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**Aikido: A Way
of Life and More**

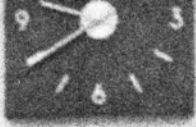
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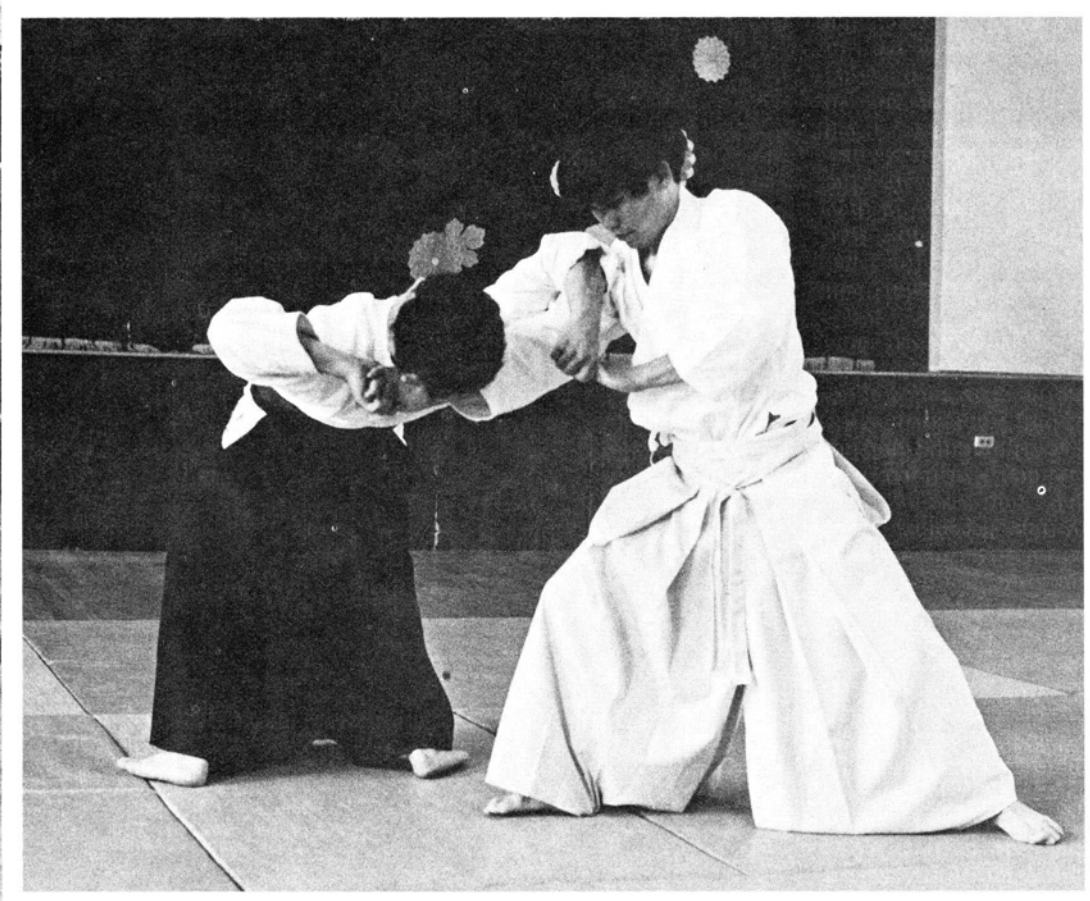
Aikido: A Way of Life and More





ASK US ABOUT OUR BANK OF TOKYO

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1975



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Kokyo Nage or "Breath Throw" against three men. It is important to blend their power into one and move as if against one man. Opponents are: Earl Cherniak, Kenneth Wakayama, Gene Anderson and Taiji Miyagawa.

The art of Aikido is spreading throughout the United States and, attracting more and more people by its unique and seemingly effortless style. Aikido is characterized by smooth, soft, harmonizing techniques and is based on blending one's power with that of the opponent and turning it against him.

"Aikido is like a bright mirror; the opponent's attack is reflected against himself. As he attacks, he is defeated by the very action of the attack. Aikido is a martial art; but first it is a way of life and more." These are the words of Aikidoist, Dan Furuya. Dan has just turned twenty-seven and when he is not working out in the dojo, he is on the job at The Bank of Tokyo in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles.

Dan, whose family comes from a long heritage of Samurai warriors, started martial arts at an early age learning Kendo and the use of the sword. "I had heard of some 'strange and mysterious' art called Aikido which attracted my attention. When an Aikido school opened near my home, I immediately joined. I was practicing Aikido when, in 1963, Master Kisshomaru Ueshiba, son and successor to the founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba; accompanied by Master Akira Tohei, came for the first time to Los Angeles to give a brief demonstration. When I saw them I was so impressed I thought I saw "true" Aikido for the first time and I was determined to go to Japan to meet and learn from the founder."

In 1966, Dan entered the USC Department of Asian Studies to major in Oriental history and philosophy. In 1968, five years after his first glimpse of Master Kisshomaru Ueshiba, he finally had the opportunity to spend a summer in Japan to study Aikido and meet the founder. Earlier that year, however; by the urging of one of his professors at USC, he applied for a fellowship to study at Harvard University for a summer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"My mind was already set to study Aikido in Japan; I never thought I would have a chance for the fellowship so I didn't take it seriously. In fact, I had completely forgotten about it. I was quite surprised when it came and I was accepted. It was decided (mainly by my parents and professors) that I should take advantage of the grant to attend Harvard and postpone my trip to Japan. I was assured over and over by everyone that Japan, Aikido and the founder would still be there the following year. If one could speak of a turning point in one's life, I think this was it for me or, at least, the beginning of it."

The summer at Harvard was an important and rewarding learning experience for me. I don't think I have ever studied so hard for a class in my life. At the time, there was nothing enjoyable about it; but now I reflect on these times with pleasant memories. It was my first journey away from home and Massachusetts was completely unfamiliar to me. Because of my intensive study load I could never venture too far away from the campus for any length of time to enjoy myself. To afford a little break between studies; I started to look for an Aikido dojo which I heard had opened about a year prior to my arrival. Even when I found the address I had a hard time locating the place. I remember the many blank and bewildered expressions I received asking people on the streets for directions to a school of Aikido. Somehow, I managed to find it. Being in a strange place and not knowing anyone was a very awkward feeling. But, in meeting the fellow Aikido students, even though they were strangers to me and I was a stranger to them, we became like old, long time friends in the first minute. This is a result of the founder's teaching. An Aikidoist can go almost anywhere in the world and still find good friends striving in the same art."

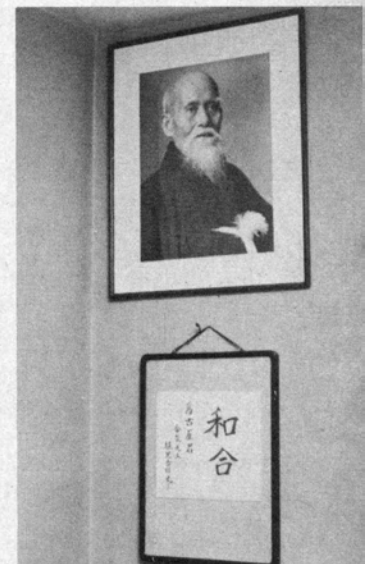
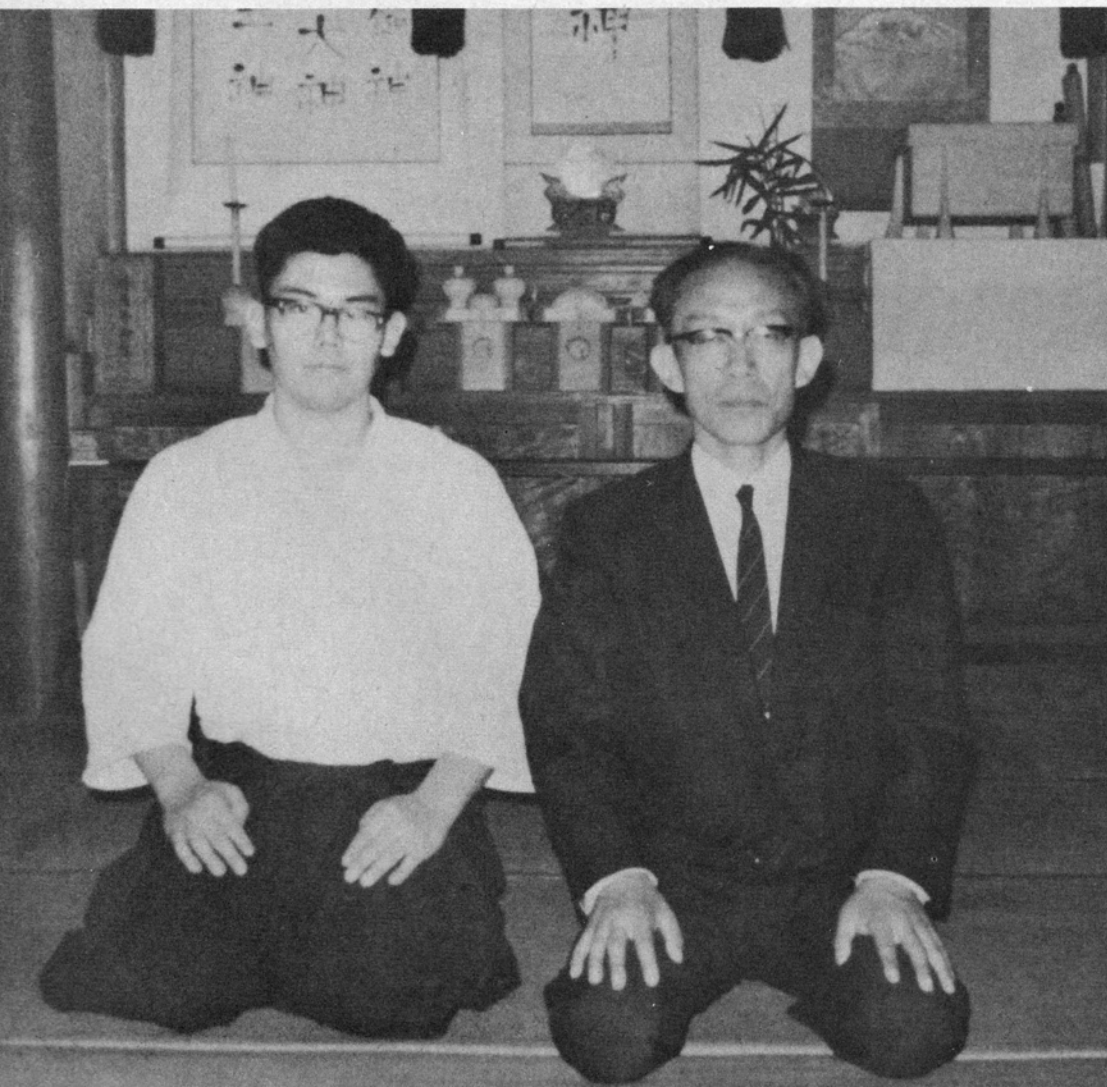
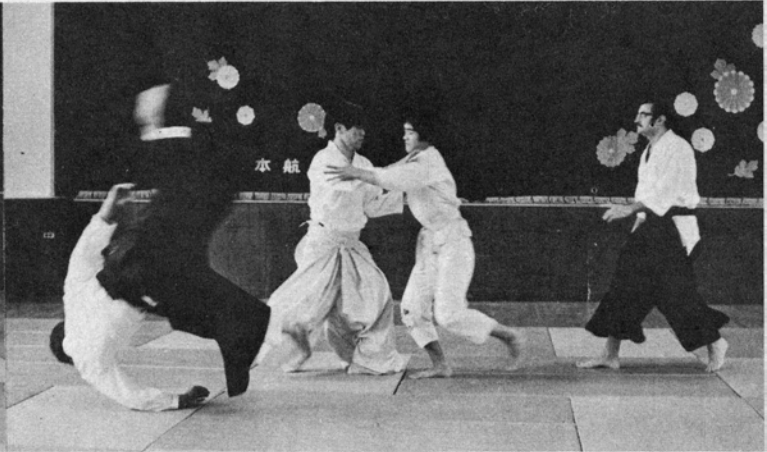
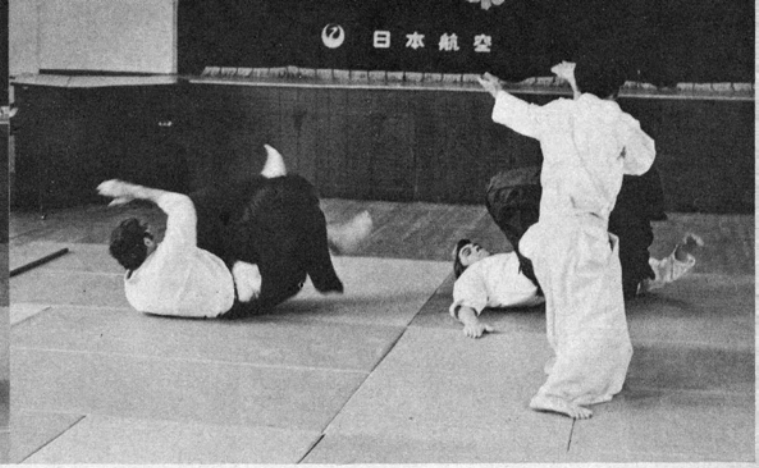
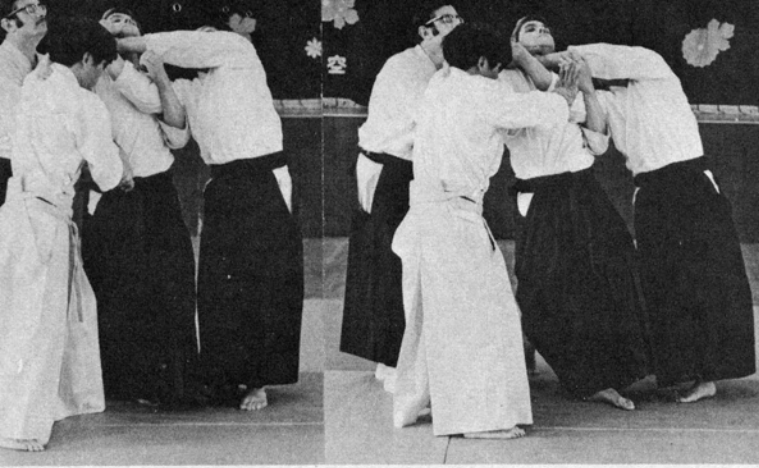
"The first couple of days I was there,

the teacher had taken off somewhere nobody knew. Although it seemed strange to me, apparently the students thought nothing of this and continued to practice by themselves. It was an old building and plaster and dust would come down from the ceiling as we practiced. I wondered what kind of Aikido teacher could be teaching here. He finally showed up one day and my doubts were cast aside. Somewhere, in the back of my mind, there was an ideal of what Aikido must be like, and suddenly, this teacher was the reality of that ideal. His name was Mitsunari Kanai, a direct student of the founder. I have met him several times since then and he is one teacher I will never forget. More than ever I was determined to go to Japan to learn, at least, to meet the founder of Aikido.

The following year in 1969, Dan was so anxious to go to Japan that his tickets and baggage were packed and ready several months before his scheduled departure. He would leave for Japan in June after he completed his finals at USC. It was on April 26, one day after his 21st birthday, while he was practicing at the dojo, word came in by long distance telephone that the founder had passed away. "I didn't and still can't say how I felt at the time. It took six years to realize a dream and in one second it seemed to fade away forever."

Dan still had the determination to study Aikido. "Maybe I really didn't believe he had died, but somehow, I still had the desire to master Aikido despite any disappointments or hardships. If somebody asked me, "Why?". I probably couldn't answer him."

"I arrived in Japan and went straight to the Aikido World Headquarters in Shinjuku, Japan. I asked for permission to be a live-in student in the way the founder taught his students. I was refused. I went back the second day and asked again. Somehow, they agreed, at least, to give me a chance. I didn't show any talent or potential at the time



In Dan's home hangs a picture of the Founder, Morihei Ueshiba. Below is a writing presented by his son, Master Kisshomaru Ueshiba. The characters mean "PEACE."

In the summer of 1969 Dan is with Master Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present head of the Aikido Foundation and successor to the Founder. This is in the Iwama Dojo in Ibaragi, the late Founder's country home.

but I knew, at least, I had the spirit. I didn't know if I would succeed or fail but, even in failure, I could learn and gain from the experience, so there was nothing to lose.

The first class of the day begins at 6:30 am and is always taught by Master Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the founder's son and successor to the Aikido Foundation. As big as the dojo was, there was so many people every morning that there was no place to take a fall. There are four other classes during the day with the last class from 7:00 to 8:00 pm in the evening. Each class is taught by a master, each a direct student of the founder and his son. "I attended each class every day. At night, I slept in a small corner of the mats and, during the day, in between classes, I spent my time sweeping, cleaning, scrubbing toilets, and washing floors as part of the discipline. I suffered from the summer heat and humidity and my whole body ached, but, somehow, as the teacher commences the class and you begin to see Aikido at its best, new energy comes out to practice and sweat some more."

"I met many great teachers and I will never be able to repay them for what they taught me. During my short stay in Japan, I realized what a hard life they must have gone through to receive the founder's direct teaching. Aikido is a precious legacy left by the founder. I will always regret that I was never able to meet or learn from him. But, in a way, each teacher seemed to have a part of him, so maybe I was able to meet him after all through his students."

When Dan was there, everyone was still suffering from the shock of the founder's passing. At the same time, however, the spirit to carry on his teaching was as strong as it will ever be. "In a crisis, seeing people coming together to support each other and work for the same cause left an unforgettable impression on me," reflects Dan.

Again, Dan met Master Akira Tohei, who was with the founder's son in 1963, when he came to Los Angeles. He is presently assigned as Head Instructor for the Illinois Aikido School and Mid-West Aikido Federation. He is 7th degree black belt, making him the highest ranking Aikidoist outside of Japan. What he teaches he lives out himself every minute of the day. There is no opening or hypocrisy betrayed in his conduct. This is the essence of living Aikido.

"I accompanied Ueshiba Kisshomaru Sensei to Iwama in Ibaragi-ken to visit the Aikido Shrine. The shrine was built by the founder and dedicated to the spirit of Aikido. Here, I learned how to pray for the founder's spirit. At the same time, I met Master Morihiro Saito, another student of the founder, who taught



Master Morihiro Saito and Dan Furuya at the Aikido Shrine in Iwama.



me the use of the sword and staff in Aikido. Every night he would start talking about the times he spent with the founder. And always, he would become so excited, he would stand up right there and start showing how the founder did this technique and that.

"I am still just a student of Aikido, I do not know how to relate its principle. This I must leave for the masters. Twenty or thirty years from now I will still be practicing and even on the day I die I still may not know what it is all about. Studying Aikido is like traveling down a road. Even though you may reach your destination the road still continues on. There is no final goal in Aikido. We may reach one goal but always we continue on to the next and the next and the next. In practicing the Aikido techniques, we may find the right way but always there is another way just a little more right. It is important not to become stale or give up but to continue to study and practice and cultivate the art. It is just like the mountain climber who finally reached the peak only to see a higher mountain on the other side. There is an ideal of perfection. Although we may never attain it, we must strive for it. That is the duty of the artist."

Dan adds, "Aikido is a martial art but first it is a way of life. If it cannot be incorporated into, it cannot be a complete martial art. To be a true martial arts, the art or technique and the individual must become one entity. Cultivation of the art of Aikido is the total unification of the technique and individual whereby the individual becomes the art and the art becomes the individual. As long as the two are separate entities, any movement or response to a given attack would be artificial, deliberated and with conscious effort. If the attack is real, you would be dead. As the individual and the art become one, the movement becomes spontaneous, natural and with no conscious effort. When this movement is employed into the technique itself, that technique becomes irresistible."

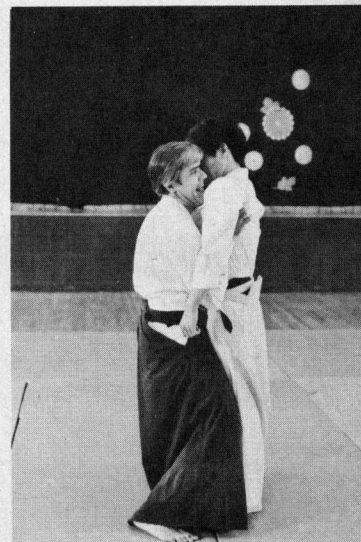
"In Aikido, we say, 'every technique has its counter, every defense has its opening.' Aikido's technique is the technique of no-technique. We practice Aikido technique as a means to learn the principle, they are not an end in themselves. Technique and principle must complete each other. Technique without principle has no meaning. Principle without technique has no function. In another sense, the technique is the external expression of the body and the principle is the external expression of the mind. When the mind and body become one; principle and technique become one. When principle and technique become one; the art and the individual become one. When art and the individual become one; the duality of victory and defeat become one. In

Aikido movement originated from the sword technique.

other words, there is no victory or defeat. Whether meeting an opponent or in a normal daily routine, you are only doing your own thing. In Chinese history, there is a story of a famous archer who gained such mastery over his art that he no longer needed a bow and arrow. He became one with the art. He could throw away the bow and arrow because, in a sense, he became the bow and arrow itself. This is the same method in the cultivation of the art of Aikido."



Dan is easily picked up by Gene Anderson

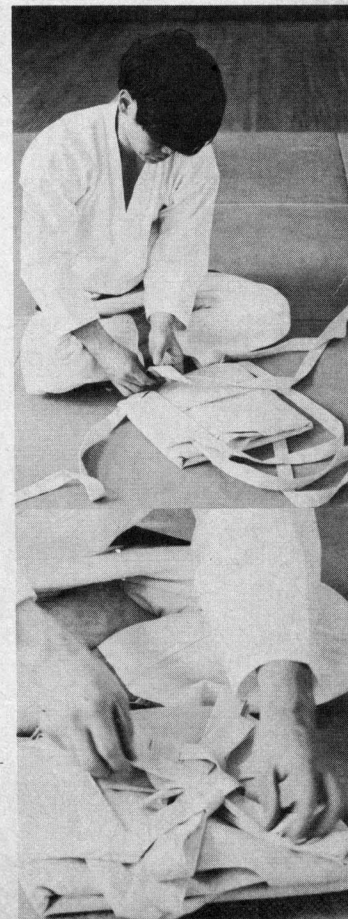


Yet with Fudo No Shisei—the immovable posture, he cannot be moved.

photos: George Foon



A part of Dan's extensive library on philosophy and martial arts.



Folding the "Hakama"—the traditional uniform of the Aikidoist.