



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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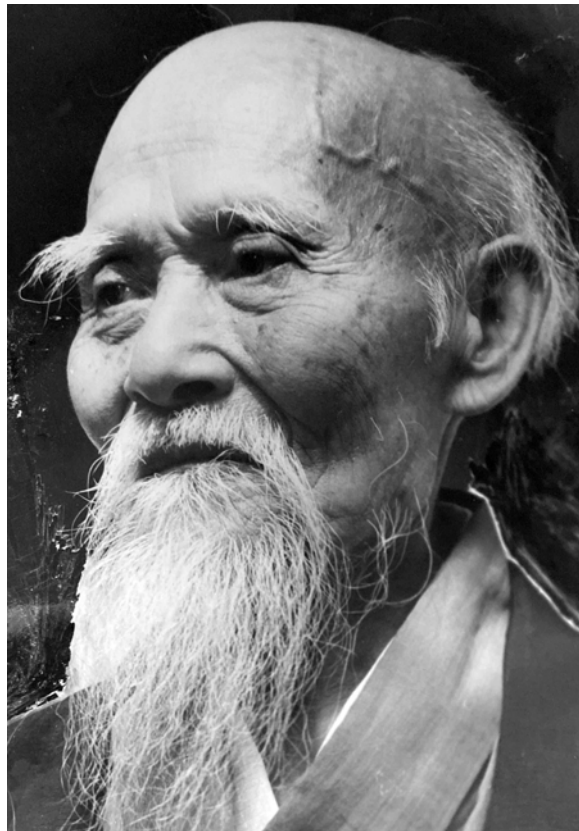
Watanabe Sensei illustrates what memories are made of.

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Be Strong

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Morihei Ueshiba
1883 – 1969



Move Without the Ball by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

Even though I am a lifelong LA Lakers fan, one of my favorite NBA players was Reggie Miller who played for the Indiana Pacers. One of my most memorable Reggie Miller moments was when he singlehandedly crushed the New York Knicks in the 1995 playoffs with less than 19 seconds left in the game by scoring eight points in nine seconds. The year before in the 1994 playoffs, the Pacers had been ousted by the Knicks in a highly contested series. The next year, the Pacers again met the Knicks in the first round of the playoffs. In game 1, Reggie had been playing poorly all night and was shooting 7 for 18 from the field. With 18.7 seconds left in the game, the Pacers were down by six points. Many of the fans had already started to leave the arena when Reggie heated up and made a 3-point basket. After making the basket, Reggie began to walk down court, but then he suddenly realized that the Knicks had an open man in the backcourt ready to take the inbound pass and he began to swarm him and pressuring him with his hustle defense. With what the Knicks fans call a foul, Reggie stole the inbound pass and hit another 3-point basket. The Knicks inbounded the ball with 7.5 seconds left and the Pacers fouled them and gave them two free throws. Devastatingly, they missed both of their free throw attempts to take the lead and ended up fouling Reggie on the other end. Reggie made both of these free throws winning game 1 of the playoffs. Reggie scored 31 points that night and the Pacers eventually beat the Knicks in seven games to advance to the next round.

This memory is not why Reggie Miller was one of my favorite non-Lakers players. The reason I liked Reggie so much was that

he was a hustle player and he seemed to hustle more when he didn't have the ball. In basketball, some players "cherry pick" which means they stay in one spot and wait for the ball to be passed to them so that they can possibly score a basket. Reggie constantly "moved without the ball." To move without the ball means that Reggie would set screens, run through screens or make people chase him. This type of movement spreads the floor out which means it makes the defensive coverage looser and makes the defense have to work harder. Playing like this set up Reggie's own scoring attempts, but it also helped him create scoring opportunities for his teammates too.

In life, it can be easy to wait and hope that an opportunity will open up for us. A true martial artist is the kind of person who knows how to make their own opportunities and thus they know how to "move without the ball."

When we first see Aikido and before we begin our training, it is easy to think that Aikido might be easy and that mastery for us would be coming soon. This is easy to understand because the movements in Aikido can seem very natural and free flowing which may create some misinterpretations.

Later, once we begin our training, we realize that the movements in Aikido are quite complicated and very precise. It can be nerve racking when we cannot command our bodies to do what the teacher is effortlessly demonstrating let alone do it like O'Sensei. Before long, we recognize that in order to get good at Aikido,



we have to put in the work. Putting in the work means creating a practice that is done with not only diligence and dedication, but hustle as well.

After a bit of time and experience, we realize that the road to mastery is more than just going to class and doing our best to pay attention. We now have to make Aikido training part of our lives. It is at this point that we grasp that a black belt cannot be given, but must be earned. Xunzi, a Confucian philosopher once said, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I will remember. Involve me, and I will understand forever." Thus, the teacher can only tell us and show us, but it is up to us to take ownership of our learning and put in the work.

This is where we learn to "move without the ball." We don't just go to class, hoping the teacher will make us good. Outside of class, we spend time developing our minds and our bodies doing what we can to surmount any obstacles which are holding us back from understanding Aikido with not only our minds but our bodies too.

O'Sensei once wrote, "The Art of Peace begins with you. Work on yourself and your appointed task in the Art of Peace. Everyone has a spirit that can be refined, a body that can be trained in some manner, a suitable path to follow. You are here for no

other purpose than to realize your inner divinity and manifest your inner enlightenment. Foster peace in your own life and then apply the Art to all that you encounter." At this stage in our training, we come to the juncture where Aikido begins to benefit us just as much off the mat than on the mat.

Currently, we find ourselves sequestered by the COVID-19 novel coronavirus and it would be simple and maybe even justified to sit around and wait for the virus to pass. It is common human behavior to want things to be easy, but we are not common people. We are people of Aikido and we choose to see that this is an opportunity and not a dilemma. We can choose to do nothing, but we can also choose to see this as a chance to "move without the ball" and take our training to the next level.

We can either see this virus forced seclusion as either a god send or a prison sentence. O'Sensei suggests that we, "Be grateful even for hardship, setbacks, and bad people. Dealing with such obstacles is an essential part of training in the Art of Peace. One does not need buildings, money, power or status to practice the Art of Peace. Heaven is right where you are standing, and that is the place to train." We are people of Aikido. While you are staying at home waiting, improve your situation and don't let anything stand in your way. •



How Do We Remember by Ken Watanabe laido Chief Instructor

How do we remember someone who has passed away? We might have a holiday, hold a memorial service, or maybe throw a celebration. How do we remember the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba? O'Sensei passed on April 26, 1969, more than 50 years ago and my teacher, Kensho Furuya Sensei, held a memorial service every year without fail when he was alive. Sensei held a memorial service for Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba every year as well. After Sensei passed away, we have kept up the traditions of remembering O'Sensei and Nidai Doshu with memorial services too.

To us, 50 years might seem like a long time, yet the Buddha passed away thousands of years ago, and Buddhists still remember the date of his passing.

When we think of O'Sensei, we might think of a strong warrior or a great teacher. We might remember video clips of him effortlessly throwing his students about. However, it's important to remember that O'Sensei did not create Aikido for himself; he created Aikido for all of us.

Simply to remember him as "The Founder," a label for the guy who invented Aikido, isn't enough. In my own lineage, O'Sensei taught his son, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, who in turn, taught my own teacher, Furuya Sensei who in turn, taught me and many other students.

In one way, the techniques and principles that O'Sensei left for us are his legacy. What is the best way to remember that legacy? To follow it, but not blindly like some dogma – Aikido is a practice. O'Sensei brought together many of the original teachings of Japanese *budo* to develop Aikido, but he also understood that it was necessary to adapt these ancient principles and techniques to the modern world. O'Sensei did all of the hard work so we

don't have to. The term *sensei* (先生) means "one who comes before." Thus, O'Sensei and all the teachers before us have cleared a path for us to follow.

It is said that "a teacher is but a steppingstone" and this is something that Sensei would say often to us. Therefore, as a token of gratitude, it is the student's duty to honor this lineage and the teacher's hard work by working hard to surpass their teachers and disseminate the teachings as correctly as possible so that the memories and the lineage can continue on. This transcendence is not about innovation, but rather about responsibility.

When we hear about Aikido's philosophy, we think, "Oh how wonderful" but it's not enough to just "know" Aikido emotionally or intellectually, but to "know" it viscerally, with our own blood, sweat, and tears. To truly know Aikido, we must experience the good and the bad. Throughout our training we will experience discouragement, failure, feel stranded on plateaus and run into dead ends, but we will also make friends, learn about ourselves, find confidence and experience breakthroughs. This is not to say that training is just suffering, but that we should accept that learning Aikido is simultaneously fraught with obstacles as much as it is blessed with miracles. To understand O'Sensei and his creation of Aikido requires the bare minimum of hard training, and maybe even a sprinkle of inspiration.

People like to tell stories of O'Sensei's accomplishments and watch his videos while opining about this and that, but how much of O'Sensei's Aikido are they practicing. It is a temptation to add things to our training or take things away from the training, not to make it better, but for our own ego and our own convenience. Why continue to polish a rough stone which may never become smooth and shiny.



In my own training, there were many basic techniques I have practiced for which I initially didn't understand their purpose. I thought, "I would never throw someone that way." Yet, after practicing for years, these basic techniques have shown their true value to me and to those who are also willing to persevere.

We can remember O'Sensei in our memories, but like a photograph, once Aikido ceases to be Aikido then O'Sensei will truly be gone. O'Sensei tirelessly practiced and that perseverance gave rise to the genius that we now call Aikido. O'Sensei laid out the groundwork for us. We can either continue on that path following his ideals, practice methods and wisdom or we can choose to diverge from it.

I have never personally met O'Sensei nor did I ever meet Second Doshu. Yet, their teachings and their wisdom were passed down

to my own teacher, who in turn passed them down to me for which I hope to pass down to my students.

To me, the best way to remember O'Sensei is to stay on the path and try to understand what Aikido is trying to teach us. Aikido is first a martial art and it can be lethal, but with constant and diligent training, we can understand O'Sensei's true lesson which was how to change from a sword that takes life to a sword that preserves life or *satsujinken katsujinto*. If we know how to look at the techniques, they are full of wisdom and that is the genius of O'Sensei's Aikido. If we train hard and meticulously adhere to O'Sensei's teachings, we will eventually understand Aikido more deeply which brings us closer to O'Sensei's memory and farther away from forgetting him. Please practice hard, please practice correctly, and please practice sensibly. That is all any teacher really wants. •



The dictionary defines the word *resilience* as, “The ability of human beings to adapt positively to adverse situations.”

Today it is difficult not to write and forget about the surreal situation that the world has been experiencing in recent months with the COVID-19 virus. Less than a month ago, I was training with my colleagues and friends in Los Angeles and enjoying everyone’s hospitality while taking all the classes at the seminar. As I normally do, I come to participate and train in the memory of our teacher, Rev. Kensho Furuya Sensei. At the time, many of the conversations about the coronavirus were centered on it just being a problem that affected China. Now, the effects of the coronavirus are the topic of every conversation and many of our dojos have been closed for many weeks. Now, we are all isolated in our homes because of the strength of this virus which spreads so quickly and is causing death to a frightening number of people all over the world.

O’Sensei once said, “Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat an enemy. It is the way to reconcile the world and make human beings one family.” Now, we have all realized that we can be physically separated in the world, but at the same time be close and united while sharing the same problems, setbacks and adversities with our friends and family and people we don’t even know on the other side of the planet.

This global catastrophe is creating so much suffering around the world and this is when the definition of resilience becomes so meaningful and it can become the catalyst for positive change. Now, we realize how quickly our situations can change, our way of living impacted and how easily we can be taken out of our daily comfort zones. Now, I think we are starting to realize that we must start to take care of this planet and everything and everyone who lives on it. Simply, it’s as if nature has grown tired and is giving us a lesson in its strength. O’Sensei said, “True budo is to accept the spirit of the universe, keep the peace of the world, correctly produce, protect and cultivate all beings in nature.” His words seem eerily true. With the current situation, as

Aikido practitioners we take on the challenge to change and accept the responsibility that life has given us. Our dojos are closed and we fulfill our humanitarian duty to maintain social distancing. This social distancing is more than an inconvenience; it is a symbol of our solidarity towards all our friends, neighbors and relatives. In short, we apply O’Sensei’s philosophy by demonstrating our resilience in the face of adversity and by adapting positively to the situation.

Sharing and feeling the problems of so much sadness, sorrow and pain of all those that have suffered is something that coincidentally also happens in the practice of Aikido. In training, we all share in the ups and downs of not only each other’s training, but in each other’s lives as well. This emotional approach is an important part of our practice just as anger, joy, grief or frustration are a part of our daily lives and thus we have to learn to manage the good and the bad in a positive way.

Aikido is a resilient art, we not only care about ourselves but we also care about others, even when they are trying to harm us. In practice, when our *uke* attacks us, we transform their negative action and direct it into a positive action in which the *uke* is carefully controlled and redirected but in a way that keeps them from harm as well. We adapt the circumstance to transform their strength and aggression into something that is positive and appropriate. With time and patience, we can change our opponent for the better. This is our “practice.” Today’s opponent is something that we cannot see and so we must be extra cautious, keep our distance and put all of our concentration on protecting not only ourselves but everyone around us. When we lose our resilience, our actions directly affect the people around us. Being resilient is being at home with our loved ones and being responsible is staying away from those who might get injured or even die by our recklessness. Aikido is about being resilient in the face of one’s opponent and to do our best to follow O’Sensei’s philosophies so that we can someday, “Reconcile the world and make human beings one family.” Take care of yourselves and do your best to help others and together we too will overcome this. •

The other day someone wrote about how they worry about how they are getting older and how their power will someday diminish. Yes, this is a sad fact of life that we will all get weaker. Even the strongest and the most beautiful and the richest and the most powerful will someday become old and feeble as the years pass on.

I think what makes this fact so hard to accept is that we think of everything quantitatively. We assign a number value to everything and then calculate whether we have more or less. Nowadays, more than being human beings, I think we have become “money” animals. Most of us cannot help this mindset because it is so ingrained into our thinking, society and culture.

We must find our power from sources other than from our bodies or from our physical strength. I think this must be hard for some to imagine, but I suppose as the years pass then we will begin to understand what I mean as we begin to reach old age.

Recently, several old friends have met with devastating illnesses and a couple of my friends have even passed away. One friend died of an illness which was totally unexpected and another by an auto accident which was also totally unexpected and unnecessary. During these troubling times, I want to reflect and try to understand their passing, but there is no understanding, just acceptance. Denial also causes more pain and only allows it to linger on and on.

The other day, I had coffee with an old friend of mine. About 10 or 15 years ago, he developed some problems in his legs and arms and it reached a point where he could barely walk. He went to many doctors but no one could tell him exactly what was wrong or what could cure him. Some doctors thought it might be something to do with his nervous system or the disintegration of his nerve endings. Some doctors thought it must be some kind of virus. But apparently, there was no cure and all the doctors could say was that if it continued to get worse, he would eventually lose both legs at the knees and his right arm at the elbow. Because of this disability, he had to quit working and retire and he just hobbled around his house on his crutches and was very, very depressed. I remember that this was a very difficult time for him because it was so hard to manage it all by himself. He was talking the other day about how he thought and thought about it and that he had come to terms with losing his limbs and finally reached some kind of resolve within himself that with or without limbs it was important for him to live on and try to make the best out of his life.

Oddly enough, as he came to this understanding and began to no longer think about his illness or situation, things began to change. He realized that he had a great deal of stress and anxiety dealing with all of the pain in his legs and arms but then realized that it was a reaction to the pain that caused him many prob-

lems and not the pain itself. Very luckily for my friend, for some very unknown reason, the illness began to fade and go away. He still has a little pain, he says, and there is a great deal of stiffness but walking is not a problem any longer and using a cane is no longer needed. It is really quite an amazing and an unusual story.

What fascinates me about this story is the great understanding he had achieved about life through accepting his own life's problems and circumstances. I see his understanding as another form of “power” in which to deal with life.

Unfortunately, we must all suffer through sickness, aging and finally death. Indeed, this is what caused the Buddha to begin his great spiritual quest after venturing from his palace for the very first time and seeing an elderly man, a sickly man and a corpse.

The hard questions about life are always clear cut and designed in a way that really hit us in the face. We call this reality. The answers are somewhat easy to understand, but it is just the long, long difficult path from question to answer that we must take which is the hardest task of all. It is this long and difficult path we must travel which we can call, “our practice.” I always wonder to myself, if faced with such a devastating sickness or tragedy, how I would fair.

We are always upset or confused by all of the challenges that face us in life, especially in our practice and in the dojo. But it is these very same challenges which hold the keys to our final understanding of life and eventually to our freedom.

Most of learning in Aikido is not simply trying to become strong or to dominate others. The mastery of Aikido is simply to become Aikido itself. Its principles are easy to understand, “don't fight,” but how hard is it to realize this in our own lives when we love to resist or fight so much! We only love to fight so much because we love power so much. We love power because we believe we are weak. Believing that we are weak is the basic fallacy we continually cling to and work hard to cover up.

Yes, it is easy to argue that we are all essentially very weak, but then I think of my friend who overcame such tragedy somehow just by the strength of his will and the acceptance of his situation. Tragedy and illness will hit every single one of us, sometimes more than others, but inevitably it will come for us all. This is an important time to call forth the true power within ourselves – the power within us to meet tragedy or sickness with calmness and strength is surely there within us. In all the problems that life challenges you with, I truly hope that you will find the power to work through them and attain the power to truly live your life. In your everyday life, please be strong. •

Editor's note: *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on May 29, 2003.*

Be Strong

by Rev. Kensho Furuya



UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

By order of the Mayor of Los Angeles, the dojo will be closed until May 15th due to the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak.

April 12 (Sunday) Dojo Closed: Easter	May 30 (Saturday) Intensive Seminar
April 25 (Saturday) Intensive Seminar Cancelled	June 27 (Saturday) Intensive Seminar
April 26 (Sunday) O'Sensei Memorial Service Cancelled	July 4 (Saturday) Dojo Closed: Independence Day

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Aikido Training Schedule

合気道 時間割

Saturdays 6:30-8:00 AM* 9:30-10:30 AM 10:45-11:45 AM	Intensive Advanced Class Regular Class	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 AM 5:15-6:15 PM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals Regular Class
Sundays 9:00-10:00 AM 10:15-11:15 AM 11:30 AM-12:30 PM 12:45-1:45 PM	Children's Class Regular Class Fundamentals Open Practice	Thursdays 6:30-7:30 PM 7:45-8:45 PM	Regular Class Open Practice
Mondays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Regular Class	Fridays 6:30-7:30 AM 6:30-7:30 PM	Morning Practice Fundamentals
Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 PM	Advanced Class		

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

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

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays 8:00-9:00 AM	Regular Class	Sundays 7:45-8:45 AM	Regular Class
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The Aiki Dojo

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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-Cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido
Salamanca Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai
Kodokai Dojo



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