



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES

NEWSLETTER

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THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1987

My deepest apologies for the late arrival of October's Newsletter. Actually, my attention was to cancel it for this month but I had already completed one short article so I will present it to you as it stands.

My students have seen very little of me of late and perhaps they may be wondering what has happened to their teacher. This month has been very trying for me but I hope to return to teaching as many matters settle down. In the meantime, I hope everyone will be encouraged to train even harder during my absence and really try to reach toward the heart and spirit of Aikido itself.

Our schedule was thrown off by the visit of the Pope to Los Angeles. Soon afterwards, the landlord finally, after three years, took steps to repair the roof. As they were ready to put on the new roofing, they were delayed one day by the late arrival of the dumpster to dispose of the old roofing. On that particular day it decided to rain and we sustained a great deal of water damage through the leaking roof. That morning I was trying to stop about thirty big leaks all over the dojo. My mother had just returned from the hospital for a stomach ailment when my father became ill and was rushed to Huntington Memorial where, several days later, he underwent triple by-pass surgery. Unfortunately, there were many complications but he still managed to survive. On the second day after surgery, while he was still in intensive care, we had the big earthquake which shook the dojo and caused a great deal of damage again, especially to the third floor. On the same day of the earthquake, my mother re-entered the hospital for further examination because she could no longer digest any food. The doctors discovered a malignant tumor in her stomach and intestines and she underwent surgery the day previous to this writing. We are still awaiting the results. It has been a busy and difficult time for me with both parents in the hospital and no other family. The stress and exhaustion have made it difficult for me to teach as I would like. I hope the membership will have great patience during this time.

The earth shakes beneath our feet and we grow old and sick. Our modern conveniences, science, economy and our prayers seem to have no effect at all to sway fate a little to our own side. But despite impossible odds, even the meekest and tiniest of God's creatures struggle to live on, day by day. Perhaps

our goals or purposes in life are not so magnificent and perhaps we are not endowed with special talents or money or power or recognition, but we still try to live. The will to live, I believe, is God's love which makes no distinction of big or small, strong or weak. Our faith nourishes this love and perhaps it may be the only thing that is real in this world or ours.

Today, we are always thinking of money and power. We only think of ourselves and view everything from the colored glasses of our own ego. We love what we think will do us good and we hate what goes against our own wishes. Even the smallest worm or cockroach does not have such a distorted view of the world.

Perhaps our dojo will never have great recognition, but as long as students come to enjoy their practice every day, I will be very happy. Although we may be surrounded by misfortune and unhappiness, I believe Aikido, more than anything else, cultivates the power of faith and perseverance and encourages us to keep going in the face of any obstacle. This is the first teaching in our dojo. I see so many people come and go looking for this or looking for that and I feel so sorry for them. Many times I am saddened because there is nothing I can do. I cannot force people to learn Aikido nor can I force them to stay and practice and yet I am powerless to teach them that what they are looking for is right in their hands. Some students come and practice and make good progress and then say, "Oh, I am not getting anything." They move on continuing an endless struggle. I hope my students will stay and continue their training and learn how to use their strength to overcome the many obstacles life presents us. This is the power of life or faith or whatever you may want to call it. This is the hidden meaning of Aikido. Please continue to practice and you will discover a beautiful power which will sustain you in your darkest moments.

I hope everyone will continue to support and give their good wishes to the dojo.

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S VISIT TO L.A.

Breaking one of the traditions of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles, the dojo closed for two days on September 15 and 16, 1987 during Pope John Paul II's visit to Los Angeles. Prior to his coming, the city began to close many streets and portions of the freeway near the Little Tokyo community because the

Holy Father would be staying at St. Vibiana's just across the street from the New Otani Hotel in Little Tokyo. Because of many scheduled events taking place so close to the dojo, with their accompanying street barriers and traffic congestion, I thought our students would have a difficult if not impossible time getting to practice. There was a parade on Tuesday with an anticipated figure of over one million people in attendance (the final tally was much less). Mass at the Colliseum on Tuesday evening boasted one hundred and three thousand people. Wednesday Mass at Dodger Stadium had over sixty thousand people in attendance. The security around Little Tokyo during the Pope's stay was incredible. Many businesses also decided to close during his stay. In addition, prior to the Pope's arrival, there was a great deal of bad press and there were many anticipated protests from groups critical of the Catholic church's views on abortion, homosexuals, Aids victims, women, women in the church, Indians and the canonization of Father Junipera Serra, priests leaving the church, etc.

Although many students wanted to keep the dojo open, I thought it would be a good time to close for several days. I also needed a short vacation to have some time for myself and to be alone for personal study. There was a great deal of writing and study that I wanted to do and I really looked forward to these precious two days. Unfortunately, I did not accomplish much because I spent the entire two days following the Holy Father on television.

I am not a Catholic and am not familiar with its teachings, nor am I knowledgeable about the Vatican and its policies. I have read much about the problems of the Catholic church in newspapers and magazines but only as a passing interest. My only strong interest has been with Mother Teresa of Calcutta whose work I have greatly admired for many years now.

Over the two days of the Pope's visit, I watched him very closely and listened to his words very carefully on television. Because of the convenience of television, I was able to get very close to him and listened to his words two and sometimes three times on the broadcasts. Everything was on television "live" and mostly in Little Tokyo, so it was interesting to see him leave on television and, a few minutes later, hear his helicopter pass over the dojo. He passed over the dojo many times during his stay going to and from his many engagements. Several times I went outside and saw his helicopter pass right over us. I would have liked to have met him person to person.

As I have mentioned before, I am not familiar with his background nor the policies of the Vatican which are currently causing so much controversy. But I was very much impressed with the Holy Father as a man and as a spiritual leader. I was impressed with his sincerity and his profound concern for people today. His great inner strength, endurance and vitality is something which I can only hope for in my Aikido.

I think he is a man of great peace working towards the peace of mankind today. And, despite the many problems which he is faced with, I think his work and teachings are important for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. I know many will disagree.

In many respects in regards to the Catholic church, the problems of abortion, women in the church, homosexuals, etc. are matters of today's reality and cannot be avoided. Although he did not give in on these matters, he still expressed a great concern and a great compassion and was willing to carry on a dialogue. As an Aikido teacher, I can, in some small way, understand or at least have some feeling for the problem of maintaining a tradition and the proper form of the teachings as they have been handed down to us and how they meet today's problems.

It was stated that the Catholic church has changed a little in every country that it has developed. Aikido, in the same way, has changed a little since it was brought to America. In many ways it has taken on the character of the American people. Aikido has also changed with the times: techniques practiced today are a little different from twenty years ago. But the *tradition* of Aikido has not changed.

The Pope pointed out that this country is a country of great wealth and prosperity and this has brought about many choices in the way we live and think. In many ways this is good but in many ways this is not so good. We have become accustomed to choosing and taking what we want and rejecting what doesn't appeal to us. The people of many other countries are not so fortunate. In religion and in matters of faith, people have begun to pick and choose and this is what the Pope believes is a source of many problems today. The Pope stated that "we cannot invent our faith as we go along nor alter it according to our personal convenience." This is very much true with Aikido as well.

Many people practice *suwari-waza* (sitting technique) in our dojo today. Some students have problems with their knees, but in general everyone does very

well. In the early days of Aikido here some twenty years ago, someone decided that Americans could not do sitting technique because it was too painful. They said Americans have much longer legs so sitting technique was impossible for them. Only Japanese could do sitting technique because their legs were short. This is what people used to say. Twenty years later, many people still do not practice sitting technique. I think they must suffer for avoiding such an important aspect of Aikido training. The Founder of Aikido practiced sitting technique everyday and always emphasized the importance of this type of training. By picking and choosing for our own personal convenience, we may make some improvement but we are also in danger of distorting the true practice and depriving ourselves in the long run.

When I first came back from Japan in 1969 after training at the Aikido World Headquarters under Doshu every day, I was invited to teach at a local dojo. They were very anxious, I suppose, to see what I had learned. I started with *suwari-waza shomen-uchi ikkyo* (sitting-technique overhead strike with ikkyo technique) because this is what I had done everyday in every class (it seemed) while I was in Japan and is one of the most basic techniques in Aikido. They stopped me and said, "You're wrong! That is not Aikido!" I was so surprised! In another dojo, I introduced *yonkyo* (fourth control hold) and received the same reaction.

There are many techniques in Aikido which are difficult for me, but because they are an integral part of Aikido, I cannot exclude them from my teaching. There are some techniques which I like very much and some which I like less but I cannot pick a few over the others and just teach what I like. As a teacher I have a responsibility to teach the whole form of Aikido. It is, in my mind, irresponsible to deprive the students in some part of Aikido because of personal convenience or preference. At the same time students must discipline themselves to accept the entire body of Aikido teaching as opposed to picking and choosing what they like. This is the meaning of discipline. When the Pope stated that we cannot invent our faith as we go along, it instantly came to my mind how we cannot invent our Aikido as we go along according to our own personal convenience.

I think many people misunderstand Aikido today because of this habit of picking and choosing. Many people call me about learning Aikido and they always ask the same question. For example, the other day, a caller asked, "Do you teach the philosophy of Aikido

because I don't want to learn the techniques!" It is so difficult to explain to people today how we cannot just cut Aikido in half like an apple or a piece of pie.

Although I heard that some people wrote on the walls, "Kill the Pope" or "Pope Go Home," I am glad he was able to come to Los Angeles because I learned a great deal from him and his great spiritual strength and compassion was an inspiration for me.

In reflecting about the visit of Pope John Paul II to Los Angeles and about our Aikido, I think it is very easy to concede to popular opinion and go along with the times, but I think it is very difficult to preserve a worthy tradition and teaching, especially a teaching which is subtle and difficult to understand. I believe faith must be the greatest source of our strength. And, I believe, it is through faith that the wisdom of the past can guide and direct us in dealing with the problems of today's society. I cannot say how the Pope is going to deal with his problems because they are matters of great importance today: the rights of minorities and individuals, Aids victims, priests, women in the church, etc. On a smaller scale, perhaps, Aikido may face the same problems of the individual in such a fast-moving society as we live in today. I hope my students will ultimately realize that it is not a question of speed or strength, or rank or power. It is how we can persevere and continue step by step on the path of Aikido everyday of our lives.

SUGANO SENSEI'S SEMINAR ON OCTOBER 24TH AND 25TH.

Seiichiro Sugano Sensei, 7th Dan Shihan, will be conducting a seminar in our San Fernando Valley dojo on the weekend of October 24th and 25th. This will be his first visit to the Southern California/Los Angeles area and I hope everyone participates to give him a warm welcome here and show him our hospitality. Sugano Sensei is a direct student of the Founder of Aikido, the late Grandmaster Morihei Ueshiba and was first sent to Australia to introduce and develop Aikido there. Several years later, he was assigned to Belgium and finally, this year, he has come to settle in New York City to assist Yamada Sensei at the New York Aiki-kai. Many of our friends at the New York Aiki-kai have nothing but the highest regards for him.

**HOLIDAY GREETINGS**

I wish to express my heartiest greetings to all of my students and friends for the Holiday Season and the coming New Year. I hope everyone will enjoy continued success and good health. I hope everyone will make a New Year's Resolution to continue their hard training and excellent progress in Aikido.

I want to thank everyone for their generous support of the dojo this last year. And, I hope I may rely on everyone's further kind support and energy in 1988.

I also wish to thank my assistants for all of their help in teaching and guiding the members. I am grateful for the many friends of the dojo who have also shown their generous support.

My thoughts and prayers are with all of my students and friends throughout this Holiday Season and will be in the coming New Year.

Faithfully,

Daniel M. Furuya,
Chief Instructor
Aikido Center of Los Angeles
San Fernando Aiki Kai

REFLECTIONS OF 1987

We have had a very busy 1987. As I look back, it has really been a very good year for us. We have had three important seminars with Yoshimitsu Yamada Sensei of the New York Aiki Kai, Mitsunari Kanai Sensei of the New England Aiki Kai and Seiichi Sugano Sensei also of the New York Aiki Kai. We had very successful and popular demonstrations at the annual Nisei Week Festival in Little Tokyo and the Martial Arts Festival at the Japanese Village Plaza, which we hosted. We also conducted seminars in self-defense for the senior citizens of the community and held a CPR class at the dojo. Our membership has grown, and many, many students are making excellent progress and training very hard in Aikido. I have also had a chance to appear on the Hour Magazine show with Gary Collins and Dick Cavett. This is also the year we re-entered the United States Aikido Federation and have affiliated ourselves with the Eastern Region under Yamada Sensei and Kanai Sensei. Kanai Sensei is my very old and beloved teacher

of twenty years ago and I am very happy with our present relationship with his dojo.

We have come a long way in the last four years since the opening of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. And, I believe, we have a very great deal to be thankful for. This is also the year that we have been able to pay our rent on time every month. What an accomplishment!!! I am particularly thankful to see the membership grow and to see the wonderful progress of the older students. We are also developing a fine core group of senior students of excellent character. This is important for a growing and ever-developing dojo.

We have a lot to look forward to in 1988. I hope we can see our membership continue to grow at a steady rate and I hope we can see the further development of our senior students and assistant instructors. I plan to have three or four major seminars in 1988. I would like to continue having the CPR class at least twice a year. I hope the younger students will become more involved in the dojo and attend these seminars.

As I have said many times before, this is the dojo of the students, not the teacher. I hope each one of you will take this to heart and try to involve yourself more with the continued growth and development of this dojo. I hope that you will come to think of the dojo as your home away from home and use it to full advantage to develop your Aikido, make good friends and learn how to reach new horizons in your life. I hope every one of you will begin to see how much Aikido has done and can do for your life and your health and happiness.

Our society is changing so fast and we are making such great strides in our technology and science. Our spiritual lives, however, have been ignored and neglected. It is this dilemma that causes us so much suffering in our daily lives. There is an old story which illustrates this well. In old Japan, there was a rather comic character living in the capital. As he was walking down the street one day he bumped into his friend who was pulling along his horse by a rope. The guy asked his friend, "Why don't you ride your horse?" His friend replied, "I can't, this horse is much too wild and no one can ride him." With this as a challenge, he immediately jumped onto the horse

to ride him. The horse took off with a start down the streets of the old capital. All he could do was hang on for his dear life. As he was going down the street, lickity-split, he passed by another friend. The friend shouted out, "Where are you going in such a hurry!" And the poor dumb fellow could only reply, "I don't know, ask the horse!"

This poor fellow is today's society and the horse is our technology and science. We have become caught up in the momentum and have no way to stop or slow down and find our direction. The Chinese also say, "It is easy to mount a tiger but very hard to get off."

Aikido is just the "harness" we need to get a better grip on our own lives. We should control the direction of our technology. Our technology should not control us. The Founder of Aikido often talked about "Chinkon Kishin." This literally means to "Calm the spirit and return to Mother Nature." There is something we had and now we have lost it. Some people call it "our humanity." Aikido is the way to re-discover it within ourselves. This is what we do in the dojo everyday as we practice and work together with each other.

WHERE'S THE BEEF?

There was a commercial which I used to enjoy on television. A little old lady buys a hamburger in a fast food outlet and, disappointed, takes it back to the counter and asks, "Where's the beef?" Nowadays, it seems that when we buy a hamburger, the meat looks nothing like "real" meat. Yet, how many billions of these hamburgers and others have been sold? For a while, everyone was asking, "Where's the beef." But, the commercial went off the air and soon people stopped asking. I, myself, am still asking, "Where's the beef?"

I was talking with a farmer from up north the other day and he was telling me how scientists are beginning to worry that we may lose the original taste of the many vegetables and fruits we eat today. There has been so much genetic engineering with plants to grow out of season or in different soil or under odd conditions and this has effected the taste and value of the vegetables and fruits today.

There is a fish in Japan that used to be caught by feeding them shrimp. The fishermen would throw out the shrimp to attract the fish and then catch them in their nets. When shrimp became more expensive,

the fishermen began to use another species of shrimp which is not really like a shrimp at all. After many years the fish have forgotten the taste of shrimp and will no longer eat them.

Today, when we go to a sushi bar, we find that the hot "wasabi" is now often served in what looks like a tooth paste tube. Before, we all know it was in powdered form and had to be mixed with a little water and a drop of vinegar and mixed into a paste. In Japan, when young people now go to a sushi bar, they don't really like the tooth paste type of wasabi and ask for "real" wasabi. This is a big joke. The powdered form is not "real" wasabi but a convenient substitute for the wasabi root which was always freshly ground at the sushi bar. The wasabi root is not too hot but very juicy and cuts the oily taste of the fish. The wasabi root doesn't keep well so they began to make the powder which can be stored indefinitely. This taste is merely hot. However, when one mixes the powder, the taste or hotness varies with the amount of water or powder used. Now, they serve it in a tube which has a uniform consistency of taste and eliminates the bother of mixing a powder. This is no way resembles the taste of the original root, even its light green color is artificial. It is only a taste and does not cut the oiliness of the fish.

Today, it is always a treat to go to a restaurant which serves freshly squeezed orange juice. How different it is! But it is odd to think that, years ago this was the norm and any kind of orange juice which came out of a can or a paper carton would most likely have seemed very odd to them.

A little while ago, I met a famous singer and I was surprized to learn that he had practiced a little Aikido. He mentioned his teacher's name but I have never heard of him. Then the singer said, "Oh, yes, my teacher has done wonderful things with Aikido. It is now 'conflict resolution' or some such thing." Aikido is changing its flavor as well. It is becoming "this and that" and we are in danger of forgetting the original taste of Aikido. I imagine in a few years, students will be going to their Aikido teachers and asking, "Where's the beef?"

PROMOTIONS

The followings students have been promoted on November 4, 1987 at the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

Congratulations!

6th Kyu
Ms. Janis Wilkins
Mr. Callahan Fritz-Cope
Mr. Brigido Anaya
Mr. David Schweizer

5th Kyu
Mr. David Perry

4th Kyu
Mr. Mark Moore
Mr. Ron Rocha
Mr. Yasushi Matsuki

3rd Kyu
Mr. David Pascal
Mr. Adam Balzano
Dr. Issac English
Mr. John Solberg
Ms. Carole Almaguer
Mr. Richard Eloriagga
Mr. Ron Hill

2nd Kyu
Mr. Allan Hardy
Mr. Stephan Stephanides
Dr. Michael Albertson

1st Kyu
Mr. Blake Ashley
Mr. Manuel Almaguer
Mr. Tom McIntyre
Mr. Tony Gonsalves
Mr. William Heath

Candidates for 1st Degree Black Belt
Mr. Rick Cushing
Mr. Victor Rodriguez
Ms. Mitsuko Yoshimoto
Mr. Blake Ashley
Mr. Eric Stout

The following promotions have been made for the San Fernando Valley Aiki Kai. Congratulations!

6th Kyu
Ms. Tanya Silva
Mr. Bobby Silva

4th Kyu
Mr. Russell Muranaka
Mr. Charles Muranaka
Mr. Daniel Shea

3rd Kyu
Mr. Gary Kawashima
Mr. Toshio Sato

2nd Kyu
Mr. Barry Asato

AIKIDO ON HOUR MAGAZINE

On Wednesday, November 11, 1987, we taped an Aikido demonstration and interview on *Hour Magazine* on channel 11 with host Mr. Gary Collins. Special guest star and co-host was Mr. Dick Cavett visiting Los Angeles from New York. He had just returned from Japan where he made the second series of *Faces of Japan* to be aired on PBS. He is also hosting the *College Bowl* program on cable. Members of the ACLA participating on the program were Sensei, Mr. Douglas Firestone, Mr. Kaz Nishida, and Ms. Mitsuko Yoshimoto. The program aired on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1987 at 12 pm noon on channel 11.

MR. DICK CAVETT FROM NEW YORK

Dick Cavett spent eight days in Los Angeles in November hosting various shows and programs including the *Comic Relief* program which was aired live on November 14, 1987. Dick practiced Aikido everyday at the dojo and everyone enjoyed his company. His visit was a special treat for us and we look forward to his next visit to Los Angeles. He stayed at the New Otani Hotel in Little Tokyo.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

All the members, students and friends of the dojo are encouraged to bring in new students to the dojo. We should try to start off the New Year with many new faces and new friends. Let us all try hard to build up our membership and help out the dojo.

NEW TRAINING SCHEDULE

There are several changes in the teaching schedule. The schedule will be revised again after the New Year.

Sensei will be going to the San Fernando Valley dojo every Thursday along with two assistants. The Saturday class in SFV will be alternating each week with the assistant instructors: Mr. Douglas Firestone, Mr. Brian Reverman, Ms. Kathy Heinemann and Mr. Kaz Nishida will be teaching one Saturday each during the month. Students, especially senior students, are asked to help out the assistant instructors by going with them and practicing in the Valley once in

awhile. We are building up the membership at the Valley dojo.

The Thursday evening class will be handled by the assistant instructors. The second class (7:30pm to 8:30pm) during the weekdays will become an intermediate, advanced or weapons class. Beginning students are welcome to participate with Sensei's prior approval. Intermediate and senior students are asked to participate in as many advanced and intermediate classes during the week as possible. Candidates for black belt should begin helping out with instruction of the new students.

We are also asking intermediate and senior students to help out with the Children's Class on Sundays (12:00pm to 1:00pm).

The teaching schedule of assistant instructors will be determined for 1988.

NEW MEMBERS

When new members join the dojo, they have many questions about what to do and how to behave. Everyone should try to help them out and make them feel at home and welcome into the dojo. This is an important part of our training. Please help our new students.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**
