



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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The 55th annual O'Sensei memorial service



Sifu Harry Wong
October 15, 1952 – April 22, 2023



On April 22nd, Sifu Harry Wong passed away.

The purpose of the martial arts is to teach us *ninjou* (人情) or “humanity.”

In Japanese, they say *nasake ni hamukau yaiba nashi* (情けに向かう刃なし) or “There is no sword which can oppose kindness.” This proverb exists to guide all students of the martial arts to look past merely developing themselves physically to destroy others. Anyone can dole out a beating but few can give kindness or compassion, especially when the other person is attacking them.

In the movie *Sanjuro* with Toshiro Mifune, there is a great line of dialogue that helps to illustrate this point. Toshiro Mifune’s character Sanjuro has just rescued the Chamberlin’s wife. While trying to get away from the kidnappers and hiding in a barn, the wife says to Sanjuro: “I hesitate to say this after you so kindly saved us, but killing people is a bad habit. 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 its sheath.”

Admittedly, I never saw Harry’s Kung-fu in person. I saw him demonstrate his training prowess in his books and videos, but never live. However, with this being said, his level of ability was never in question. Throughout my time as a student, Harry

would drop by the dojo to hang out with Sensei. He would often bring him books or treats. We all assumed that Sensei liked Harry a lot because Sensei rarely referred to him as “sifu.” Sensei was private person and few people were allowed up in his office, but when Harry showed up, we never had to announce him and he just went right up to Sensei’s office and went in. Sensei was also a stickler for formality, but he always referred to Harry by his first name. To us, it demonstrated that Sensei must have really liked him. Also, by referring to Harry by his first name to us, it signaled that we should use his first name too. Therefore, I never thought of Harry as a teacher or martial artist. He was family and I always just thought of him as a friend of Sensei’s. Even when I would see his books or magazine covers at the bookstore, I would just think, “Oh, there’s Harry.”

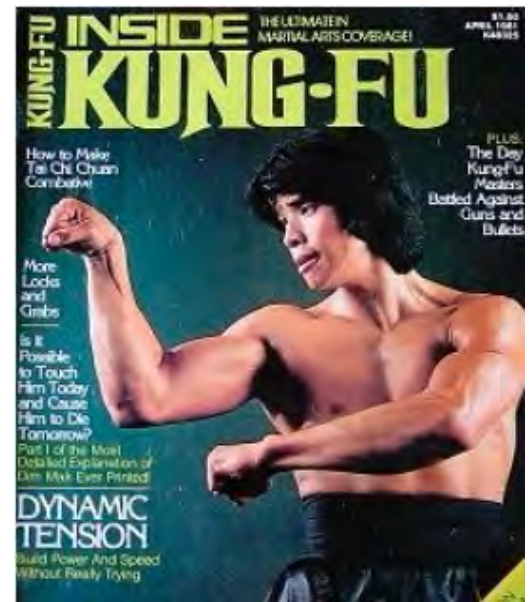
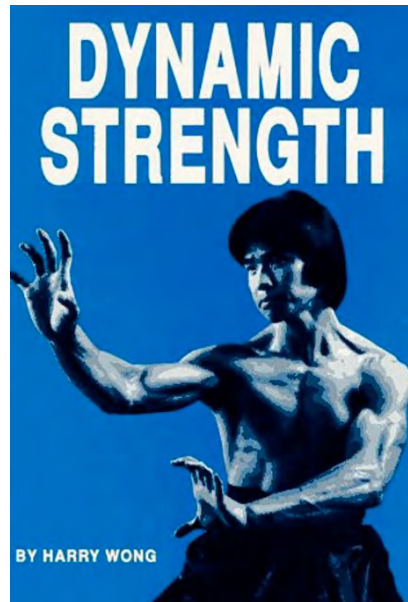
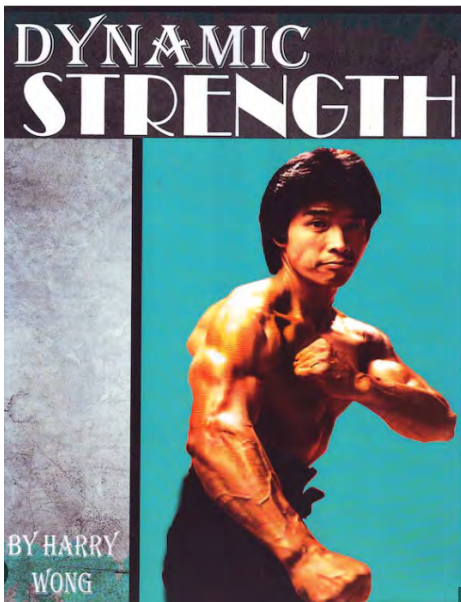
Kindness



by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

There are some people who study the martial arts that carry themselves in a way that makes you want to challenge their bravado or macho attitude. Harry was the complete opposite. I remember that Harry carried himself with this sense confidence but one which comes from genuineness. This made him one of those people that you wanted to know but would never dream of fighting. Also, when he talked to you, he seemed like he really cared. I don’t remember him ever talking about himself in a bragging way. Harry was just one of those guys that was so friendly that he was easy to talk to.

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After Sensei died, from time to time, Harry would send me messages to see how I was doing. Often times, the message was just to check in on me and other times he would just say, "Keep up the good work." Last December, Harry nominated me for the David Chow Humanitarian Award. Initially, when Harry wanted to nominate me, I didn't want to do it, but he just said, "I believe in you." I thanked Harry when I won, but I didn't really publicize that I won because I was embarrassed. When I spoke to Harry about it, he said, "I understand. But I think you are doing a great job and I think Sensei would be proud of you." He didn't get mad that I didn't publicly thank him, he just kindly "understood" my embarrassment.

Another example of Harry's kindness was how he cared for his friends. Six months before he died, Harry was telling me how he wanted to get in touch with Judoka Gene LeBell. Gene LeBell was a pioneer in Judo and professional wrestling and was legendary for his tenacity and toughness. Harry had heard that Gene had been sick and had lost touch with him. LeBell was notoriously aloof, and Harry said that Gene was "one those people that never wanted to show weakness" and so he probably didn't want people to see him sick. That didn't matter to Harry. Harry was searching for a way to get in to see LeBell because he wanted to check in on him. Worried for LeBell's health, Harry wanted to help get him back into shape and give him some vitamins. A few months later, Gene LeBell died, and Harry relayed to me how sad he was that he didn't get to go by and see him.



One of the greatest lessons in *budo* training is *shinmu fusatsu* (真武不殺) or that "True *budo* does not kill." If the martial arts aren't supposed to be about killing then there must be a deeper meaning. Kojima Sensei of Zenshuji Soto Mission once said, "A teacher can only develop you 50%." What this means that we are to use the teachings of our teachers to develop the 50% on our own. This can be kind of harrowing journey as you try to fill that other 50%. Thus, in searching for a deeper meaning we come across people like Harry. People like Harry demonstrate to us how to be better. Their example teaches us that it takes way more skill and strength to give kindness than it does to destroy someone. People like Harry live and die to help to teach us the lessons that we sometimes try to avoid.

Sifu Harry Wong appeared in numerous TV shows, movies and magazines. He also published several books on training with accompanying videos. From the outside looking in, he looked like a martial artist, but he was way more than that. Harry embodied the concept that "There is no sword which can oppose kindness." Malcolm

Forbes once said, "You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him." This is the definition of kindness or humanity.

The things I remember the most about Harry was that he was always super kind to me and that he never came off as arrogant or rude. Today, Harry will forever be the model that I strive for as not only a martial arts or teacher but as a human being. I will always remember Harry as being this "super cool kung-fu dude" that used to come by the dojo. Rest in peace, Harry. •



Fumio Demura Sensei
September 15, 1938 – April 24, 2023

When we remember a person, we think about that person. We think of their life and their accomplishments.

The first time I saw Fumio Demura Sensei demonstrate Shito-ryu Karate, it was at the Aratani Theater, but back in the late 80s/early 90s, the venue was known as the Japan America Theater. It was during a big martial arts demonstration organized by my teacher, Rev. Kensho Furuya. There were many other martial artists demonstrating and many high-level practitioners from Japan, but I'll always remember Demura Sensei's demonstration. Demura Sensei's movement was so sharp and so precise, full of balance and power. I was not yet a black belt then, but I have never seen anyone move like Demura Sensei before. At the time I didn't think anyone could move so cleanly and move with such focus.

Fumio Demura was without a doubt a great martial artist, but the true measure of a teacher is the kind of students and teachers that they can create. Thus, when we remember a teacher, we also think of their students. I remember that Demura Sensei's students were always very well-mannered and disciplined. As Sensei would say, "They were always on the ball." If someone is "on the ball," they are alert and aware of what is happening and act pro-



Fumio Demura Sensei



by **Ken Watanabe**
Technical Director

actively and reactively. As a group, Demura Sensei's students were always very polished and organized. Their attention to detail was so precise that even Sensei would be in awe of them. The crispness of their demonstrations served to show the students' skill, but also highlighted that Karate was a versatile and effective martial art. People came from all around to see

Fumio Demura demonstrate and he and his students would never disappoint.

Demura Sensei's students were very good at martial arts, but I remember one incident that really showed his students' level. This happened years later, during another big demonstration. It was outdoors at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in their plaza. I forget the details, but I'd never forget the lesson I learned. One of Fumio Demura's students made a mistake of some kind. It was a breach in etiquette that was directed at my teacher. Whatever the faux pas was it was enough that the student had to personally apologize to Sensei. As the student apologized, we all just stood there confused as to what the student was apologizing for. Sensei, being respectful, never told us what the student had done.

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Fumio Demura Sensei continued from page 4...

Later, Sensei told us that although this student made a mistake, their apology was so sincere and heartfelt that he just could not stay mad at him. They made no excuses nor assigned any blame. Sensei just said that the apologize was "sincere." Sensei said that when we make an apology, sometimes we try to rationalize it, suggesting that it's not really our fault or that there is an excuse that will justify it away. Most times, we apologize because maybe someone told us we have to or we apologize out of fear. However, this student's apology was completely sincere. A mistake was made, an apology was issued, and that was that - a clean end. Sensei said, "It was a martial artist's apology." That is something that I never forgot. A martial artist's apology is supposed to be respectful and have ownership, and sincerity. This goes back to the samurai days when all a person or a warrior had was their honor.

It is said that students become an extension of their teacher's life. A sensei isn't judged by how skillful they are - a sensei is supposed to be skillful and wise. Ultimately, a sensei - a teacher - is judged by the quality of their students and the level of teacher they can create. Thus, students are a reflection of their teacher, both in skill and knowledge in the art, but also in the kind of things that are invisible things and not readily obvious to the casual observer.

These invisible things demonstrate the student's true level of ability and most times those things cannot be taught on the mat. These are the qualities a student gleans, not from instruction, but from the teacher's being. It is the hidden transference from teacher to student. In Japanese, it can be referred to as *ishin-denshin* (以心伝心) or "heart to heart communication." Thus, some students will get it and some will not.

That is the miraculousness of Demura Sensei. He was able to embody the characteristics of a true martial artist and transmit it to not just one person, but several people. That is one of the things that I think Sensei most admired about Demura Sensei.

When the teacher dies, a part of the teacher will supposedly live on in the student, whether that student realizes it or not. When I remember Fumio Demura Sensei, I remember how skilled he was, his sense of humor, his organization, and the books he authored, but I also remember the people he affected and how he influenced them to practice their martial art at the highest level that they can. That is how he influenced me as a martial artist. I remember his students and the way he lives on through them. I am happy to have been influenced by such a great teacher.

Rest in peace Demura Sensei. •

Over time, as a teacher, you realize that practice and technique are important issues in the training of a student. However, also over time, I think what is even more important are the values that we transmit like having the proper attitude, actions and behaviors. These values are what affect our understanding of the art and shape us as we become teachers.

Last month, two very important martial arts teachers passed away. Both were good friends with Furuya Sensei. One was Kung Fu Sifu Harry Wong and the other was the legendary Shito Ryu-style Karate teacher, Fumio Demura. Both were prolific martial artists and good friends of Sensei's, but neither of them were practitioners of Aikido and yet they still respected and admired each other.



Sensei was well known in the martial arts community as not only a teacher of Aikido and Iaido, but also as being a Renaissance man who was knowledgeable in philosophy, Japanese writing, gastronomy, architecture, etc. It is true that Sensei's main passions were Aikido and swords, but one of the things that really inspired me over the years was his interest and respect for other martial arts.

Sensei's knowledge made him a collector of many different things from Japanese art to swords. However, the things he collected were not just things that had a monetary value, but things that had a more intrinsic value. Sensei's library was full of writings, manuals and biographies of different styles, teachers and subjects. I would often look around and marvel at the subject matter, from silly things like the Harry Potter to deeper and more philosophical books like the Upanishad.

When I would spend time talking with Sensei, I always admired the way he talked about other forms of art and not just the martial ones. He always spoke about them with a great deal of respect and knowledge because he knew that behind each art there was a lot of effort and study. Any critical judgment of any teacher or technique was always done in argument of purely the technical aspects and not personal at all.

Today many are insular and it is easy to criticize others. Most times, people speak, judge or criticize from a place of ignorance, simply due to the fact that they are hurting. Listening to Sensei and watching how he interacted with these other teachers made me realize that we only criticize from a place of weakness.

One of Sensei's best friends was the Kung Fu teacher Adam Hsu. I always admired their mutual respect despite the fact that the arts they practiced and taught were different. This difference

was not an obstacle to maintaining their friendship.

I believe that many times, not only in the times that we live in but in most instances, we act defensively because we are ignorant, envious or just being egotistical. This contempt for other martial arts only limits us and deprives us of the opportunity to grow and learn.

I often wonder what Sensei and his friends talked about. I suppose that they shared many ideas or concerns that they would not typically share with students. I like to think that they shared more than they took. I also like to think that they valued each other not out of fear but because they each understood the sacrifice and effort it took to reach their levels.

It is said that the pinnacle of all martial

Respect



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

arts lead to the same place. This means that we are all one but just separated by our perspectives and preconceived notions. I believe that one can live the Way of Aikido with passion but at the same time also accept other practitioners. There is no reason to despise someone simply because they practice another art like Judo or Karate. It is also short sighted to think that we alone "know" and that no one else can contribute anything to us. Each of us chooses what we want to do for multiple reasons and surely they are not the same reasons as anyone else. When I see a Kendo practitioner or a Kung fu teacher or someone from any other art, what I am looking for is dedication and passion. If a person is serious about their art, they will always act with sense of pride and respectfulness. When they demonstrate their earnestness towards their art, I naturally think that their character must have come from their efforts to develop their art and as such deserves respect.

Thinking about Sensei and his interactions with his martial arts friends reminds me of this great quote from the movie Black Panther, which illustrates how teachers at a high level think: "The wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers." I believe that all styles of martial arts give us some tools with which to build things and a good teacher decides with their character, attitude and behavior what they want to teach their students. Mr. Miyagi in the Karate Kid films said, "There is no such thing as bad student, only bad teacher." Our students become just like us. I was lucky that Sensei taught me the value of not only other martial arts but other people as well. Treating others with respect, regardless of style or ability, shows our true level. I only hope that I too have some great friends to collaborate with. Who we want to become is up to us. Build bridges not barriers. I hope that Sensei, Wong Sifu and Demura Sensei are all having some great conversations in heaven. Rest in peace, gentlemen!•



Around the world, children are taught religions, and they learn about faith, and the different values indigenous to their cultures. However, understanding the depth and the meaning of those studies, and the ideas that they provide as a foundation for how to behave as human beings comes with time and wisdom. The study of spirituality is a self-reflection that helps us improve ourselves as martial artists and as members of our community. I would like to share my studies about Ueshiba Morihei's beginning journey on his spiritual path.

In *A Life in Aikido: The biography of the Founder Morihei Ueshiba*, Ueshiba Kisshomaru wrote that O'Sensei was a religious man, and he spent his early years learning about religion at a local temple in Tanabe, his native city, in Japan. He was particularly fascinated by the teachings of Confucius on ethical, moral and social standards. During that period, in the late 1800s, it was normal for affluent families in Japan to send their children to an elite school that provided good education.

As a young adult, he was known to be an extraordinarily strong man with a strong discipline. In the 1920s, he was residing in Ayabe with his family where the headquarters of the Omoto-kyo were. Soon after he settled, the Shinto sect was no longer tolerated by the Japanese government and Onisaburo Deguchi, the leader of the Omoto-kyo, was arrested. The day after his release, on February 13th, 1924, Mr. Deguchi secretly left for Mongolia with Ueshiba Morihei and two other acolytes. Their objective was quite simple, to spread Omoto-Kyo religion and somehow reform the country by making the right alliances and fighting the enemies. Unfortunately, the plan did not work, and on June 21st, 1924, they were captured by the Chinese forces and held in chains while waiting for their execution. It is not clear how the Japanese consulate became informed, but their execution was canceled as Onisaburo and his acolytes were walking toward the wall of death where a firing squad was waiting for them. Negotiations took place and then the Chinese army released them to the Japanese authorities. It was the end of that expedition.

Spiritual Path



by **Alexandre Hillairet**
Aikido Instructor, Ventura Aikido

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"

– Daodejing Laozi

Many stories have been written over the years, many books have been published about O'Sensei and all of them provide a different version of the facts. After analyzing all of them, they all agree about one fact: that O'Sensei found spirituality in Mongolia during his journey with Onisaburo Deguchi.

In Asian philosophy, it is believed that the world exists because there is a duality among all things on earth and in nature. For example, night cannot exist without day and day cannot exist without night. We can also say that spirituality cannot exist without chaos and chaos cannot exist without spirituality.

In countries such as India or Indonesia where there is extreme poverty, it becomes easy to observe and understand the duality between chaos and spirituality. In the dojo, it is not as dramatic as that. Fatigue, and wanting to give up, are forms of chaos that somehow we must overcome to finish the training session. Every time that we do not give up fighting our mental and physical fatigue is a step forward on our personal spiritual journey.

As a young man, O'Sensei studied religion but like most children he did not understand the true value and the true meaning of it all. It took years and wisdom to finally appreciate what he had learned. The Mongolia expedition and his near-death experience were catalysts and his first steps into his spiritual development. Some people, after enduring such a traumatic experience, become mentally and physical disabled, but O'Sensei embraced his weakness, and it became his strength.

In the Aikido magazine *Tankyu* in 1997, "Finding meaning and depth with Aikido" Ueshiba Kisshomaru wrote that Aikido deepens our understanding and value of human life, and it helps us to be in harmony with the great flow of nature. The more one studies, the more one feels its depth and weight.

O'Sensei, the founder of Aikido, is our guide in this spiritual journey. The path of spirituality is universal, and it is important to understand that it is not only open to the selected few, but also to everyone who chooses to study hard with all their heart. •

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

Dojo Coronavirus update:

Currently, the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles has lifted the face mask mandate for all persons vaccinated or not. Anyone who still wants to wear a face covering in class is welcome to do so. There is also no vaccination requirement to attend classes.

IMPORTANT DATES

May 20th: Little Tokyo Sparkle volunteering
May 27th: Senior's Intensive Seminar
May 29th: Closed Memorial Day
July 4th: Closed 4th of July
July 8-9: Zenshuji Obon volunteering
October: Dates TBA - Spain 25th anniversary seminar

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, gender identification, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation 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

10:15-11:15 AM Advanced
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Theory

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular
8:30-9:30 PM Fundamentals @Budokan

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM Regular
11:30 AM-12:30 PM Fundamentals

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Regular Class

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

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

Iaido Training Schedule

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Regular Class

Tuesdays

7:45-8:45 PM Regular class

Thursdays

7:45-8:45 PM Regular class



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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.

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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.

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