



KEGANIN NO SENSHI AIKIDO

MORIHEI UESHIBA Soldier, Warrior, victim of CRPTSD

One of the facts of O Sensei's life, which often gets overlooked, is that he was a soldier who served in combat as Corporal and was promoted to Sargent. He lived in the arena of warfighting for eighteen months in the Russo-Japanese war.

In his book, *INVINCIBLE WARRIOR*, John Stevens writes;

Upon the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, several of Morihei's superiors recommended a career in the military for the gung-ho soldiers, offering to sponsor him as a candidate for the Military Officers Training School. Yoroku [Morihei's father] was opposed to this course of action for his sole heir and Morihei himself was troubled by what he had witnessed on the battlefield. On the Japanese side, much of the fighting consisted of human wave attacks, which always involve the reckless expenditure of human lives. Many years later, in 1962, Morihei stated in an interview, "I enjoyed being in the military, but I innately felt that war is never the solution to any problem. War always means death and destruction and that can never be a good thing." Such an attitude was rare. In defeating Russia, Japan had scoured another victory over a much larger country, this time a Western power, and a tide of euphoric nationalism swept over the nation. Distinguished service in the military as an officer was one of the highest honors a young man could hope for.

Morihei rejected that course of action, however, and returned to Tanabe as a civilian in 1906. The next few years were very trying for Morihei. He fell into great spiritual torment: he disappeared for days at a time, either by shutting himself up in his room to fast and pray or by hiding out in the mountains, madly swinging his sword for hours and hours. He was uncommunicative with his family and friends and prone to anguished outbursts, so much so that his family worried about his sanity.*

Today, these would be recognized as the symptoms of Combat Related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, CRPTSD.

Before the war, Morihei was recognized as a master of most styles of martial arts in Japan at the time. After the war ended, Morihei put these considerable martial arts skills aside and eventually turned to the calming, nonviolent world of farming. It was also during this time that he joined the Ōmoto-kyō movement. But I believe it was also during this period that Morihei's martial arts mastery and commitment to Budo, his indomitable will, and his deep spirituality enabled him to resolve his own issues and find a way through what I call his CRPTSD. He was able to see that there was a possible path for him to peace through the proper application of martial disciplines. His strength of character and morality obligated his development of a way to bring this path to a world committed to warfighting and a universal suffering of CRPTSD.

His search started with Daito-Ryu Aikijujutsu. Within this style, he organized his own form of aikijujutsu, which he called Aiki Bujutsu. He later used this as a starting point from which to

create his own martial art, which he then renamed Aiki Budo. Ueshiba incorporated his mastery of other ancient martial arts, adding elements of many of these, including swordsmanship and kito-ryu ju jutsu, and blended these with many techniques of his own. Emphasis was always placed on using ki, or centered inner power, to increase a person's strength. The final iteration of his martial art he named ai-ki-do, "way to a unified spirit". Throughout this path of developing Aikido, it appears that he was always striving for a way to more peacefully resolve conflict. In keeping with this, I believe that O Sensei intends the practice of Aikido technique to be a pathway for developing that calm, centered, internal peace which we can then take into the world as a way to promote peace.

I believe that every great philosophy, every significant idea which has played a role in the development of humanity, of human nature, has come from a deep, very personal place in one individual, who sees the positive effect this will have on the world and has the strength of character, commitment, perseverance and entrepreneurial drive to bring it to the world. Ueshiba, O Sensei, found this inner well-source and had that drive.

O Sensei has said that Aikido is a way to bring peace to the world, but one cannot bring peace to the world without first achieving peace within oneself. However, to only achieve inner peace, without then offering this pathway to the world, is not at all in keeping with the life and the teachings he expressed through his Aikido. We do not have to be combat veterans to achieve, or even understand, the centered, calm, peaceful state which can come from the proper practice of Aikido. Likewise, we do not have to have an advanced rank to make a sincere effort to expand that inner peace, to offer it to those suffering from trauma, to bring it to organizations involved in striving for peace, to make our own sincere effort to bring peace to the world.

This is not some timid, wishy-washy, peace-love-good-vibes offering. For all its gentle, flowing movement and philosophy of conflict resolution rather than fighting and aggression, Aikido is a martial art; tough-minded, vigorous and powerful. Our efforts at bringing this vital form of peace to our communities and the world must also be as strong and resolute. At times it may seem as if we slide two steps back for every step forward and, sometimes, appearing locked on a plateau, feels like that is as far as we can possibly go. Most of the time the top of the mountain will disappear in the clouds and every inch of the way up will seem enshrouded in a thick, opaque fog. The whole task can be hopeless and scary. But without scary, there can't be brave. And hopeless just means finding another way up.

Shouldn't we practice technique as a way to find Aikido, rather than practice Aikido as a way to learn technique? If we practice Aikido enough to find, experience, and begin to understand what O Sensei offers us, then aren't we obliged to follow in his path and offer this powerful dynamic to our world?

Onward into the fog

**INVINCIBLE WARRIOR*, John Stevens, Shambhala Publications, Incorporated, 1999