



合氣道

# The Aiki Dojo

学  
府  
合  
氣  
道  
場  
羅  
古  
屋  
道  
場

道の為、世の為、人の為、合氣道



## Responsibility

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Staying close to Furuya Sensei not just technique, but how he taught.



## Never too Young to Learn

by Gary Illiano

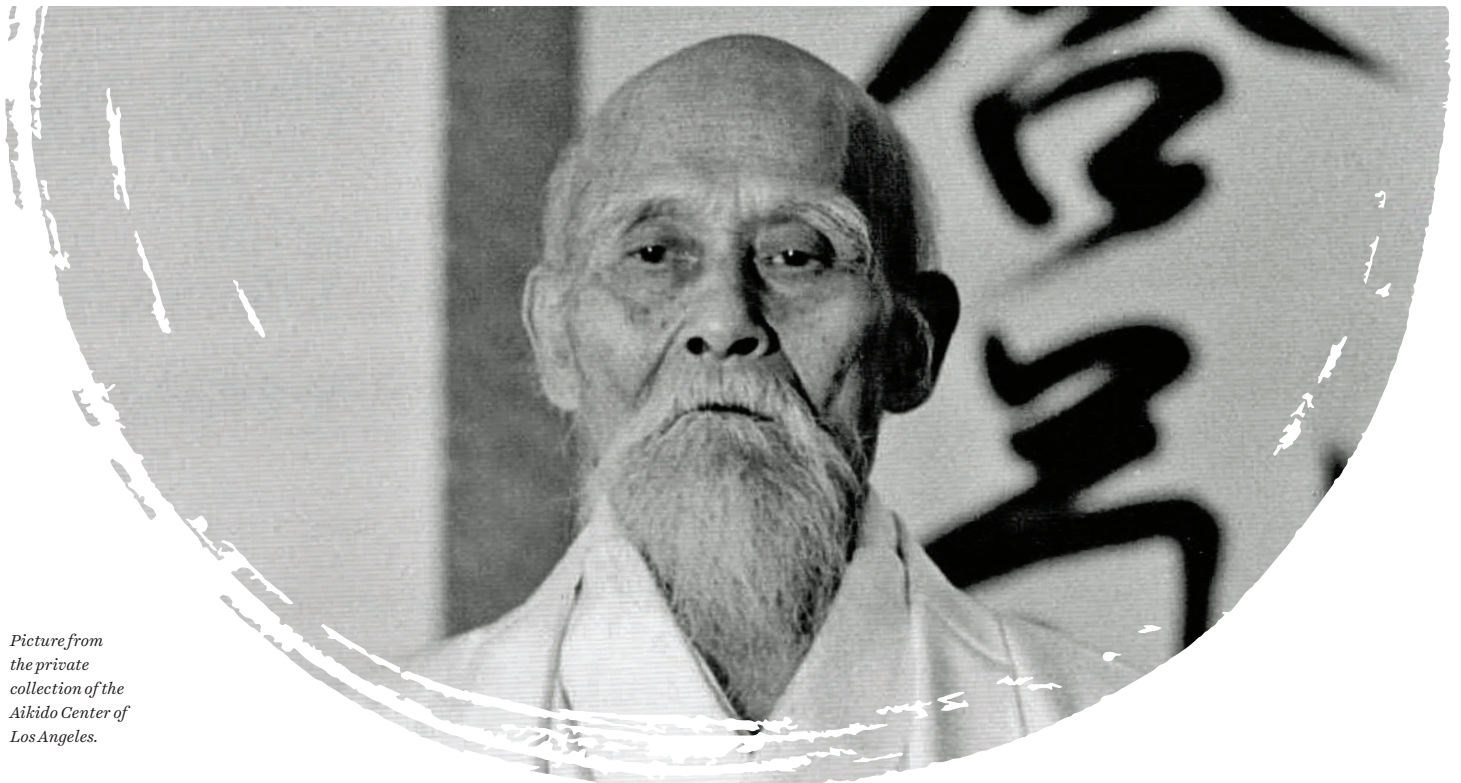
An enlightening experience while away in the city of Havana, Cuba.



## A Body for Remembrance

by Ken Watanabe

Why we teach and practice year after year to remember O'Sensei.



Picture from  
the private  
collection of the  
Aikido Center of  
Los Angeles.

# MORIHEI UESHIBA

DEC. 14, 1883 – APR. 26, 1969



# The Person is the Sword

by **David Ito** Aikido Chief Instructor

There is a wonderful scene in Akira Kurosawa's *Sanjuro* when Toshiro Mifune's character, Tsubaki Sanjuro is rescuing an official's wife being held hostage. After questioning a stubbornly uncooperative henchman, Sanjuro prepares to kill him when the very elegant and refined wife intervenes and asks him very politely not to. She says, "killing people is a bad habit." This very well-mannered woman goes on to say, "you glisten too brightly, like a drawn sword. You're like a sword without a sheath. You cut well, but the best sword is kept in the sheath." With deference, Sanjuro grudgingly acquiesces and ends up taking this person hostage instead of killing him. Throughout the course of the movie, the once bad henchman has a change of heart and ends up becoming a voice of reason and a part of Sanjuro's group. This scene shows us that one's true power lies not in killing others but having the restraint to take the higher road so that we may change, which can help to change others as well.

*Budo* or the warrior arts are often mistakenly thought of as merely a means to destroy or kill others. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is undeniable that martial arts are *budo* and at the beginning their sole purpose, out of necessity, was to obtain victory on the battlefield. As *budo* evolved, more and more there became less need for *budo* to be just a means of felling one's opponents. As people in the business of war honed their skills through training and developed themselves through

study, they came to realize that the true fight was on the battlefield within and their ego was the real opponent. In 1868, after the Meiji Restoration or the "modernizing" of Japan there was no longer a need for a warrior class and thus *budo* had to change as society changed. It is here that we begin to see the shift from systems based around *jutsu* (術) or techniques designed to destroy, to arts that are *do* (道) or paths to follow as a means to live one's life.

Morihei Ueshiba or O'Sensei was born during the Meiji Restoration in 1883. Much is written about the fighting arts that O'Sensei studied and his evolution. Obviously, the art we are studying today is not the same art that O'Sensei started with. That is because his art developed into Aikido as O'Sensei evolved as a human being.

Generally speaking, most *budo* focus their emphasis on technical or fighting aspects. Aikido is a fighting art, but it is different from other fighting arts because it is pursued more as a way of life. Aikido is a sophisticated, high-level martial art which at its core embraces the ultimate paradox in Japanese *budo* training which is *satsujinken*, *katsujinto*. *Satsujinken* translates as the "life taking sword" and *katsujinto* is the "life giving sword." Like most students, when I started, I found it difficult to understand how something can both take a life and give a life.

In *satsujinken*, *katsujinto*, the sword they speak of is a metaphor to symbolize a person. Thus, the phrase is really about the evolution of the person as they move toward becoming a true human being. Like the sword, a person is neither good nor evil, but both have the capacity



to do either harm or good—sometimes both. The sword is an inanimate object and thus it is just a tool and can only “come to life” once it is in the hands of the user. People also only “come to life” when they become truly self-actualized human beings. Self-actualization can only come about through persistent training and thus only a self-actualized warrior can choose the path of life instead of death.

Through training, a dedicated student can reach this higher place which typifies *katsujinto*. This is a place where one truly realizes the oneness of man and that of mankind and realizes the real definition of *budo* which is that of compassion. We see this in O’Sensei’s teachings of non-violence.

Aikido is first and foremost a martial art, but the unique character of Aikido is that it is also a path to our greater selves. As we train we become better human beings and learn to be more “human” towards one another. Focusing on winning, killing, harming others or any other

external pursuit shows only the lowest level. The highest level in *budo* is the ability to be calm, show restraint, and have compassion for others. Only at this high level can the world be changed by our actions. This is the true goal of Aikido.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of O’Sensei’s passing. It is easy and even understandable to forget O’Sensei’s passing especially after 50 years. After all, everyone is busy, and we have our own lives to live. However, through Aikido training, we come to realize humanity and in so doing, we realize that true *budo* is putting others before ourselves. That is why we cannot and should not forget O’Sensei’s passing because doing so shows our true level. Anyone can kill, and it is in fact a bad habit, but only a true master can think of others, living or dead, and put away the sword not for others’ sake, but for their own. That is how we learn *satsujinken*, *katsujinto* and that is why we must never forget. •



# Responsibility

by **Santiago Garcia Almaraz** Aikido 5th dan  
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

The years seem to go by faster and faster each year. A year goes by in what seems like a day and we find ourselves at another *meinichi* or memorial service for our teacher, Reverend Kensho Furuya.

Memorializing Furuya Sensei's passing is a small token of appreciation for all of his generosity and sacrifices. Sensei devoted his entire life to teaching Aikido and insuring that we would always have a dojo to train at. Sensei's only goal was to preserve the teachings of O'Sensei and pass on his knowledge to future generations.

If I learned anything from Sensei, it was that we had to be mindful of ourselves all of the time. This mindfulness not only had to be 100% for all classes, but for every minute of our lives. He made us feel as if we had to give our very best to everything that we did. Today, I think it is harder for students to create this type of 100% mentality and some seem as if they are waiting for their problems to be solved rather than find the motivation to overcome their situations.

While training under Sensei, in every class I felt as if it was my responsibility to solve my problems even if I didn't speak English. Classes with Sensei made me feel like I had a heightened sense of awareness or like I was awakened and that I had to solve my own problem with every correction he gave me. Training with Sensei, there was a lot of physical and mental stress coupled with the feeling of having

to do the movement correctly. I cannot deny that Sensei was hard and demanding but now I understand how his strictness was so that I could advance to the next step in my training. Despite Sensei's strictness, I never felt humiliated, mistreated or ignored when I was wrong. I also understand that he criticized me not because I was awkward but because he wanted to bring out the best in me. He wanted me to do the techniques correctly and make sure I had the correct attitude as well. Most likely, the one thing I learned from Sensei was that the work of learning was exclusively mine and that I have to enjoy the process on both good days and bad days alike. Whether I am wrong or right, the most important thing was to keep working.

Today, we are passing on the art that we learned from Sensei which he learned from his teacher 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba. We trust that Sensei taught us the best way that he could and only changed what needed to be changed based on the people of his day. I am sure that Sensei did his best because now I am the teacher and I am doing the best that I can while trying to stay as close as possible to what Sensei taught me.

In order to stay close to Sensei in not only the technique, but in how he taught, it is important to keep him in our minds, hearts and spirits. This closeness is what allows us to keep his legacy alive and to maintain the spirit of Aikido as it was taught to him by 2nd Doshu, as it was taught to him by his teacher O'Sensei.

I am grateful to have had Sensei as my teacher and that he cared enough to be strict with me so that I could become the person that I am today. Thank you very much! •

# LA HABANA OTRA VEZ: NEVER TOO YOUNG TO LEARN

by Gary Illiano Aikido 2nd Dan



It is our last night in Havana, our last practice before heading back to Los Angeles. My wife Linda is sitting off to the side with our group's driver watching class. Although we had been with him all week, this is the first Aikido class he has ever seen. A veteran of the war in Angola, now driving and occasionally working security details, he seems very interested, watching intently, recording some video on his iPhone.

Havana is a little warm, much more humid than Los Angeles. The mat is full, but not overcrowded. Earlier that evening Ito Sensei had given a special seminar to a select group of the instructors and senior students, taking requests to demonstrate various techniques. Now we have begun a formal class, open to everyone. Some students have been practicing for years. Some have been practicing for hours.

I see a young guy practicing with the air traffic controller. We had met the controller earlier in the week when he introduced himself with very good English. Earlier tonight the controller told us that he will be on duty when our flight departs the next day. He will make sure we get off safely.

My best guess is this young student is maybe 19 or 20. He seems to be struggling with the techniques. I think I might be able to shed some light. The controller is happy to have some help with showing a brand-new student how to move. He bows politely and leaves to go practice with someone else.

Young guy doesn't have a uniform, yet, just a tee shirt and sweat pants. Somehow through a mix of English and Spanish he confirms he is brand new to Aikido. Later I will learn that his English is actually quite good, when after class he tells Linda he is at University studying international business.

For now I decide to eschew verbal explanations. I know about six Spanish words, with maybe one or two that can be used on the mat. This will be pantomime and imitation, copying as best as possible. That's ok, good even. Sometimes I think explanation puts people in their heads instead of in their bodies.

He quickly figures out how to do the techniques. Sometimes he gets it from feeling my lead. Sometimes he gets it from imitating my movement. Maybe he has a knack, maybe his enthusiasm or his youth drive him forward. I'm not sure. It is both refreshing and fun to see the discovery process.

Sensei demonstrates another technique, launching the uke into a forward roll. With my young partner I'm pantomiming, trying to determine if he's ever done a forward roll. He seems to understand, shakes his head no. Then he watches the person next to him roll. He gives me an almost imperceptible shrug, and before I can say or do anything he steps forward into a front roll. He pops up, turns around with a big smile on his face, with a look that says, "look what I just did!"

I'm not sure when we lose the "I can do it" attitude. I think it must be when we learn how to be afraid of things. My grandson Chase is almost 10, and I'm seeing the caution developing in him. When he was five, I would ask him if he could sing and dance, and he would say "yes, of course." He would then just start to sing and dance. Now that he's older, and his fears are more developed, it's more like, "well, I'm not sure," or "well, I don't really do that..."

To keep that can-do spirit into late teens is something nice to see. My Cuban friend has it, more than most, in this my last Havana practice. Maybe it will change after we leave, maybe he continues to train, maybe not, or fear works its way into the equation. Maybe I'll see him when we go back to Havana, maybe I won't.

As I move into my later years, I find that fear finds new and clever ways to infiltrate my practice. Working with young people teaches me something about reconnecting with the can-do attitude from my own past. My Havana friend tells Linda afterword that he learned so much that evening. Funny, but I feel that I am the one who learned something. I am grateful for the gift he left me with. Linda and I very much look forward to spending more time with our Cuban friends. In this, and in many other ways, they are truly wonderful people. •

# A Body for Rememberence

by **Ken Watanabe** laido Chief Instructor

It's nearly 50 years since the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, passed away on April 26, 1969, and since then, our dojo has held a memorial service every year. This occasion was so solemn and so important that my teacher, Reverend Kensho Furuya, refused to celebrate his own birthday because it fell so close to the Founder's own *meinichi*, or "memorial day." Why hold a memorial service for someone we never met? After our own teacher passed away, it would've been very easy to discontinue this tradition. It would've been easy to simply forget about organizing a memorial service, yet the dojo continues to hold a service every year to remember O'Sensei because keeping his memory alive is important to our dojo.

Most of us only know of O'Sensei from stories we read in books. O'Sensei was, of course, an incredible person, and the stories make for some pretty fantastic reading. Imagine someone as strong as O'Sensei with a sixth "warrior's" sense who was virtually undefeatable! Yet, as we teach and practice year after year, a more important way to remember O'Sensei is from the Aikido technique itself.

To practice O'Sensei's Aikido is to remember O'Sensei and honor his legacy. Aikido is, first and foremost, a highly sophisticated martial art and must be approached in that manner. To not do so would be to forget O'Sensei's teachings. As the years pass, the worst thing would be for O'Sensei to become an abstraction; an idea. His spirit stays alive in the technique.

Some students, even black belts, might think, "ugh! Why do we have to practice this technique?" The direct answer is, "because O'Sensei said we have to." If the technique wasn't important to our progress, we wouldn't have to practice it every day. Sometimes, we think we might know better, but we have to realize that if it was good enough for a master like O'Sensei to practice, it is certainly good enough for us.

Yes, many techniques practiced in class do not seem "cool." Some are quite plain, and many might seem even too basic to even bother mastering. Some of these techniques do not seem very effective when viewed



*From the private collection of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.*

from the standpoint of more normal "fighting" arts. Even as a young black belt, who obviously knew EVERYTHING, I often wondered about the value of many of these techniques, but as I practiced and begin to gain a deeper understanding of the techniques, I finally realized, "ah, THAT'S why we have to practice this technique every day!" Discovering the value of these techniques is to remember O'Sensei.

Aikido is not a sport. Aikido is not entertainment. Aikido is a martial art that enables the practitioner to defend themselves from opponents who are stronger, faster, more experienced, armed with a weapon, or who have the advantage of numbers. It is with this spirit that we should practice thoughtfully with our *uke*, or practice partner. It is with this spirit that we remember O'Sensei.

The Founder, Morihei Ueshiba, was not called "O'Sensei" because of his great skill. He is called O'Sensei because of his students. In Japanese, O'Sensei means "great teacher." Usually, a teacher was only able to develop a single successor. They would gamble everything on one person to pass on their art to the next generation. O'Sensei was able to develop dozens of very skilled Aikidoists. What O'Sensei developed in Aikido, he was able to pass down to many skillful disciples, not only one single successor and that is what makes him so great and that is why he has the title of O'Sensei.

As the life of O'Sensei goes further into the past; as his own *uchideshi*, or live-in students, begin to grow old, and retire; it is even more important to take the time out and remember, not only the teacher, but his teachings as well.

Part of remembering O'Sensei in these memorial services and in the techniques means to let go of our egos and take a moment to stop thinking about ourselves. As we become more interconnected on the internet, it's important not to lose O'Sensei's memory in the vast wasteland of distraction we have at our disposal. In a time of viral videos and quick clips, remembering someone like O'Sensei who passed away 50 years ago in 1969 might seem like another time, yet his legacy in the form of Aikido lives on, and through our practice, we find a way for us to keep his memory alive. •



*From the private collection of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.*

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

More and more I hear disparaging remarks about O'Sensei. Some even doubt he is the Founder of Aikido—Aikido as we know it today. Someone said it is “ridiculous” to think of him as the “greatest martial artist” of all time, and on and on. Why say such things—especially if you are an Aikidoist? In Japanese, we say that the one who practices Aikido is an “Aikidoka.” The addition of ka (家) means “part” of the family of Aikido.

Of course, it is easy to speculate, and it is easy to express our opinions and we can say anything is the world's best these days. I am sure that others who have no relationship with Aikido can even say, “O'Sensei who?”

But what is “best” for each one of us is finding what we love. For a mother, her baby is the “best” baby in the world! Maybe for others it is not so and we can argue with her. But, it is best that she feels that way—it is the Natural Way of nature—not a product of the argumentative, self-serving, intellect of man.

For a mate, their spouse is the “best person in the world”—it may not be so in reality, but for that person, this is their reality and it is good that they think this way. What if the husband thinks, “this is my wife, but she is not the best person in my life, in fact, she is not pretty, or smart and has no talent at all!” What good does this serve? It is better that he loves her as the “best person in the world.”

Someone might say, “I love God,” but others may disagree and argue but it serves no point. It is good that this person loves God and is faithful to their religion. There is nothing wrong with this. Of course, it is biased and perhaps (for others) narrow-minded but this is the good kind of bias and narrow-mindedness. There is nothing wrong with it. There is nothing wrong with something which comes from love and that love is what is best for that person.

Why stomp on others and argue with meaningless intellect? Why cause confusion and discord? I see many in Aikido today who practice Aikido and “benefit” from Aikido but do not love Aikido at all. This is so sad. Sad in some ways that they practice but cannot love Aikido. But also, sadder, that these people usually cannot love anything at all.

I myself do not know what is “love.” And for me, as stupid and narrow-minded and “ridiculous” as it may sound to others, I do love Aikido. In Zen, there is only one reason to do Zazen. For most people, it is painful and horrible and boring! Sawaki Kodo Roshi always said, “the only people who can (and continue to) do Zazen are those people who love Zazen.” How true! How true!

From this, we can say, “the only people who can (and continue to) do Aikido, are those who love Aikido!” How true! How True!

One should love everything one does in this world and give their love to everything in this world that they encounter. There is no shame and weakness in love, it expresses the Way of Nature. Ultimately, it is the true power which Aikido seeks to discover and refine within one's self. •

守意不違志  
黙々養生神

# UPCOMING EVENTS

近日開催予定

**April 26th**  
O'Sensei Memorial  
7:45 PM

**April 28th**  
Intensive Seminar

**October 13–14th**  
Aikido Kodokai Dojo's  
20th Anniversary  
Salamanca, Spain  
*Details to be announced.*

## Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

### Saturdays

6:30 – 8:00 AM \* Intensive  
9:30 – 10:30 AM Advanced Class  
10:45 – 11:45 AM Regular Class

### Sundays

9:00 – 10:00 AM Children's Class  
10:15 – 11:15 AM Regular Class  
11:45 AM – 12:45 PM Fundamentals  
1:00 – 2:00 PM Open Class

### Mondays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice  
5:15 – 6:15 PM Regular Class  
6:30 – 7:30 PM Advanced Class

### Tuesdays

6:00 – 7:30 PM Advanced Class  
8:00 – 9:00 PM Open Class

### Wednesdays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice  
5:15 – 6:15 PM Fundamentals  
6:30 – 7:30 PM Regular Class

### Thursdays

6:00 – 7:30 PM Regular Class  
8:00 – 9:00 PM Fundamentals

### Fridays

6:30 – 7:30 AM Morning Practice  
6:30 – 7:30 PM Regular Class

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

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

## Iaido Training Schedule

合居道 時間割

**Saturdays**  
8:00–9:00 AM

**Sundays**  
7:45–8:45 AM

# 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 will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have

## Aikido World Headquarters



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

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