I thank him for that.

As students of Sensei, we received a wonderful gift. Of course, in the moment that gift may have felt like a curse sometimes. But in retrospect, having had the opportunity to teach and trying to see the process through Sensei's eyes, I look back with fondness and gratitude for the sacrifices he made for us. He was truly a one of a kind and I feel fortunate that I had the opportunity to know him and be his student.

### Remembering Sensei

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz, Chief Instructor  
Aikido Kodokai, Salamanca, Spain



Whenever I have to write something about Sensei, a mixture of memories and feelings of respect, admiration, responsibility, and loyalty comes to mind; I guess they are a reflection how much he meant to me.

His character and manner made him unique. He was very demanding of his students about everything: technique, etiquette, cleaning the dojo, and so forth, yet for all his strict discipline,

Sensei was equally generous. And although many students over the years might not have understood so at the time, Sensei always had a reason for scolding us or having us do something exactly how and when he wanted it done.

Sensei always treated his students as his children in the best sense; he watched over us as we made progress in the dojo and helped us learn to see the martial arts as a part of our everyday lives, not just as a hobby or something to do a few days a week.

He was a person committed to his teachers and friends. He wrote or called them regularly and always had a good memory for details and important dates in their lives. His loyalty to Hombu Dojo was exceptional, as was his love and admiration for Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba. Sensei remained steadfastly committed to Hombu Dojo and the Aikikai until his last days. He left this world with more future plans for the dojo and always thinking of us, his students, and how to continue to improve us and spread Aikido.

The remembering and sharing of the words of our teacher on this anniversary of his passing is very important, but remember: throughout the year in every act we do it becomes even more important to keep Sensei's special legacy alive.

### Untitled

Who can know Sensei's heart and soul?  
When everyday he gives it away to others?  
Forty-five years of teaching and I am weary,  
This Path without an end. . . .  
The moon makes its way across the nightly skies,  
Not heeding the cries of the lonely fawn,  
Who can cure this loneliness?  
When they leave at night,  
The dojo cold without the sounds of students?  
My home is not here with me,  
But in the hearts of my students,  
Who come another day. . . .

**Editor's note:** Sensei posted this to Aikiweb's Aikido Haiku forum on October 19, 2003.





### Concentration

by William D'Angelo III, Aikido 2nd Dan

I think that most of us who studied directly under Sensei, especially in both Aikido and Iaido, have very vivid and intense memories of what it felt like to train with him as our teacher. Perhaps one of my strongest memories about Sensei was that training never stopped, even when we found ourselves off the mat or even outside the dojo. As some of you may know, I sometimes served as the dojo lawyer, so I would often meet with Sensei in his office, going through mail he had opened or opening mail myself. I noticed that every single one of the letters he opened with his letter opener were perfectly cut open as if done with a sword or *tanto* – there were no ragged or torn edges, just a clean, perfect cut at the top. Sensei watched me out of the corner of his eye as I opened my pile of mail. I perhaps got a clean cut about every tenth envelope, not very good – on each of my nine failures, he admonished me over and over that I was not paying attention. Training never stopped.

Although it is but a short, small story, it awakens in me the feeling of love students can have for their teacher. For a teacher, much like a parent, stands between us and our full maturity, assisting and showing us the way; but it is not a one-way relationship. In exchange for our teacher's care, instruction, and love, each of us as a student has a responsibility to become the best student possible, to pay attention, to learn to develop unwavering concentration in all things, something that is quite hard to do but which Sensei did all the time. To this day, I try to open all my letters with a clean stroke because to do otherwise would be to reveal myself as a thoughtless person and would bring shame to Sensei.

The last day I saw Sensei we had lunch in Hancock Park and then went to the open air market. It was fascinating to watch him handle the vegetables and fruit, see him consider which were the most fresh and best tasting, taking some and putting others back. The whole time, his touch was always very light, almost as if he was not even holding the food. It was as if he could tell without telling. But what I remember most about that afternoon was how pleased and happy he was to be spending a simple afternoon in the warm sun walking up and down the street. I will always miss Sensei.

*“Both teacher and student should have and expect the highest expectations from each other in the most ideal situation. In this way, the process of learning and teaching can take place effectively.”*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

### An Easy Lesson

by Kevin Hoffer, Aikido Shodan

Early on in my training at ACLA, I felt I was just starting to get my footing. One thing I had learned was when Sensei was sitting on those blue mats in the corner, we had better pay attention to what we were doing if we practiced right in front of him. So once during a very well-attended class, with very little room to throw, another young student and I were practicing a technique that I believe was a *koshi-nage*. I certainly was not feeling great about being thrown in a brand-new way on a crowded mat, especially not when Sensei was sitting right in front of me, but I also wanted to show my best *ukemi*. But then something very unexpected happened. While “loaded” on my partner's back either to fly through the air, or execute some *ukemi* properly, Sensei told us to wait. So I climbed down, thinking we would try again. At that point Sensei slapped me right on the back with some real force!

“No, no! Don't get down, now I can't . . . try again!” he said with great frustration. Strangely enough, I understood right away why Sensei had slapped me on the back. Not because of poor technique, but because I climbed down before he could show us how to do it right. My first thought was that I should be hurt and of-

fended. I started to ask myself: “Why is my teacher hitting me? What kind of teacher have I found? How can I put up with possible abuse?”

After class, and on the way home, I kept thinking I needed to look at the experience really closely and make sure this was okay. Except that I wasn't really offended. Nor was I hurt. At all. Nor was it a really big deal. In fact, it seemed quite the opposite. It all felt very mundane: Sensei had jumped up to show us exactly where we went wrong, and when I misunderstood what he wanted from us, he let me know. That really was it. Here was a life-long devoted teacher of an art I wanted to learn everything about right in front of me, a teacher who had to find so many different ways of getting through people's egos to the heart of where they can learn. A teacher who cared so much about me understanding of the technique, and knew that I was going to be fine with it, gave me a quick and easy lesson on how to take direction during class from a teacher who has so many students to focus on.

Whenever I see new students get a lot of a teacher's less-than-cheery attention in class, I always say that it can be really hard when a teacher focuses energy on you during class. But it's much harder when they don't.

## Our Teacher and His Students

by Jonathan White, Chief Instructor  
Eastsound Aikido, Orcas Island, Washington

As I continue to teach Aikido here on Orcas Island, I am constantly amazed at what Aikido has to offer me and my students. I am also humbled by the experience. One of my biggest challenges as an instructor is that I was one of Sensei's students: I recognize that when I teach, I also represent him. How is that even possible? He had such a profound level of understanding that there is no way I can bring that depth to my students. I don't have the perspective that comes with knowing the historical context or the origins of the moves the way Sensei did. I remember Sensei sharing some of that history periodically, and it always clarified why we move our foot in a particular way, or hold our hand in a certain position. His knowledge allowed him to share the art with simplicity and clarity. I have to accept that if I share Aikido with some level of simplicity, and don't try to explain too much, then my students can get something from Sensei as well.

Sensei taught us on so many levels. He could be confrontational, direct, challenging. He could ignore us for long periods of time. As students, we always had a feeling of being on guard with him, since we never knew what to expect. Usually, when he would call us over to his desk, it was to ask us to do something or to correct something we were doing. But, I remember one time in particular that took place after a practice. We had cleaned the dojo, and when I went upstairs to change back into my street clothes, he called me over. Sensei told me about when he was a young Aikido student. He said he wasn't necessarily that good, but he recognized that if he was going to get better, he had to change the way he trained. In his training he had been focusing on his strengths, and he wasn't progressing well. He said that he realized that if he began to focus on his weaknesses, then his Aikido would get better and become more complete. He found that as the weakest parts got better, there was always a new weaker part to work on. Sensei asked me to think about that. And I did.

Sensei's story became a code that I've tried to live by in all aspects of my life since he shared that with me over 20 years ago. It is a beautiful and yet challenging way to live and practice. The beautiful part is obvious, but the challenging part is that if we are always looking at our weaknesses and trying to improve, how can we take on the role of teacher or instructor? This question exactly frames the challenge that I've faced, and continue to face, teaching Aikido. What I have begun to learn is that this embrace of my weaknesses keeps me learning and being a student. And, from this place, I hope to pass along what Sensei shared with me as cleanly and clearly as possible. By following this idea of correcting our weaknesses, Sensei is somehow still present. And, in this way, my students and I continue to learn and be challenged together.

This insight continues to be a profound gift and I feel sincerely grateful to Sensei for it.

When he asked me to write something for this memorial newsletter, Ito Sensei wrote that "these articles help our students (past, present and future) to gain a better perspective on what it was like to be his student or to have had him as your teacher – two similar but distinctly different things." This distinction seems to me an insightful one, and I appreciate the opportunity to think about this difference, which is not so immediately apparent. It seemed clear that I was Sensei's student: I joined the dojo and trained often. I did my best to observe him and to learn what he demonstrated. I suppose the evidence that Sensei was my teacher comes into focus in hindsight, when I look back and see how a few distinct gestures on his part, in this instance sharing his personal experience as a young Aikido student, deeply affected me. He offered this message to me, and I gave it a lot of thought. I began to realize that I, too, was working at the things that I thought I did well, both on and off the mat, and I was ignoring or putting aside the things that I did not do well. I am not sure how much I appreciated Ito Sensei's distinction at the time I trained with Sensei. I always saw Sensei as my teacher, and I respected him; but when a teacher passes on and we are still living with his lessons, it is at this point that we know for sure that we were his students, and that he continues to be our teacher.

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*"There are two roads to becoming a great Aikidoist - one is to develop great skill and strength in the techniques. Another way is to become a fine, warm-hearted, compassionate human being."*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya

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## Grapes from the Old World

by Matt Seki, Aikido 4th Kyu

I once heard a story of how an epidemic swept across Europe affecting its grapes and decimating the wine industry. In an attempt to save some of the rarer varieties, a few forward-thinking farmers transplanted some of these crops in Argentina. As the epidemic deepened, at least one of these varieties was totally eliminated from the European continent. However, thanks to the work of a few brilliant growers these varieties were already flourishing in South America, as they do to this day.

I bring this story up because cultures seem to work in much the same way. As our families made their way in search of opportunity to the United States, they brought with them their culture, customs, and traditions. As the generations passed certain particulars of the heritage were lost, but many of the essentials remain. Meanwhile, as this occurred abroad, the countries of origin evolved in a completely different direction. This is certainly true of the early Japanese diasporas to the United States, which came shortly after the Meiji restoration. The major societal change, along with the opening of Japan to the western world, shook Japanese society to its core. With the vocation of the *samurai* class completely eliminated, *samurai* families had to find other means of existence, forcing many to send their kin across the globe. Of course along with these families came a kind of “time capsule” of the old culture.

While not as complete a loss as in the previous grape story, there are certainly hidden pockets of old Japanese ways still in existence in this country. This is evidenced by instances of modern Japanese anthropologists venturing to places like Hawaii to study certain customs and religious practices, long since discarded in Japan. Even older folks like an uncle of mine joke: “Modern Japanese can’t understand me, I speak Meiji Japanese!”

Sensei was definitely a rare variety of these “lost grapes”. Even visitors from Japan would comment on how Sensei and our dojo were “more Japanese than in Japan”. Sensei maintained and created an amazing time capsule of old ways according to his understanding and design. Although I grew up in a mostly Japanese community in Hawaii, Sensei’s level of attention to maintaining particular traditional Japanese sensibilities was unsurpassed by anyone I had ever met. Even in the dojo, every detail – from the stairs to the entrance, every plant and pebble in the entry garden, the wood paneling on the walls and antiques perfectly placed about the space – was perfectly picked and positioned. This level of attention seemed to come with consistent training in the martial arts, as well as a proper mindset. The martial arts he devoted his life to, Aikido and Iaido, both demand a ridiculous level of attention to detail. It seemed that even the slightest incorrect shift in mind or

technique were easily perceived by Sensei. The subtle shift on the grip on the sword, the almost imperceptible shift of focus of the mind from the opponent to your own body: he would catch them all. This knowledge of the subject and uncompromising demand towards perfection appeared to permeate his entire life and even ours, his students. I remember him telling me that he wanted me to learn Iaido so I would “make no mistakes” and this has been my goal. To put this in school grading terms, by Sensei’s standards this meant not an “A” or even an “A+” but a 100%. Not surprisingly this began to penetrate into my mind and affect everything I do. This I believe is one of the gems of studying martial arts in general and why we were so blessed to have a teacher like him.

Sensei had a hunger for knowing, understanding, and experiencing the old ways. He also maintained an unwavering commitment to doing what was right and in the right way, especially in instances that may have seemed trivial or unclear to us students at the time. For example, he once joked about his new high-tech rice cooker, which was so expensive and had the latest in fuzzy logic technology. However, he remarked that truthfully this and any other rice cooker simply pale in comparison to cooking rice the old-fashioned way, on the stove top and this is so true! He explained that it was purely out of convenience that we use a rice cooker, but as a trade-off we are actually diminishing our quality of life. He then posed the question, “Many things in life are like this, so how much of your quality of life are you willing to trade for convenience?” This lesson alone has completely guided and changed my life forever. At the very least, I question many things in this fashion and the more I trade back convenience for quality I am always rewarded with more than just quality, but also deep insight into myself, the world, and actually everything!

In truth, we all are “lost grapes” in ways most of us will never realize. We all have vestiges of our heritage and that’s great, because it’s part of how we are all unique and what makes the world interesting. And while the inertia of this evolving world is inevitable, there is much room for choice and decision as well. I believe Sensei had it right and at the very least we should be mindful of the actions and decisions in our lives, especially the ones we don’t even realize that we have. Our attention to detail can always be improved in all aspects of life and there is always more to learn.

*“Excel in the ordinary by bringing everything ordinary to its most excellent level.”*  
– Reverend Kensho Furuya



## Watching, Doing, Learning

by Tod Fujioka, Aikido 2nd Dan

Hawaii Betsuin Aikido Club, Honolulu, Hawaii

I am a member of Hawaii Betsuin Aikido Club and practice under Gayne Sogi Sensei on the island of Oahu and have the pleasure of practicing at ACLA whenever I visit Los Angeles.

When I first started my practice of Aikido I would watch my teacher as he would demonstrate and wondered how I would ever be able to do what he did. After each practice I would go home, try to remember what we did, and the name of the techniques. I would try to replay the techniques I saw in my head but could not remember all the details: was it my left or right, was I supposed to do this or that, what was the technique called?

Reading books on Aikido was great but it was hard for me to picture a technique through a book; then I found the first video tape of *The Art of Aikido* by Reverend Kensho Furuya. I watched the video often and I could replay the techniques, which helped me understand his positioning, movement, and the philosophy. I made a point to acquire all the videos in the series: watching and replaying the videos helped me when I was not practicing at the dojo.

I have been to Los Angeles many times but during my first trip after starting Aikido, I made it a point to visit ACLA and try to practice. I walked down to the dojo from the Miyako Inn Hotel for early morning practice. (I think in those days not many people walked in that area of Little Tokyo.) I immediately recognized the dojo entrance from the videos and felt excited to be able to attend a class with the teacher who helped me through his writings and videos. Unfortunately for me, Sensei was not available, but the assistant leading the class allowed me to practice with them and I notice he moved very similar to what I saw from Sensei on the videos.

When I am in Los Angeles I try to stop by ACLA and practice when my schedule permits. From the first time I set foot in the old dojo when Ito Sensei allowed me to practice then and each time after, I am always inspired by everyone's sincere and zealous practice and seeing Sensei's presence in everything they do.

Recently I have not been able to practice Aikido as much as I like to due to my work schedule. I have been able to use the methods my teacher has taught us to develop Aikido outside of the dojo and I re-view Sensei's videos to keep connected with Aikido when I am not able to practice.



**Life as a Work of Art** continued from page 9...

Sensei's teachings and the things he set in motion still effect and teaches me now. For example, one night many years ago, two black belts and I were called into his office and told that we are going to start Iaido. I found Iaido to be incredibly difficult and demanding. Only some time after Sensei's death, did the relationship of sword and Aikido start to become apparent to me. Recently, Ito Sensei recommended a book by a Kendo master, in which he describes certain Kendo attacks and strategies. Even though he makes no mention of Aikido, one immediately recognizes the Aikido movements. The basis and logic of a lot of Aikido techniques were shown in a few pages in this Kendo book. This profound lesson was set up years ago by Sensei.

Sensei also thought a great deal of Mother Teresa. I once saw a video of her in Beirut during the civil war in the 1990s. For some reason, she was escorting some kids out of the city or something. In any case, she was berating some soldier to go get the kids. You could hear gunfire and it was clear he was afraid to go into the streets. However, Mother Teresa was in his face and you could see he was deciding which alternative was worse, Mother Teresa's wrath or random gun fire in the streets. It turned out he got the kids. Sensei said there was a saying: "A warrior should be more afraid of his teacher than the enemy."

On the way to last month's intensive Aikido class, I realized that I was looking forward to the class and to see what Ito Sensei was going to teach. This sort of surprised me because I had absolutely dreaded Sensei's intensive classes when he was alive. Getting up in the early, dark morning for what I expected to be an emotional and physical minefield felt awful. Actually, once the class started, it was fine, but I absolutely hated the early morning freeway drive to the dojo. Now I see the reasons to have the intensive classes the way they were. Actually, it is well known that people are most physiologically vulnerable early in the morning. Traditionally armies attack at the crack of dawn for this reason. Intensive classes are more than special Aikido classes; they are a way to learn to deal with and cover our weaknesses, a mental exercise.

Sensei used to talk about "critical thinking". Formal critical thinking is simply objective, critical analysis of any particular idea. However, a significant component of critical thinking is the recognition of cognitive biases and the ability to avoid them. These biases can be considered "mind traps". For example, there is thing called a conformational bias, where people are more likely to believe information that agrees with their beliefs than information that disagrees. These things are used all the time by politicians and marketing people to influence and manipulate our behavior. These biases are huge traps and barriers in one's martial arts education, especially the more sophisticated one becomes.

Amazingly, it appears that Sensei was teaching all these things (and more) that only start to make sense now. His life was indeed a grand work of art. In fact, it still is.



## Sensei's Space

by Kay Sera, Aikido Shodan

As I contemplate writing this article for Sensei's memorial edition of our monthly newsletter I am struck by how far away our time with Sensei seems. It feels bittersweet to draw my mind back in time and remember training in our old dojo: bitter because I miss Sensei, and sweet because I can look back with warmth and affection at being in the sphere of a wonderful teacher whose influence was greater than I realized at that time.

I can remember what was once habitual – striding over the broken asphalt of the alleyway from the gated parking lot, noticing his always clean Honda with the “FURUYA” license plates, trotting up the precisely cut wooden steps, pushing thorough the wooden door with the little bell, stepping quickly through the fresh, moist, bamboo-enshrined garden, passing over stepping stones, while taking note of the Kanji inscribed on their cool, moss-encrusted surfaces. I would then enter, after bowing, a most wonderful space. Often I would hear Sensei clicking away at his computer upstairs with the sound of some old Japanese movie blaring on the TV set. It had become so familiar, the whole routine and all the little details that I would notice whenever I entered that space. Even those cobwebs which wafted in the rafters way up high; they just couldn't be reached, despite attempts by some of the taller students on very tall ladders.



There was something very comforting about this space. The familiarity. The routine that had been developed. Most of all it was a space where once we entered, our minds would become sharpened to begin practice in its many ways from bowing, getting dressed, warming up, practicing, and cleaning up. It was a space that Sensei created, a space that demanded our utmost awareness and attention. With Sensei there, it was a most wonderful space, indeed!

## Mahalo, Sensei!

by Herald Farrington, Aikido 3rd Dan  
Aikido of Hilo, Hilo, Hawaii

I was never a direct student of Sensei – I corresponded with him occasionally via email for maybe four years, and I met and trained with him during one extended weekend visit to Los Angeles – but I still think of him, daily . . . and I miss him, dearly. Maybe that is why I find it so difficult to write about him. I can only imagine how it must be for his direct students. Nevertheless, I am grateful that I have been asked to share something from my all-too-brief relationship with Sensei. Here's what he taught me, and what I find myself practicing (or more often failing to practice) on a daily basis:

- Keep an open and humble mind and spirit
- Train hard
- Search diligently for the deeper meaning
- Train daily
- Search for the heart of the mother
- Train more

Maybe I cannot offer any advice or direct insight regarding Sensei to this newsletter's readers, but I do want to remind everyone that

we are all here temporarily, and we must each work hard to make every day count, both for our own development, and for the development of our dojo and our communities. Each of us can be taken at any time, and none of us can afford to waste opportunities! And no matter how busy we may find ourselves, we should always make time to share an enjoyable meal or maybe just a cup of coffee or tea, or perhaps a beer or a shot. . . . I will never forget how Sensei took me out for dinner and then coffee and cheese-cake after my very first practice at ACLA, and how we didn't get home until midnight! And also how he invited me, along with everyone who had come to Saturday class, for brunch afterwards. It seemed to me that a few of the students seemed a bit perturbed that they all had to make time for a no-name visitor of no particular skill such as myself – especially on a fine Saturday – but as we all sat down to an incredibly full table, everyone participated in a meal that I will never forget, at one of Sensei's favorite restaurants, and I only wish that I could share time with him again.

I think that all *Aikidoka* would agree that one of the basic principles of our practice is the practice of transformation, and I hope that all of us can take this opportunity, in memory of Sensei, to transform the pain and loss of his passing into a renewed commitment to honor the best of his teachings and his example.

*Mahalo nui loa, Sensei!*



*Master Hsu and Sensei in the dojo in the late 1980s*

### Cultural Martial Artist – Sensei Kensho Furuya

*by Sifu Adam Hsu*

Martial art originated to kill. But the training is highly valuable both in physical and mental health. Although martial art has become obsolete on the battlefield, its life-saving skills still have much to offer to individuals and society. After all, saving life is much better than killing.

Increasing traffic and emigration between different countries and nations brings us closer and closer, and more intercultural communications happen every day. Understanding and digesting each other, new interpretations of the world, and emerging species have become the brand new outlook of humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. So the heritage of martial art has evolved into more than simply fighting technique nowadays: the most important guideline of the modern martial art society is to interpret the culture within and promote the modern way. Also this crucial segment is the least sufficient.

Sensei Kensho Furuya, the founder of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles, still stands as an extraordinary leading figure among various martial art schools and teachers. Sensei taught remarkable Aikido and Iaido; however, he emphasized the *do* of his arts as much as any technique, if not more. In addition he also studied and shared with his students the arts of calligraphy, tea ceremony, dance, Zen, and other disciplines. More than the forms, he abstracted the essence and cultural dimension of these arts to assist the achievement of Aikido beyond *budo* in every aspect.

Although Sensei has passed away and the original dojo no longer exists because the lease agreement terminated, his students have worked hard to rebuild a brand new dojo almost identical to the original one, inspired by Sensei and the consistency of Zen and *budo*. Many qualified instructors teach Aikido and Iaido at this new dojo, following the spirit of Sensei. To these teachers, and their students, I say: believe in harmony and share your legacy to promote the infinite potential of humanity that your teacher saw. Furthermore, for the promotion of whatever martial arts, Sensei points out the correct path ahead and feasible demonstration, even today. With that legacy in mind, this anniversary of Sensei's passing amounts to more than an individual event of ACLA; it becomes a memorial for all martial artists and for all people connected with humanity.

Please rest in peace, Sensei Kensho Furuya, the modern martial artist.

*Taipei, Taiwan, Spring 2013*



*Two old friends discussing life over a cup of tea*

### Move Quickly, Don't Rush

*by Jim Bassett, Aikido Ikkyu*

There are many ways of teaching, and many ways of characterizing teaching. As a teacher, who does one follow? Perhaps knowing that, sadly, one's beloved teachers pass on, Sensei followed the teaching that passes through teachers. I always felt like Sensei tried to "stay out of the way" of Aikido, doing his best not to taint the teachings of Aikido with his own limitations as a human being. Staying close to the fundamentals, he found his point of reference and center. This made his teaching precise and delivered with equanimity. The teaching flowed through him: what he taught and how he taught it became one and the same.

"Move quickly, don't rush!" In the security of the fundamentals, the pace on the mat felt urgent and revealing, and yet, in the repetition, there seemed a slowness. The pace on the mat, tempered by the bow, tempered by the patience of the teacher, created the conditions for insight. Trying not to obstruct, but teach, Sensei moved the whole room in Aikido, and in the experience of Aikido, he urged us to catch the teaching.



*Sensei demonstrating randori at JACCC's Children's Day festival*





*James screens one of his early films at the dojo*



*Sensei demonstrating during a visit from a local school*

### You Know Him

*by James Takata, Aikido 2nd Dan*

As we commemorate the sixth year since Sensei's passing, I realize that there are many more students in our dojo today who never met him. I write this article with those students in mind. You may not have met Sensei in the flesh, but you know him.

Sensei founded and designed the dojo where you train. His aesthetic and artistic sensibility shaped every detail: architecture, furniture, art, garden, everything. If you walked into the old dojo where he once lived and taught, it would feel eerily familiar.

You may have heard his voice and seen him teach through his *The Art of Aikido* videos. I remember when I took home the nine VHS tapes as a 6th Kyu. Sensei told me to learn all the secrets. I

thought he must be joking; why would he reveal the secrets of the art in his videos? But they are there, if you're ready for them and you look closely.

You also know Sensei because you train with teachers and students whom he taught directly. As Kojima Sensei said in his sermon this year, Sensei's spirit lives on in the Aikido that he passed on to his students (even the least talented among us).

Sensei often seemed to come from another time. His commitment to Aikido and traditional Japanese culture was astounding. What other contemporary person could sacrifice so much for his art and students? Who else could have achieved what he did in Aikido, Zen, and Iaido? I doubt there's anyone out there like him today. I wonder if there will ever be another.



*The dojo dogs,  
Kuma and Michiko*

### Untitled

From around the world so far,  
Out of sight and out of mind,  
What Grace brings us together?  
What mysterious power shines over us  
To let us meet through space and time?  
Grateful for what we have,  
Grateful for what we know,  
Grateful for what we will never understand. . . .

**Editor's note:** Sensei posted this to Aikiweb's Aikido Haiku forum on October 20, 2003.



*"It is like knowing what ingredients go into making a cake but not knowing the amounts of each ingredient. The results can be disastrous. At the same time, even if you know what ingredients and the amounts of each, you must still know what is the best way to combine each ingredient and in what order. Training is much the same way."*

– Reverend Kensho Furuya



*Sensei teaching students from Nishi Hongwanji temple's Saishin dojo summer program*

### **Sensei's Dream and Sacrifices** *continued from page 4...*

Sensei would have succeeded in whatever endeavor he put his mind to, but it was obvious to him that his calling was teaching the things he loved the most: Aikido, Iaido, and Japanese culture. Sensei grew up in a time when there was great pressure for Japanese Americans to assimilate into the society. It was just after WWII and the aftermath of the internment camps made many families feel compelled to conform into American society and ignore their Japanese heritage. However, young Daniel Furuya was more interested in his Japanese cultural roots than conformity. He liked collecting things from Japan, such as coins, stamps, and swords. He enjoyed the *chambara* (*samurai* sword fight) movies shown at the Linda Lee Theater and the Kokusai theaters: these movies got him interested in martial arts and the rest, as they say, is history. Of course, there was

pressure from his parents to pursue more mainstream professions, such as practicing medicine, but that was not where his heart was, so when he went to college his major was East Asian Studies. So to a great degree, we have his non-conformity to thank for producing such a great teacher.

He worked for the Bank of Tokyo for a number of years while maintaining a small dojo in Hollywood. But his dream was to be a martial arts instructor on a full-time basis. It was, and still is, rare for a dojo fully to support a teacher's living expenses without requiring other employment. He knew that the particular path he was taking wasn't paved with riches or the comfortable life and that it might not even support him marrying or having a family of his own. These were the things he was willing to give up to be a full-time martial arts instructor. He also was adamant about not compromising the teaching for commerce. This non-compromising approach to teaching was not everyone's cup of tea and he knew that he would never have hundreds of students paying him lots of money. Sensei certainly had ample opportunities to exploit the art and his knowledge, but he refrained from doing so. Although he had many martial artist friends who sought out work in the entertainment business, Sensei typically eschewed soliciting his services to that industry. If they came to him he was more than happy to advise them, or participate directly in the project, but he did not seek them out. His participation in these TV projects was for one reason: to educate people about Aikido and Iaido.

Living in the old dojo that he loved so much was no picnic. Although the dojo was beautiful place to practice, it was a difficult place in which to live. There was no central heating and air conditioning, so Sensei roasted in the summer and froze in the winter. We might have briefly experienced that discomfort as students, but he had to live in it. The dojo was an essential part of that dream of being a full-time teacher, so not only did he forgo the comfortable life financially, he also gave up physical comfort as well. After the Landers earthquake in 1992, he no longer slept in a bed. Many days he would work into the early morning hours to get newsletters done or to converse with someone in Japan. Even though I often mentioned that his snoring kept me awake during our trip to Japan, there was something reassuring about the sound of snoring upstairs when I would open the dojo on the weekends. At least he was finally asleep and getting some rest.

Last, but not least, is the loneliness of being a true teacher of martial arts, and perhaps that is where Sensei sacrificed the most. He considered his students his family, but in order to be a good teacher there has to be a distance in the teacher/student relationship. That was a very hard and conflicting thing for him to do, especially with his senior students. Sensei was always happiest when there were lots of students practicing on the mat and when he spent time with senior students off the mat. But when we students went home, the dojo was a very lonely place for Sensei. One of the reasons he was so active on the Internet was that he could connect with others while his students were away. While other teachers might look forward to that break in teaching, Sensei's need to teach was further fulfilled through the Internet. It is easy to say that the sacrifices he made were of his own choosing in pursuing his dream, but to experience them and still feel the need to give the gift of knowledge takes a special person. There have been other teachers who started out with the same goals but compromised their principles along the way for the sake of commerce and comfort. He never did, and if only for that reason alone, there will never be another teacher like him. It is important for us to carry on Sensei's legacy as best as we can and to continue his teachings not only in the areas of Aikido and Iaido but also other aspects of Japanese culture. He established his foundation with the goals and mission to carry on this dream.



*Sensei lecturing about Japanese culture to a group of students from a local middle school*