



合氣道

# The Aiki Dojo

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道の為、世の為、人の為、合氣道

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# REVEREND KENSHO FURUYA MEMORIAL ISSUE



# Do insects have souls?

by **David Ito** Aikido Chief Instructor

The other day I was at a picnic and I was completely swarmed by this one insect. This fly seemed to have it out for me as it chased me around from the pool to the balcony. Everyone laughed at me as I made a big deal by running away. While I was dodging this eager fly's attack, someone yelled, "Just kill it, it's not like it has a soul!"

That's a good question, "Do bugs have souls?" Everyone knows how bothersome bugs can be. They swarm us, crawl on us and try and steal our food. Some bugs are mean and bite causing us to scratch and itch while some others can even be deadly. Nothing is more scream inspiring than a measly little bug who jumps out from behind something when we turn on the light only to scare us. After all, bugs are the worst and completely lazy, serve no purpose but to cause us harm and try and hurt us and thus it is okay to hate them, hurt them or even kill them. Bugs may be ugly, bothersome, scary, lazy and ferocious but, do they have souls?

In an article in the Smithsonian magazine, scientist Andrew Barron and philosopher Colin Klein were discussing the idea of consciousness in insects. They posit that human consciousness does not lie in the neocortex, but in the midbrain. Insects do have a primitive version of the midbrain and therefore might have a sense of consciousness even if it is perfunctory. They said, "Bugs feel something like hunger and pain, 'perhaps very simple analogs of anger,' but no grief or jealousy. 'They plan, but don't imagine,' Klein says. Even so, insects' highly distilled sense of self is a potential gift to the far-out study of consciousness."

If a bug has a soul, then shouldn't we treat it a certain way? If a bug has consciousness, then by harming or killing it aren't we hurting it? Shouldn't we afford it some basic level of rights and protections just in case it does? What kind of people are we if we allow this measly insect to be harmed just because it scares us, creep us out or bothers us?

More than likely, bugs are not conscious and so it is ok to hurt them, kill them or treat them as badly as we want.

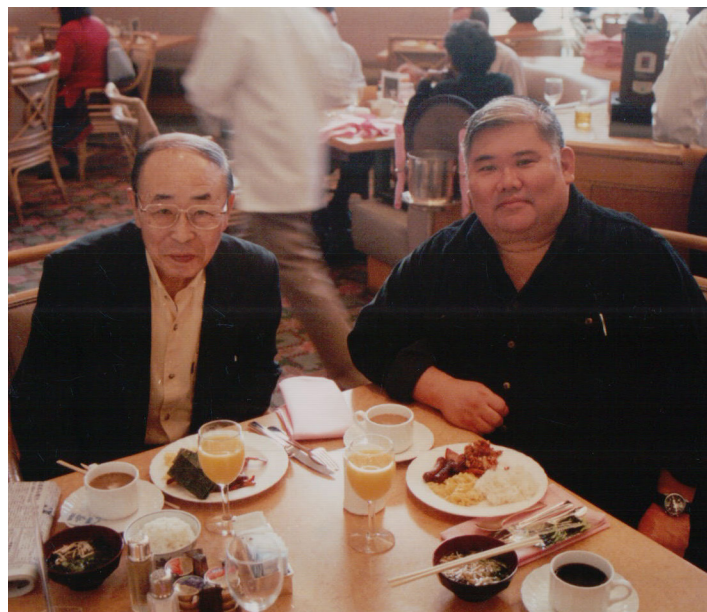
However, human beings do have souls and we are conscious, yet we sometimes tend to treat each other with the same amount of contempt and disdain that we afford bothersome or scary bugs that we don't care about. When we realize that all living beings including insects and especially human beings have souls then we understand O'Sensei's teaching of non-violence.

To manifest non-violence, we must first realize that all beings suffer, including ourselves. When we realize that all beings suffer, then we make attempts to alleviate their suffering. We do this by offering them what Furuya Sensei called a "caring heart." When we put others before ourselves we are realizing their burden, not adding to it, and thus we can begin to understand O'Sensei's teaching of non-violence.

Furuya Sensei's teaching that I am most grateful for is the "caring heart." He explains it here:

Aikido practice must always be well-balanced and natural. It sounds like a common thing to say but, in actual practice, most students do not understand what it means. It is easy to lose one's focus and direction although one may not forget how to do the basic technique. Just because we know a few moves and are strong doesn't really mean anything. Our attitude, the direction we are taking ourselves in life, how we deal with others and a caring heart are all very important aspects of the art and should not be forgotten even for one minute—especially in training. *(continued on page 3)*





Many of us simply do what we feel like and believe that we have the right to do anything we want. This, of course, is not the Aikido spirit. This kind of person only thinks of themselves and doesn't realize that their actions, words and thoughts greatly affect others. When we begin to put others before ourselves—we are now entering the world of training. In this way, we are getting the whole view of life and this leads to a well-balanced and natural practice. A thoughtless person can never do Aikido correctly.

A caring heart means to “put others before ourselves.” It doesn't matter if that thing has a soul or not. What it means is that we think of something other than ourselves. Just because something bothers us or is different doesn't mean we should destroy it regardless if it is attacking us or not.

If humans are better than insects because they have a soul then that necessitates that we should treat each other better, kinder or with more

compassion. This is the reason behind non-violence because to destroy anything, even an insect, we are really only destroying ourselves. When we understand Sensei's teaching of a caring heart, even an insect matters. This is Aikido.

I am so grateful today that I was Sensei's student and I do my best every day to make sure that Aikido and our dojo is available for future generations. As we sail into the 12th year since Sensei's passing, I freely admit that it gets harder and harder each year to remember him and I almost forget where the line is between when he was alive and when he left this world. With that being said, there is still much work to do. I am eternally grateful for all of those people who have helped to keep the dojo going and who are helping to keep Sensei's memory alive. Please continue to practice Aikido and support the dojo with a caring heart. It really does matter. •



# Extraordinary INTENSITY

by **Raul Montolfo** Aikido 3rd dan  
Senior Instructor, Gracie Morumbi Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

I first entered Sensei's Dojo in the late 1990's. My first class with Furuya Sensei is still vivid now as it was 20 plus years ago. The emotional intensity and range of techniques in Sensei classes was amazing—powerful, fearlessness, agile, and almost mystical. My personal memory of Sensei was his movement, and the extraordinary intensity of those classes; an atmosphere of life and death. I felt the group of students at that time to be very special, a small elite group in the sea of martial artists in Los Angeles.

Sensei would come down from his office upstairs slowly and purposely. He paused to carefully examine the frontline before entering. In my eyes, it symbolized the atmosphere of danger, and the acute awareness required. I felt that it attracted only those with some deep need to train in a unique martial way—followers of Bushido. Sitting seiza in the nervous silence before class, in a dojo which Sensei created in style and details of dojos only seen inside Japan centuries ago. I felt privileged to be there and a student.

Real and immediate danger was felt by everyone in the dojo. We trained together in a state of hyper-alertness. It was fearsome and exciting at the same time. The slightest sound is magnified. The slightest movement is detected. We observed and mirrored every little detail of Sensei movements. Danger is very uncomfortable, but it heightens one's senses. If we

channel fear into acute awareness the present moment expands. "Now" becomes vast. Fully alive. I have learned that powerful energy usually feels uncomfortable. Sensei brought this out every time he walked on the tatami.

This feeling of danger created a strange kind of purity, a likeness—regardless of size, rank, or level of skill. Everyone felt fear, no one tried to hide it. That shared experience created an amazing level of cohesion. A communion of fear. A level of intimacy difficult to describe. The group adrenaline burned away pain, weakness, timidity, and all self-consciousness. All that remained was training. There were bumps, bruises, scrapes, and sprains—but no complaining, explaining, or apologizing! None of that was necessary. Incredibly, there were no serious injuries. The intensity of awareness prevented that.

Impressive looking technique held no value here. Success and failure had no meaning. It was pure Zen. During that hour there was no other way to be. It was wonderful, and exhausting. Training with Sensei at ACLA was a true Martial Dojo.

I am deeply grateful for being part of something so special. It was not only Furuya Sensei, it was the mix of individuals who came together during this time at ACLA to train with Sensei. An extraordinary group chemistry was generated. I'm still blessed to have someone like Ito Sensei in my life.

For a short but intense period I was privileged to be allowed to spend time with Sensei off the tatami mat and knowing him forced me to focus on many aspects of my own character and has developed my deep love for Budo, Japanese culture and a commitment to Buddhism. I regret that I never had the chance to maintain or develop the relationship I would have greatly benefited from. It was not to be, but I will always treasure the remarkable memories that I have of a very complex individual as well as a unique Aikido Master and actual teacher. I pray with my deepest vow for his eternal rest in peace and deeply thank Sensei for all that he gave me.

In gassho •





## Gifts & Gratitude

by **Mark Ehrlich** Aikido 3rd Dan

Hello, Sensei. It's Mark.

I'd like to begin by extending a heartfelt greeting to everyone at the Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles and its affiliated dojos, and offering my best wishes for a happy and healthy Year of the Dog to you and your loved ones.

When I reflect on all the time that has passed since Sensei died that March night so long ago, I admit to feeling helpless in the face of some relentless, irresistible inertia. It seems that now more than ever, life's pace has quickened to breakneck speed, and we all feel pressure to work so hard just to keep up—with making a living, with our relationships, and with huge societal and technological shifts in the world, to name just a few. Given this harrowing existential momentum towards we-know-not-what, I have found my Aikido training to provide a much needed rest stop; an oasis, as it were, where I can refuel, check my progress, and get ready to return to the road a little more tuned up and attuned to myself than when I pulled over. Training has helped me not only to savor the journey itself, but also to learn more deeply about myself and my fellow travelers.

Of course, I came to this perspective slowly over the better part of a decade. Oftentimes, I head to the dojo with dread instead of joy. Sometimes I catch myself wanting a different lesson or teacher or training partner; many times I find myself wishing for more time or talent or flexibility or strength than I have. I regularly wrestle with finding my way around different dojos I encounter during my travels, whether logistically, culturally, or otherwise. In many ways, I find myself studying to get at the heart of Aikido, trying to uncover its truths beneath the apparent differences of lineage or pedagogical style.

In many ways, I find myself learning about myself by how those differences soothe or prick my ego, or take me out of the moment and into some romanticized past or some idealized future.

In the end, all this just proves is how poor of a student I am and how much I still have to go in my training. But I feel such gratitude that at least I think I've learned to identify root causes to my problems, and to understand that they all have me as their source, and me as the means of resolving them. For this insight I have to give credit to Sensei. Because Sensei gave so much to provide us a dojo—a clean, well-lit place where people could train, every day—someone untalented like me could come and discover a love of Aikido and learn what a wonderful community ACLA is. Because he held us all to such high standards, you and I could benefit from the hard won experience of Ito Sensei, Watanabe Sensei, and the rest of the faculty and seniors. Especially today, I can appreciate how solid a foundation ACLA gives its students in the basics. And last but not least, because Sensei showed us glimpses of how Aikido could be—how we could model it as practitioners, and even more as citizens of the world—we now have successfully continued his legacy much longer than many would have ever thought possible. We owe so much to Ito Sensei for demonstrating such courage and care to keep the dojo going. (The best way to show our gratitude, I think, involves coming to practice more. Teachers everywhere seem to agree on this point!)

While we all had some notions of what Aikido was or what it could do for us when we started, we probably have different notions or insights that keep us training. For me, it's not about what I can get from Aikido; I'll never become a super hero or ultimate fighter, never get rich or famous from my training or teaching reputation, and likely never experience any of the breakthroughs that the Founder made. Nowadays, it's about what I can do for Aikido. Some of that involves training (in the right spirit and with proper mindset) and some if it involves giving what I can in terms of time, talent, and treasure to support my personal Aikido network. Most of it, though, involves doing the right thing at the right time in the right way; regular readers of this newsletter will recognize Ito Sensei's examination of this particular focus of martial artists, and I can think of no better way to pay forward the Way which I've received than to do my best to follow this particular principle, even when—especially when—off the mat and out in the world.

Do I fail? Yes, every single day. Do I continue? Yes, every single day, and hopefully a little wiser and better for yesterday's failures. But when I think about it, that's really all that Sensei ever asked of us: Do your best today, every minute. Pay attention because there is no time for less than your best. Cut off your head when you enter the dojo and learn how to learn that it's not about you. Learn to watch and listen to others. Practice etiquette and respect. Be active in the community. Build upon failure and don't make the same mistakes. It sounds so simple, but for me at least, it remains very hard. Yet persisting in trying follow this example I argue will not make us an army of mini Senseis, but more manifest versions of who we always could be, unencumbered by all the nonsense that fills our heads about ourselves.

Sensei has helped me become a better man, when I think about it. So I do my part to repay that kindness and pay it forward in the world, on the mat and off. I hope it helps.

Thank you very much, Sensei. It's Mark. •

# A MARTIAL MESSAGE

by **Ken Watanbe** Iaido Chief Instructor

Have you ever played “Telephone”? It’s a children’s game in which several players form a line and a message is whispered from person to person. The goal being to relay the message unchanged all the way to the end of the line.

Usually, the message gets jumbled up. People mishear a word (or five) and pass on their best interpretation of what they believe they heard to the next person. Often the original message is completely changed by the time it reaches the end.

Our training is like this. We receive instruction—the message—from our teacher, train hard to master it, then one day, hopefully, pass on that message to our own students.

In martial arts, passing on the message without changing it is very important. It’s easy to overthink about something Furuya Sensei said to us, twisting it out of context. It’s easy to change the message when our own training is incomplete to suit our own needs.

Each technique has a truth and a lie. The lie is what we show our opponent; what the opponent sees. The truth is what actually makes the technique work. The truth is the correct way to do the technique, while the lie, of course is the incorrect way.

To pass on the right message, both the lie and the truth must be understood. Without knowing what is false, the truth will not be clear, and when the truth is unclear then, well, anything can become true.

Innovation for innovation’s sake, without thoroughly understanding what is true and what is false creates more lies; a fabrication. Practice can be like listening carelessly and thoughtlessly to the message—your teacher’s instruction—then filling in the blank spaces with what you believe is the correct way without the practice; the part of the training where the truth of the technique eventually reveals itself to you.

Some think they know better. Some think they can cheat and shortcut the training, wondering, “how can I hack this?” rather than, “how can I make this right?” Practicing Aikido is not like finding an easier way to peel an orange. Practicing Aikido is like perfecting the best way to peel an orange. Most people think, “how do I make this easier on me?” rather than, “how do I make it the best it can be?” This is where caring comes in and thinking about something else other than yourself.

Understanding what is true—trusting that it is true—produces truth. This is why Sensei was so strict and demanding and oftentimes unforgiving. One misstep in passing on the message destroys the message and in turn, the art’s wisdom is lost.

Aikido is, first and foremost, a martial art. At the same time, it is a non-fighting martial art. What does this mean? We are not trying to impose what our idea of what a martial art is; we are training to under-



stand Aikido and ultimately O’Sensei’s understanding of a martial art.

There is so much to practice and so much to learn. It is impossible to convey every single message there is in this art. Part of passing on the message correctly is practicing until the truth in the technique comes out.

When I practice the technique, I hear Sensei’s words play in my head. Did the technique feel correct to me right away after hearing these words? No. Did I understand their meaning? Not at all. Did I follow them? To the letter.

Listening to the message carefully then following it until it becomes part of our body; that is how to play “Telephone” in the dojo. Sensei’s words went from simply information—data—to wisdom, but only after practicing the technique the same way and refining it over and over and over again.

In our version of “Telephone”, we control the message. We are the ones responsible for its clarity. Since Sensei’s passing 11 years ago, part of my training is to be able to convey this message to the next generation as clearly and unchanged as possible. To show our gratefulness to Sensei and all he sacrificed so that we could enjoy this wonderful dojo and incredible art, the only way to repay him is to keep the message in our body, mind, and spirit. The goal of training is not to get good and not to get strong—these are just byproducts of keeping the message intact. The greatest gift we can give to O’Sensei and Furuya Sensei is to keep the message intact and pass it on. •



# FROM A FRIEND

Breathing In — I can hear you:

The Edge is Sharp!

Breathing out — I must smile:

Seek the Heart of the Mother.

You are still with me, Sensei,

Every day I am reminded of your words.

And although I often feel that I might be failing,

I am always inspired to keep on trying.

In many ways, I barely knew you — nor you me.

Yet in those short moments, you shared enough.

Enough that I am still learning, and you are still here.

Mahalo nui, my friend.

**Heraldo Farrington**

Aikido 3rd Dan

Aikido of Hilo, Hawai'i



# 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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Aikido  
Center of  
Los Angeles

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

## Aikido World Headquarters



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has been awarded Official Hombu Recognition by the  
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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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