



# Mana

The newsletter of **Hawai'i Ki Federation**

Fall 2020

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*Christopher Curtis, Chief Instructor, Hawai'i Ki Federation*



*Koichi Tohei Sensei arriving on Maui, 1961.*



*O-Sensei arriving on Maui, 1961, for the dojo blessing and demonstrations.*

## Chief Instructor's Message

*by Christopher Curtis, HKF*

Hello everyone. We are happy to have this opportunity to share the MANA Fall 2020 newsletter with you. I hope everyone is safe and healthy and has been able to continue with strong Ki during these recent difficult months.

It was in 1953 that Morihei Uyeshiba Sensei, the original founder of Aikido in Japan, sent Koichi Tohei Sensei, his primary student and Chief Instructor of the Aikido Honbu Dojo in Tokyo, to spread the teachings of Aikido, first to Hawai'i and eventually throughout the Western world.

During these formative years, Tohei Sensei became the primary teacher for everyone outside of Japan. However, Tohei Sensei wanted very much for everyone in Hawai'i to meet his teacher, Uyeshiba Sensei (O-Sensei). So, even though O-Sensei was living in retirement at the time, he agreed to visit Hawai'i in 1961.

My good friend Gary Omori Sensei was a 17-year-old training with Suzuki Sensei at the Maui Dojo at the time that Tohei Sensei brought O-Sensei to Maui and has graciously agreed to share his first-hand experience with us. (See the following article.)

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## My Recollection of Morihei Uyeshiba's Visit to Maui

*by Gary K. Omori*

It was 1961 when Morihei Uyeshiba Sensei visited Maui. At the time of his visit, I was 17 years old. I was a student of Shinichi Suzuki Sensei. My father, Masaru Omori, was a black belt in Aikido at that time, and it was at his urging in 1956 that I began training in Aikido after discontinuing Judo training.

Aikido at that time was a new and intriguing martial art to many of us. We were so fascinated by the grace and beauty of the art. There were great efforts made by the first and second generation Japanese to maintain ties to Japan, and it was through the Buddhist churches' efforts to support martial arts training that these ties to the culture could be maintained and enhanced.

Aikido was taught in a building that had been owned by HC&S. This building had been relocated by the Aikido club from Pu'unene to Wailuku, and then restructured into an Aikido dojo. The building had been purchased by the Aikido Club for \$500.00 around 1958. This was through the efforts of my father who was the housing superintendent for HC&S plantation. We all

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*Curtis Sensei. . . continued from page 1*

Please take note of Omori Sensei's comments regarding everyone's response to O-Sensei's Aikido techniques during his visit. Many of you in Ki Society may have been fortunate to have Koichi Tohei Sensei's, or even your own teacher's, instruction in executing these same demonstrations that seemed so inconceivable when first introduced in those early years. Not only was O-Sensei able to execute these moves, but because Tohei Sensei was able to master the understanding of, and perhaps more importantly the teaching of mind-body unification, he was able to go on to share these abilities with many others through the years.

The thing I value so much about these recollections of Omori Sensei's is how he expresses the feeling of being a part of the beginnings of this great Aikido experiment here in this community of Maui, and how exciting and unique it was to everyone at the time. I experienced some of this for myself in those early days, and so I also know how dear it was to the Japanese community to have such a strong and distinctive Japanese art to share with everyone here in Hawai'i.

In addition, many of the excellent photographs we have of this great event were taken by Omori Sensei. You might be interested to know that some of these very pictures were later made into a book, which several students and I presented to Nobuyoshi Tamura Sensei in 2009, (just 2 years before his passing), at his home in Provence, France. Tamura Sensei had been otomo to O-Sensei during that visit to Maui, and Suzuki Sensei had remained close friends with Tamura Sensei through the many years since. This memorial book of photos was given to Tamura Sensei in Suzuki Sensei's name. There is a copy of this book in the Shunshinkan Dojo on Maui.

I want to thank Gary Omori Sensei for sharing this experience with us. ♪



*Maui's old dojo, dedicated in 1961 and demolished in 1999 for the construction of the new Shunshinkan Dojo on the same site.*



*Maui Aikido Ki Society's members watch O-Sensei perform a Shinto-style ceremony for the formal opening. Dojo Head Instructor Suzuki Sensei is 2nd from left in front row.*

*Recollection . . . Morihei Uyeshiba Visit. . . continued from page 1*

spent many weekends converting this structure into a training hall. It was hard work and essentially a labor of love. There was a great deal of camaraderie and a sense of belonging among all the students and instructors.

It was during this time when the visit of the grand master and founder of Aikido, Morihei Uyeshiba Sensei, (affectionately known as "O-Sensei") was first discussed. His visit served as an impetus to have the building up and ready. To have the building and the Aikido place of training was indeed a great honor for all who trained in Aikido on Maui.

As the day of Uyeshiba Sensei's visit to Maui drew near, we were busy making preparations. Both Koichi Tohei Sensei and Nobuyoshi Tamura Sensei (the otomo) were the advance party, and Tohei Sensei was advising on preparations for O-Sensei's visit.

The date of arrival of Uyeshiba Sensei finally came and there was much excitement and enthusiasm. Aikido at that time was a new Art that was quite mythical, especially on Maui where the martial arts that were most commonly practiced were Judo, Kendo and Karate.

The day of the blessing of the Wailuku dojo happened on a Saturday, and there were black belts and students

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*Recollection . . . Morihei Uyeshiba Visit . . . continued from page 2*

from Honolulu, the Big Island, and Kauai. It was in the afternoon when Uyeshiba Sensei did the blessing, and it was reminiscent of a Shinto ceremony, although I learned later that it was not strictly Shinto. After the blessing, he then addressed all of us in Japanese through a translator, and what he said that day had a major impact on me. He told all of us that every day he was getting physically weaker; however, mentally and spiritually he was getting stronger.

He spoke about his vision for world peace and the need for harmony between all people. You could sense that he genuinely meant what he said. There was no doubt that Uyeshiba Sensei was totally committed and dedicated to making the Art of Aikido the art that would encourage world peace. Of course, he had witnessed much during the Second World War, and he may have been profoundly impacted by the devastation of the atomic bomb and the huge amount of human suffering inflicted on the people of Japan.

Uyeshiba Sensei did a short demonstration after the blessing with his otomo and uchideshi Tamura Sensei as his uke. Tamura Sensei attacked Uyeshiba Sensei with a bokken and was just thrown without any effort whatsoever.



*O-Sensei and his otomo, Nobuyoshi Tamura Sensei, in a demonstration inside the Maui Dojo.*

The following day was the Aikido demonstration by Uyeshiba Sensei and the yudansha from all islands. The demonstration was held at the Wailuku Gym, with the public invited. The radio station KMVI and the Maui News covered this event. I was fortunate to be able to take pictures of the grand master Uyeshiba, and with my twin lens reflex camera and Honeywell strobe flash I was able to take some black and white pictures for the Wailuku Aikido Dojo.

I had a pretty good vantage point. What stands out in my memory was this small, bearded man of 5'1 and 110 lbs holding back six men while sitting in the seiza position. These men were huge, and they could not budge him as he sat there. The first person standing over him had his hands on Uyeshiba Sensei's head, followed by 5 people in back of him trying to push him over. He also held back 5 or six men with his little finger while they tried to push him off balance as he stood in the hanmi no kamae stance (triangle of defense stance).

Koichi Tohei Sensei also did a randori demonstration, and I remember the yudansha that attacked him told me later that they were thrown so far that at times they



*Koichi Tohei Sensei demonstrates for a big Maui audience in the Wailuku Gymnasium.*

*Recollection . . . Morihei Uyeshiba Visit . . . continued from page 3*

landed on the gym floor rather than on the mats. Suzuki Sensei and Yoshioka Sensei as well demonstrated towards the end of the public demonstrations.

O-Sensei left a permanent impression on me as well as on all the people he came in contact with. I feel that my being in his presence at that time was a great gift and has helped me put my training in Aikido in the proper perspective. What impressed me most about O-Sensei was not his great gift and proficiency in the art that he brought to the world, but just the person himself. I did not sense any arrogance, just a great deal of genuine humility. I remember bowing to him outside the dojo and his putting his hands together and returning the bow. He did not ignore me or just walk past me as if on his way to his own coronation. I also felt his sense of purpose, which was world peace and using the values and principles of the art he founded as a means of attaining that ultimate goal.

O-Sensei exuded a sense of compassion, and being with him, you felt at peace and at the same time inspired. He was just nice to be around because of his kiai, or positive energy. In his martial demonstrations, he exhibited explosive power and boundless energy. Morihei Uyeshiba Sensei was truly an inspirational person. ∞



*Koichi Tohei Sensei throws Shinichi Suzuki Sensei, Maui Head Instructor, in a demonstration in the Maui Dojo.*



*Maui instructors, students and other community supporters of Aikido gather around O-Sensei and the Shinto priest at the occasion of the dojo dedication. On far left, front row, is Suzuki Sensei. Fourth from left, front row, is Koichi Tohei Sensei.*

## HKF Dan and Den Promotions

On September 19, a unique Ki test was given at Maui Ki-Aikido's Shunshinkan Dojo. Curtis Sensei gave Fincher Sterling his Joden test, and because our dojo is still not open for training, we conducted it carefully conforming to CDC guidelines. Watching in the dojo were just 10 MKA members, everyone masked and seated on the mat 6 feet apart. However, via a laptop and Zoom, Aikido friends from Maui to Europe were able to watch and congratulate Fincher at the end of his very good test. It was another chapter of the story of how we are keeping in connection and continuing to foster camaraderie while we must stay apart.

A month later on Oct. 17, Prakash Mackay of Maui Ki-Aikido also received and passed his Chuden test at the Shunshinkan Dojo under the same social distancing conditions. The 10 students and instructors who attended to cheer Prakash on were happy to be able to be back in our dojo, if only for a brief time. ☺



Fincher Sterling, Christopher Curtis Sensei, Prakash Mackay.

## Maui Ki-Aikido News

We are all looking forward to the day when we can return to training together in person inside our dojo. However, Curtis Sensei did find a way for us to get together in person outdoors for a weapons kata class. He held it on the large grassy lawn at his home in Ha'iku, Maui. ☺



A bokken class outdoors in the Curtis backyard.



**Did you know Maui Ki-Aikido has a YouTube channel?**

**Here's the link – please visit!**

**[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbXR7MdmWlmV\\_ZUjp3tZmxw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbXR7MdmWlmV_ZUjp3tZmxw)**

## Exploring *Ki-Aikido on Maui, A Training Manual* with Tracy Reasoner Sensei.

The revised Fourth Edition of *Ki-Aikido on Maui, A Training Manual* was completed in 2019 by its author Christopher Curtis Sensei. It attempts to share with the world the teachings of Koichi Tohei Sensei, interpreted through the many years of Ki-Aikido instruction by our Maui Ki-Aikido founding teacher, Shinichi Suzuki Sensei. However, Curtis Sensei is quick to say that, for 37 years and three previous editions, the book has become more and more his personal take on the teachings, and in this latest edition, includes the influence of Shinichi Tohei Sensei. Therefore, this book has been a concerted effort to honor the Ki Society teaching itself through the many years and four editions, as it is taught in the Maui Shunshinkan Dojo.

In this issue of MANA, we interview Tracy Reasoner Sensei of Maui Ki-Aikido. He's teaching an online class focusing on the new, 4th edition of the Manual. His Zoom class is open to all and is live on Mondays (from 6:00 to 7:00 pm HST in Hawai'i).



MANA: Your class discusses the teachings in Curtis Sensei's *Ki-Aikido on Maui: A Training Manual*, 4th Edition. How would you explain this unique book's impact?

Tracy Reasoner: Well, the first Manual that I had was the 2nd edition. That was 1997, the year I first met both Suzuki Sensei and Curtis Sensei, where I was training in Arizona with Kirk Fowler Sensei and Phillip Nagasawa Sensei. Suzuki Sensei came to teach us, with Curtis Sensei as his Otomo. They brought a case of books for us to sell and use. This edition was the first time the Manual had been released outside of Maui. For many, this was the first time a lot of this information had been available to those not attending World Camp in Japan.

At the time of the 2nd edition, Aikido in America was not the "stone age," like what Suzuki Sensei was up against, but more like the Wild West. For us, where I was training, some instructions existed, such as the first sets of Taigi Arts, some essential Japanese vocabulary with definitions, how to bow to the shomen, etc.. Still, various teachers would come along, and a different method would be shown, leaving people scratching their heads trying to decide which to do or what was "correct." This book was excellent for those like me who were new to Ki-Aikido. There had been very little information available in print. The only way to obtain any further information was by attending seminars. Students then had to rely on the notes we took at a seminar, trusting that we did not edit out things we did not like or failed to hear. There were videos and books, but most were from the Aikikai or were philosophical. There was no one source to get all the essential information needed for a new Ki-Aikido student.

The 3rd edition of the book added information and clarified other things. I know this edition was the most widely used, as this was released at the time of the new dojo opening, and more students became aware of this work. The photo with Suzuki Sensei on the cover doing Kokyu-dosa with a student from Lynn Curtis's children's class was the epitome of the Aikido spirit taught on Maui.

I say this because earlier, I described my thoughts on Suzuki Sensei's style to Curtis Sensei. I referred to it as

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Tracy Reasoner . . . continued from page 6

“Combat style Aikido,” using the only references I had at the time from my military experience. He and Suzuki Sensei corrected me immediately, saying that Aikido is the practice of non-dissension, so it is not combative at all. That discussion turned my thoughts on how I was practicing at the time on their head. I was practicing Aikido with nothing but dissension.

MANA: How important is it for Ki Society members worldwide to have access to the 4th Edition?

T.R.: It provides the essential basics that are the foundation of everyone’s training, indispensable for both students and teachers. Just the section on etiquette gives one an understanding of not only what to do but how. Throughout the Zoom classes, I have been told that although they read various Manual sections, it was like hearing it for the first time. And remember, this is a new addition, where the existing text has been brought further up to date, and quite a bit of important new material has been added.

MANA: How do you use the book in your teaching?

T.R.: I use it as my go-to reference and basis for many of my beginner classes. On many occasions, I will go to the table of contents and check for a section that I have on my mind, perhaps something Curtis Sensei has spoken to me about, or even a question a student asked me. I will then read a related section for inspiration. Now, in the Zoom classes, I am teaching directly from it, chapter by chapter. It has provided us a fresh look at the Manual and allowed us in the Zoom class to discover the importance and intensification through each chapter. For example, Charles Swindoll’s “Attitude” sits right after Etiquette, and Saikontan – Chinese Philosophy sits between the chapters on Breathing and Meditation.

As a teacher, the Manual is a wealth of inspiration, while as a student, there is a plethora of information set in such a way to clear things up or inspire more questions in you.

MANA: What has been the influence of this book on you, personally?

T.R. This Manual is a constant reminder of why we train, why we make the time and effort to attend classes, seminars, and continue our practice diligently. Of course, using the book is not and should not be considered a substitute for attending class.

It’s a helpful tool when we cannot attend class or attend seminars. It has taken a lot of blood, sweat and tears to put together not only by Curtis Sensei, the primary author, but by Suzuki Sensei and Tohei Sensei for their teachings it contains. Overall, by making this an annual read, you are honoring not only your practice but the teachers who came before you.

MANA: How has it been for you, teaching about the book on Zoom?

T.R.: Well, I was a bit nervous, of course, but after I just started talking and connecting with everyone, it was like we were sitting around a table having a discussion. It reminded me of the get-togethers after class at the Maui dojo. People would discuss Aikido and what we just learned or what we may be struggling with. I arrived on Maui in 2003 after training at the Arizona Ki Society for eight years. I could never have imagined that now I am teaching a class in the latest edition of the Manual. It came to me as such a surprise as well as an opportunity when Curtis Sensei asked me. However, I don’t consider that I am “teaching” a class; I am mainly moderating a discussion on the Manual. I have enjoyed having other teachers in the class as it gives a well-rounded point of view. It has also been fun having my former assistants from the beginners’ class attend, several who knew me as a junior instructor and have commented on how much I have changed.

MANA:..Are earlier classes archived on the internet?

T.R.: All of my Zoom classes are on the Maui Ki-Aikido YouTube site.

MANA: Thank you, Reasoner Sensei, for this interview and your insightful, on-going classes on Zoom. ☺

## Caring for our beloved dojo

The Shunshinkan Dojo is being cared for by Maui Ki-Aikido members while we are, of necessity, shut down because of the pandemic. Regularly, various members arrive on their own to quietly perform jobs such as wiping the mats and sweeping the floors, pulling some weeds, making sure the plants are thriving, and generally checking up on the building and grounds. However, on a Saturday in October, a small group of masked members gathered to do a big clean-up of the yard and the inside of the dojo. ☺



The dojo cleaning gang: John Hara, Sayaka & Hana Reasoner, Ilima Loomis, Lynn Curtis, Joni Jackson, Curtis Sensei, David Hewahewa, Guilherme Sampaio and Fincher Sterling. Mele Stokesberry behind the camera.



Ilima Loomis attacked the weeds.



Lynn Curtis was on window-cleaning duty.



Joni Jackson tended the floors.



Sayaka Reasoner made the porch bench shine.

## Ki-Aikido on Maui – 4th Edition

*Ki-Aikido on Maui – A Training Manual* is the only source of Ki Society teaching details available in print or digital form. (See story, page 7.)

The 4th edition has been revised with updated information and new material, including a new Foreword by David Shaner Sensei; a new Introduction; new translations of Koichi Tohei Sensei’s “Thirteen Rules for Instructors” and “The Living Principles”; guidance for applying kaisho, gyosho, and sosho training to techniques; teachings on connecting with one’s partner; details of the latest kyu and dan testing procedures for examiners, as well as the rank requirements from 5th kyu through 5th dan; and a new teaching on “The Meaning of Aikido.”

*Ki-Aikido on Maui, a Training Manual*, 4th Edition can be purchased at Maui’s dojo (call, email, or use order form below), or obtained on Amazon Kindle or Amazon print-on-demand.

## Letting Go – Talks on Aikido

*Letting Go – Talks on Aikido* is a collection of insightful, concise essays on a wide range of topics, adapted from talks given by Christopher Curtis, 8th Dan, the Chief Instructor of the Hawai’i Ki Federation and Head Instructor of Maui Ki-Aikido in Wailuku, Maui. It’s a useful companion to the “Letting Go” lectures, podcasts and discussions available on Curtis Sensei’s blog, found at curtissensei.com.

*Letting Go – Talks on Aikido* in e-book form is available from Amazon and from Barnes & Noble Nook. A paperback copy may be ordered from Maui Ki-Aikido. See order form below.

### **To Order from the Dojo: Please write in the number of items you are ordering.**

**Ki-Aikido on Maui - A Training Manual**, 4th Ed. by Christopher Curtis Sensei ..... \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

**Letting Go: Talks on Aikido** by Christopher Curtis Sensei ..... (non-member) \$15 \_\_\_\_\_  
 (HKF members, or non HKF dojos if 5 or more copies) \$10 \_\_\_\_\_

**50 Years of Aikido in Hawai’i, A Book of Days** ..... \$10 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Perpetual keepsake calendar with historic photos that chronicle the birth, evolution and development of Aikido, including rare photos of the founders.

**Bokken Suburi DVD - Training Aid** ..... **Remastered** ..... (non-member) \$25 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Christopher Curtis Sensei performs the 8 Bokken Suburi, 10 repetitive bokken cutting exercises, Kengi 1 and 2, and Jogi 1 and 2, developed by both Soshu Koichi Tohei and Shinichi Suzuki Sensei over the past 50 years. (HKF members) \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

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# *Mana*

The newsletter of **Hawai'i Ki Federation**

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