



The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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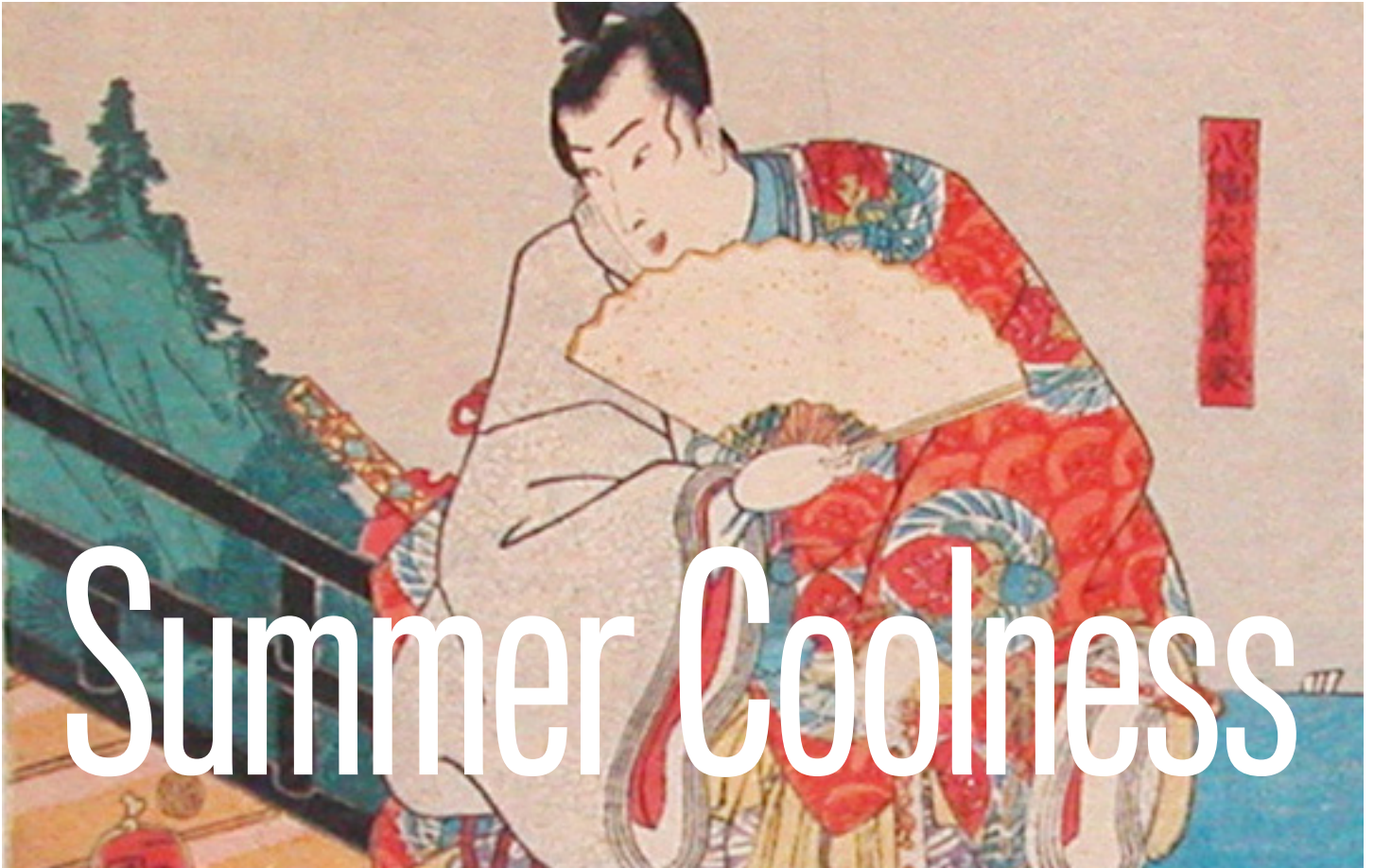
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Summer Issue



Summer Coolness

by **David Ito** Aikido Chief Instructor

The coolness of it

Suzushisaya

In the middle of a
green rice field,

Aota no nakani

A single pine tree!

Hitotsu matsu

~ Shiki

In Japan, the heat in the summer is especially unbearable but the heat itself doesn't seem to affect the Japanese people that severely. The heat, it seems, is a matter of one's perspective and more of a subject of conversation than a circumstance. How the Japanese deal with the heat is interesting.

The idea of combating the heat is not in the Japanese cultural lexicon but rather they take steps to harmonize with it. As a culture, the Japanese harmonize with the summer heat with something called *suzumi* (涼み). *Suzumi* is where one achieves the feeling of coolness by using one's mind and all of one's senses to harmonize with the situation. We can see the Japanese practice *suzumi* when a nice summer breeze passes by or while they are sitting under the eaves of their house enjoying the shade and a cup of tea. In Chado or tea ceremony, *suzumi* is created as the host arouses a sense of coolness with a particular piece of calligraphy, flower arrangement and tea accoutrements with names that encourage this sense of coolness. An ordinary person might elicit *suzumi* by just reading Shiki's haiku and embracing the coolness of a lone pine tree in a green field.

A disciple of Sen Rikyu, the person credited with perfecting the art of the tea ceremony, once asked, "what precisely are the most important things that must be understood and kept in mind at a tea gathering?" Rikyu responded, "make a delicious bowl of tea; lay the charcoal so



that it heats the water; arrange the flowers as they are in the field; in summer suggest coolness, in winter, warmth; do everything ahead of time; prepare for rain; and give those with whom you find yourself every consideration.”

In tea ceremony, these are known as the Seven Rules of Rikyu and they seem easy enough in theory but in practice they are woefully more difficult. All of Rikyu’s rules revolve around being mindful of others and perhaps none are more difficult or abstract as the rule “in summer suggest coolness, in winter, warmth.”

In reference to this rule, Sen Shoshitsu XV, the former grandmaster of Urasenke tea ceremony said, “this coolness is not produced mechanically by fan or air conditioner. Nor is it some other contrivance to help one endure the heat. Rather, it is a positive way, derived from the physical setting of enjoying life in the heat of summer.” Situations, much like temperatures, are subjective and thus based upon how we see things. We can let the heat ruin our day or use it as a means “to enjoy our lives.” Thus, in order to inspire coolness while suffering the heat of summer, one must be able to alter one’s perspective.

In Aikido this higher mindset is similar to when we are confronted and we choose to align with our opponents not only with their energy or power but more importantly with their perspective. The Dalai Lama said, “if you can, help others; if you cannot do that, at least do not harm them.” When we see where they are “coming from,” this enables us to give our aggressors compassion or at least try to not add to their suffering. This nonstandard philosophy allows us to take ownership of ourselves and thus manage the situation differently without the need for aggression or violence.

At the peak of Aikido training, we are striving for this place of stillness or *seijaku* (静寂). Stillness can only be achieved when our bodies

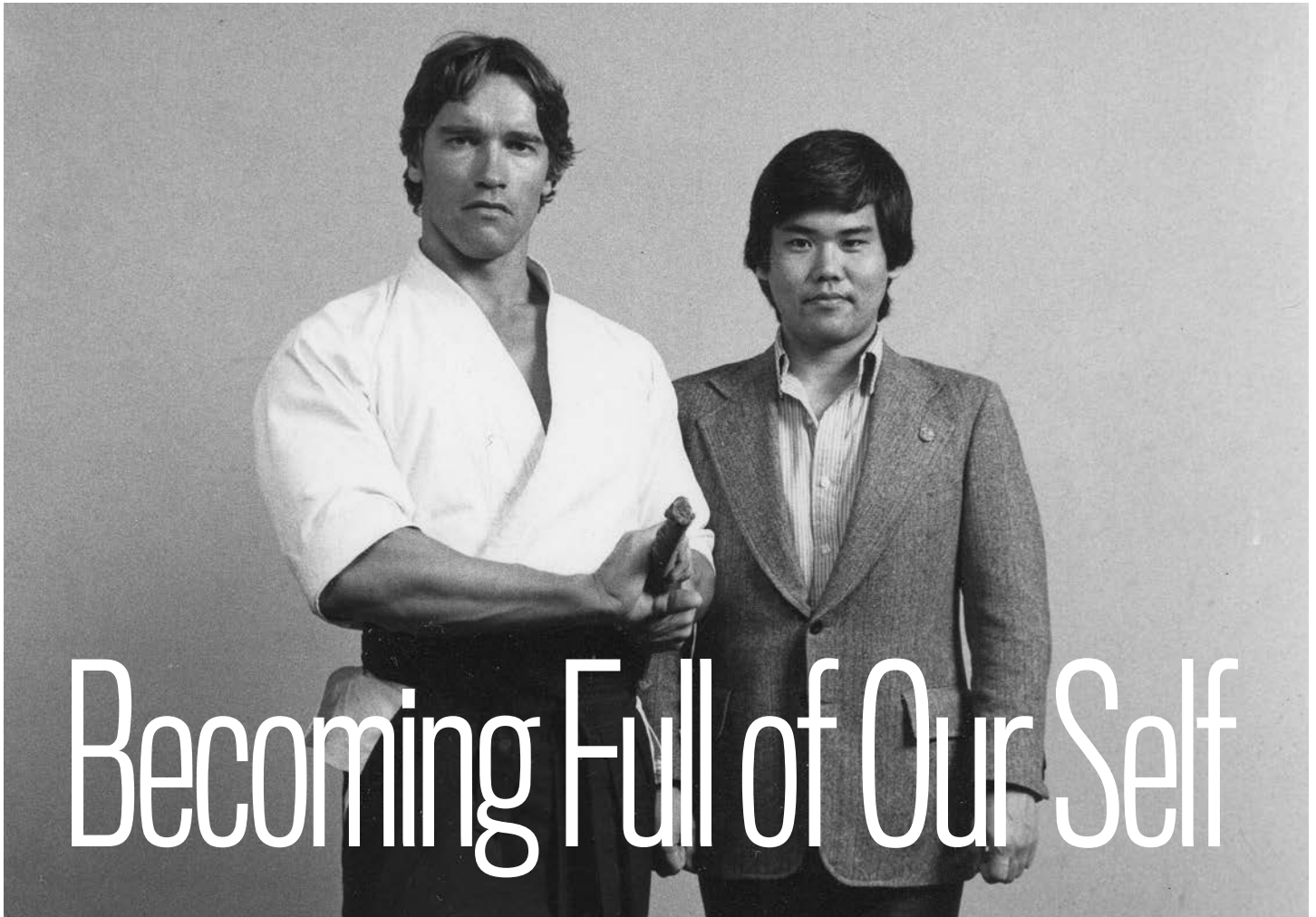
are centered and balanced and our minds are calm. At this junction of mind and body lies this same perspective of *suzumi* where stillness embraces the positivity of the situation and we can find balance within the unbearable temperatures of life.

Stillness is found in Aikido’s philosophy of non-violence which is rooted in the higher philosophy of right thinking which leads to right action. With the right mindset, we can have *suzumi* and gain the right perspective and see the person confronting us as not an antagonist but a person suffering. We do not react mindlessly, but rather act mindfully and thus appropriately. The philosopher Epictetus summed up stillness with his assertion that, “it’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.”

The main goal in tea ceremony is to simply serve a delicious cup of tea. This selfless goal is to help the guests alleviate their suffering and this is done by helping them to change their perspective. Aikido’s goal is to create change and thus is no different.

Today, it is easy to see the world as full of turmoil and negativity and to throw our hands up in disgust, but we are part of this world and if nothing else, part of the solution. In Chado, they often say, “one cup of tea can change the world.” The strongest force in the universe is positive and we can realize this when we realize that we are not the situation or circumstance, but that we are human beings and thus we need to be human. Heat like violence and hatred are merely a low level perspective that one chooses in light of a negative circumstance. Furuya Sensei once said, “violence is a myth, not a reality, because violence is born out of ignorance. Hopefully, ignorance is not man’s destiny on this earth.”

Embracing *suzumi* allows us to transcend the situation and take ownership over ourselves as we choose to use something unpleasant in a positive way. Stay cool this summer! •



Becoming Full of Our Self

by **Ken Watanabe** Iaido Chief Instructor

There is a lot of talk in aikido about energy, but the thing about energy is this: what the heck does it look like? We train to project it through our fingertips, to blend with it, to use it in our technique, and yet this energy is still difficult for us to conceptualize. It's not like an apple that we can hold and taste, or a photo of one we can look at and say, "this is an apple."

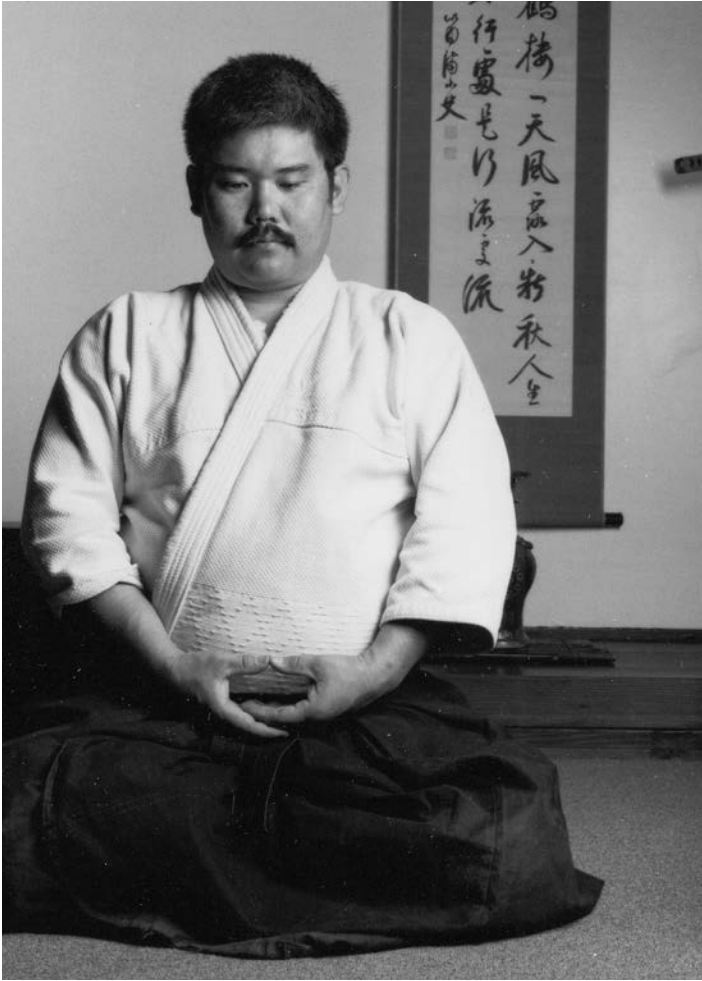
We can see energy's results as someone is thrown or pinned seemingly effortlessly, but how do we know if we have it? How can we develop it? In aikido, energy doesn't have the kind of form we're used to when we visualize something. It doesn't seem to have a shape. It doesn't look like lightning bolts, or a ball of light, or laser beams shooting from someone's eyes.

Because the concept of energy is so abstract, the way to show it in training is through our physical form. Energy may not have a physical shape, but it certainly shapes our practice. We can see its form, or lack thereof, in ourselves through our posture, our movement, and our timing. We can see its effectiveness through the technique when we either effortlessly throw or pin our opponent, or require lots of wrestling and straining to do so. We feel it after a good class.

Energy shapes our physical form and our physical form shapes energy. Our posture can be off-balance, or it can be stable; our movement can be stiff, heavy and sluggish, or it can be quick, flexible, and light. It is all up to our energy. Because energy is related to focus and intention, it is also strongly linked to our mental state, and how we develop the breadth and focus of our concentration.

In aikido we train so every bit of our technique is filled with our energy. If we only concentrate on our hands, our feet won't move us out of the way. If we only think about our feet, then we forget about the energy in our hands and we can't use them to effectively guide our opponent's attack. If we think about ourselves and how tired we are or how much your partner isn't allowing you to reach your "full potential," then nothing will feel like it works.

In our practice, we train to fill our technique with that kind of mindfulness. When we fill our entire body and technique with the proper energy and concentration, we are naturally able to use our whole body in the technique to throw or pin our opponent. When we can use our whole body in the technique, then we can begin seeing what it means to move from our "tanden," our center. When we can learn how to recognize this energy inside of our technique, we can recognize it in our opponent. When we can sense their energy, we can



effectively align ourselves, blending with and neutralizing the power in our opponent's attack.

This energy is not something that we can “get” or accumulate like a battery charge by simply conceptualizing it. We're not trying to develop the kind of supernatural powers for bending spoons or levitating coffee cups. This energy must be used in tandem with our physical movement.

The key is, once again, practicing regularly and properly to naturally begin expressing this energy. When we begin practicing aikido, the movements might seem very physical, and some students might never progress past this stage, but eventually we must see how correct form and correct movement expresses correct energy, and begin moving with the correct energy, focus, and intention. Even when we clean the dojo after class, if we're careless, if we don't have the right equipment, and if our energy is unfocused, the dojo never gets clean; on the contrary, it gets dirtier!

The most effective aikido technique also happens to be the most beautiful technique, and its proper expression and effectiveness becomes the shape of the energy.

They say even an inch-long worm has an inch-long spirit. Practice in a balanced, sensible manner that sharpens both the physical and the mental aspects of the technique. Practice to let aikido fill yourself with your true self. •

2018 Toyota Raffle Tickets Are Now Available!

For every raffle ticket sold by the dojo, we will receive a \$4.00 donation. Email Gary Illiano at illiano.gary@gmail.com or email the dojo if you want to purchase a ticket or if you want to sell them for us.

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TOYOTA Let's Go Places

Drawing of the winning ticket will be held on Monday, November 5, 2018 at Baldoria Restaurant in Little Tokyo, 243 S San Pedro Street, Los Angeles at 7 p.m. Winner need not be present.



AIKIDO TRAVEL DIARY

Old City Aikido in Philadelphia

by **William D'Angelo** Aikido 3rd Dan

During the months of June and July of this year, I had the opportunity to travel to Philadelphia for personal business reasons. When I told Ito Sensei that I would be in the city of Brotherly Love, he recommended that if I had the chance, I should train at Old City Aikido because the teacher there, Jason Perna Sensei, had a relationship with Rev. Kensho Furuya, our teacher.

On Monday night, June 11th, I went to the basics class from 7:15 to 8:30 in the evening, which was taught by Mr. John Green. As I entered the dojo, I first noticed something on the name board—very near the top after the Sixth Dan rank marker was the name “Rev. Kensho Furuya.” I immediately felt a very strong connection to the space and all the people there. It would be one more night before I learned from Perna Sensei the actual connection between our dojos and how Furuya Sensei’s name came to be on Old City Aikido’s name board.

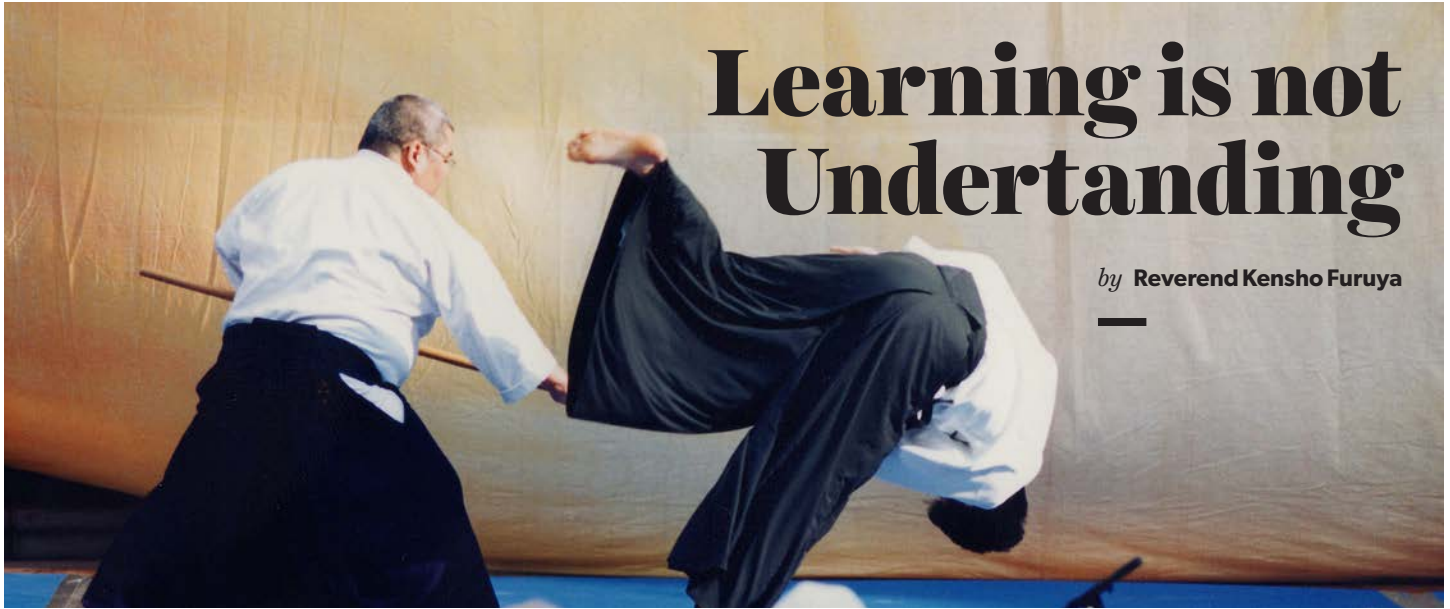
That night, the class was vigorous. I had the opportunity to train with many of the students. As you would expect, certain things were different but the same. We did ukemi before stretching. The dojo was very clean, white walled; the mat, rows of scrubbed tatami rimmed with wood; the wood framed tokonoma, encasing both a photo of O’Sensei and a sheathed sword. The class ended with the strike upon a large bell and we all bowed out. The students were all very welcoming, friendly and willing to train with an unknown visitor.

The next night—Tuesday, June 12th—I went to Perna Sensei’s general class from 7:15 to 8:30 in the evening. Perna Sensei had just returned from a seminar focusing on pins. He taught a class with various pin combinations from the standard attacks such as shomen-uchi and yokomen-uchi. Just as on the previous night, the students were very welcoming and willing to train with a visiting student.

After class, I had the opportunity to thank Perna Sensei for his hospitality and the generosity of John Green and all the students. He was very excited to have a visitor from the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. He went on to explain his deep connection with Furuya Sensei. Apparently Perna Sensei was one of the earliest members of Furuya Sensei’s online Yahoo group. Perna Sensei told me that he found much guidance and strength through the group and through Furuya Sensei’s words. At one particular time, Furuya Sensei had been pivotal in assisting Perna Sensei. Because of this closeness he grew to feel for Furuya Sensei and to honor the memory of Furuya Sensei’s passing, he had placed Furuya Sensei’s name on Old City Aikido’s name board where it now rests.

Knowing that Furuya Sensei was watching over me, I felt inspired to train hard, be respectful and remember to be kind.

I was fortunate enough to get to train again at Old City Aikido in July. I attended the basics class on Monday July 9th with John Green. On Tuesday July 10th, I went to Perna Sensei’s weapons class which focused on aiki-ken kumi-tachi. I look forward to training there next time I am in Philadelphia. •



Learning is not Understanding

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

In Zen, I see that many students seem to think that learning comes suddenly, totally and profoundly—this is most likely due to reading too many books on Zen! In Aikido class, I see the same things as students are oohing and aahing during the techniques, some students even talk of flashing lights and ecstatic feelings welling up inside of them. Sorry, I don't think so. This does not really happen at the normal level that we are all learning Aikido.

Learning does not mean understanding. We may learn something but not necessarily understand it. In the learning process, we are generally accumulating great amounts of information and input. Once we can obtain such information through our minds and bodies, a process of digestion begins. As we begin to work with this information, digesting, processing, applying, thinking, questioning, fitting together, throwing away and digesting again and again, an understanding begins to take place. This process usually takes years. At the same time, it is not a limited experience, it may continue to grow deeper and deeper as the years pass and our own experiences and learning abilities increase.

Of course, there are many other levels within these two processes depending on how much information we accumulate and how much we process and work with it—processes which may involve sudden realization or enlightenment or the attainment of wisdom or something even more profound and personal.

In the dojo, it is important to keep receiving information, so this is why I try to go deeper and deeper in the art and into finer details of each of the techniques. At the same time, the students are receiving and increasing their “learning” aspect of training. It is extremely important to go over the same materials over and over and over again to give one's self the opportunity to digest and process all of this knowledge within one's self. It is in this general process that understanding finally takes place within the individual. This is true understanding, I believe. It is always important to maintain this “form” of training within every aspect of the dojo.

Students who look only for sensations or “feelings” of understanding are usually the ones who become misdirected or confused about prac-

tice because their ideas are always vague and imaginary. Another bad practice is fantasizing and imagining various scenarios in practice. All of these methods lead to misunderstanding and confusion and eventually disappointment.

In all Aikido practice, it is important to keep the training natural and “wholesome” without venturing into the wild or exotic or innovative.

We are not playing “master” or fantasizing another world to escape to. We are actually and practically trying to learn this art called Aikido. There is a great deal of planting, nourishing, cultivation, growing and developing before the flower actually blooms. It is the same in Aikido.

Learning is not understanding. Learn, learn, learn—and understanding will naturally come as everything begins to come together within one's self. It is in this process of everything coming together within one's self that a profound and wonderful transformation takes place within us. This is the essence of Aikido training. Most students fail to realize this transformation, so everything stays on the superficial surface.

There are those who think that Aikido is as simple as making jelly—“oh, yes, I understand! Add boiling water and stir!”—No! Aikido training is not quite like that. It is not so superficial and mechanical. Learning and understanding are the living processes of growth. If we kill this process or abuse it or do not appreciate it and make full use of it, we can never grow. Like a flower that is deprived of water or sunlight or nourishment or care.

If we appreciate ourselves and all of our blessings, we will not mind at all the time and effort it takes to nourish, cultivate and develop ourselves internally.

People who think they know everything or are arrogant are only covering up a lack of self-worth. This is not healthy for us. This is why we don't spend time on ourselves—as in training. We focus on contributing and nourishing others.

Finally, one last word about learning: the easiest person to fool is yourself! Please continue to develop yourselves through Aikido. •

Editor's Note Furuya Sensei posted a slightly different version of this article to his Daily Message on April 21, 2002.

UPCOMING EVENTS

行事

July 28 Intensive Seminar

August 2

Tai Chi with Karita Sensei

August 25

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

居合道 時間割

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

The Aiki Dojo



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

Aikido World Headquarters



公益財団法人 合気会

AIKIKAI®

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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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Aikido Center of Los Angeles | Telephone: (323) 225-1424

1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012 | E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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