

Aikidosphere

Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Second Doshu

Former Dojocho Aikikai Hombu Dojo

Memories of Doshu

by Y. Yamada, 8th dan

The leader of the aikido world, Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba, passed away on January 4th, 1999, at approximately 5:00 PM. He was 77. For a few years Doshu had been in and out of the hospital. It was his wish to keep his illness quiet, so as not to cause concern. It was Doshu's everlasting generosity to not have people worrying about him.

As of January 18th, 1999, Doshu's son, Moriteru Ueshiba, officially became his successor, Ni Dai Me Doshu (Second Doshu). In spite of the recent transformation, any new direction or changes in Aikikai policy will have to wait until the mourning period is over. Additionally, I would like to take the opportunity, at this time, to acknowledge and thank those kind people who sent condolences and offered support to the Ueshiba family.

A Japanese magazine asked me to write an article in Doshu's memory. Having translated it into English, I would like to give you insight into my feelings:

To all of us who study and teach aikido, the year, 1999 started off with the very sad news of Doshu's passing. The end of last year (1998), I heard news of Doshu being hospitalized, so I left New York with Sugano Sensei on December 30th to visit Doshu in the hospital. At that time, it never entered my mind that I would have to fly back and forth over the Pacific Ocean for the sad events that would follow. On January 4th, 1999, I left Tokyo after visiting with Doshu in the hospital, holding his hand, knowing that it would be the last time I would hold his hand to say good-bye. Upon my arrival at JFK airport, the sad new was waiting for me.

During the fourteen hour flight to Tokyo to see Doshu in his hospital bed, I had time to reflect on what I was feeling. I could not believe that it was only three months ago that I saw Doshu, and although he looked a bit weak to me then, he was still cheerful. So, during that flight, my mind was occupied by thoughts of the emptiness of life, how life is in vain. My mind also wandered to the past, to all the good memories of Doshu.

Many people will tell you their memories of Doshu or maybe they will write about his personality or his accomplishments. I assume that there will be people who will take this occasion to write their own thoughts and memories about Doshu. However, to me, the strongest impression I have of Doshu was that he was always a gentleman. He was a man who cared about others, especially his students. He was concerned about people right up until the end because knowing that everybody likes to spend the first three days of the new year with the family, he hung on until the 4th with his strong, strong spirit.

If you will allow me to speak simply, I was given permission to be Uchi-deshi for the Aikikai more than forty years ago. The first day of Uchi-deshi life was also my first day of aikido practice ever. It's safe to say, I didn't know west from east. Doshu was so generous. Not only did I not know anything, but being a young boy, I was also a little fresh. Yet, he never scolded us, but, let us practice freely. I have to assume that there were times, every once in a while, when he really wanted to raise his voice or punish us. He never did.

Under the strong pressure of having the great O Sensei as a father, perpetually surrounded by his father's students, and then taking on the responsibility of becoming the new leader of the aikido world, Doshu devoted his entire life establishing aikido, so that many people could enjoy practicing. In other words, Doshu was solely responsible for the expansion of aikido and opening it up to the public arena. His whole life was dedicated to this achievement. Now, through his efforts, we can practice aikido joyfully, anywhere in the world.

In the past, despite his busy schedule, Doshu paid visits to the New York Aikikai and our summer camp. It was both my pleasure and my privilege to travel around the US with him, during which time, not only did I get to know him as Doshu but, as Ueshiba, the human being. One of the memories I have of him happened one night at a hotel in Los Angeles, California. All the deshi had rooms on the same floor as Doshu. We were all hanging out together, talking in one of our rooms, when Doshu decided to retire to his room. All of a sudden, we heard him scream. Upon entering his room, we found a very young, attractive 'night princess' smoking a cigarette on his bed. For your curiosity, Doshu apparently left the door open. Doshu's statement was, "Yamada, this is your specialty to resolve!" Needless to say, I asked her nicely to leave the scene. On January 17th, 1999, more than three thousand people from all over the world gathered together to pay their last respects to Doshu. I could hear every one of them say, "Doshu, thank you very much." As I held Doshu's hand in the hospital, I wished he would perform shihonage on me one more time. As I'm writing this, white

powder is falling from the sky, out my office window.

Doshu memorial held in Tokyo

By Liese Klein

Thousands of Aikido faithful came to the Aoyama Funeral Hall in Aoyama, Tokyo, on Sunday, January 17 to attend the funeral of Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba.

Teachers and practitioners from around the world paid their respects to Doshu, most waiting for two to three hours in lines that stretched around the block. Students in uniform stood beside the flags of their respective universities, with the tops of the flagpoles covered by caps as a sign of mourning. Visitors from Asia, Europe, North America and South America waited patiently in lines to place small, green branches entwined with paper on a table and bow silently before a Shinto altar, over which hung a large portrait of Doshu.

At a service inside the chrysanthemum-filled hall, former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu made a short speech, followed by farewell speeches from Hombu teachers and family members. The ceremony ended with chanting by Shinto priests and a procession of family members and priests left the funeral hall around 4 p.m. The family left in two black limousines, passing by a line of mourners in single file, dressed in black.

The following day, a notice was posted at Hombu Dojo naming Moriteru Ueshiba, grandson of O-Sensei, as the new Doshu of worldwide Aikido.

1/6/99 UPDATE - Hombu dojo has released the following informaion.

Aikido World Headquarters: Kisshomaru Ueshiba Doshu Obituary Mr. Kisshomaru Ueshiba passed away on January 4th, 1999 at the age of seventy-seven. The funeral ceremony and public farewell rite will be performed as follows.

Funeral Ceremony

Date and Time January 7, 1999 (Thursday) at 12:30 (pm)

Location Hombu Dojo

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Public Farewell Rite

Date and Time January 17, 1999 (Sunday) at 13:00 (pm)

Location Aoyama Funeral Hall

Address 2-33-20, Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Phone + 81 3 3401 3653

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The official events scheduled in January like annual Kagamibiraki, New Year party, etc. will be cancelled this year to mourn over the loss of the Doshu.

New Doshu will take office after the Directors Board of Aikikai Foundation to meet shortly and the public farewell rite to be held on 17th January.

Further information will be provided from time to time.

Moriteru Ueshiba

Chairman

Aikikai Foundation

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1/5/99

The world Aikido community is deeply saddened by the passing of Aikido Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba at 5:30pm on January 4 in Tokyo.

Doshu, son of Aikido Founder Morihei Ueshiba, O-Sensei, embodied the principles and ideals we hope to attain through our practice of Aikido. His technique and movement were admired by Aikidoists of all levels for it's beautiful, elegant simplicity and purity of form.

Doshu was a major formative influence on Aikido's Shihan, many of whom are now enroute to Japan. The loyalty and respect he engendered in Shihan and students everywhere formed the foundation for the continuing development of Aikido over the past thirty years.

Perhaps his most important achievement was his contribution to the international development of Aikido. Under his leadership, Aikido was able to grow and flourish throughout the world. He tirelessly worked to create the unity that exists in the international Aikido community today.

In addition to being the leader of Hombu Dojo and the world Aikido community, Doshu was recognized by the larger society and governments around the world for his contributions to humanity. He received numerous awards and honors from his native Japan, as well as other countries, including France, Brazil and Spain.

A series of events will mark this sad occasion. There will be a ceremony for the family and close friends on January 6. The Hombu Dojo funeral for Doshu will take place in Tokyo on January 7 at 12:30pm. An official formal funeral will take place on January 17.

Doshu's passing will be mourned by the Aikido community. He has been and will remain an inspiration to all of us.

Aikido Online will continue to share news concerning Doshu with everyone in the Aikido community. If you have information you'd like to pass along please contact our editorial staff.

For now, we would like to honor Doshu's memory with a collection of photographs. We hope soon to present more material on the life of Aikido's second leader.

Photos courtesy of Aikido, The Spirit of Aikido by Doshu and The Founder of Aikido Memorial Photo Collection.