

Another, maybe the last of the big stars of Aikido society has gone. Tamura sensei's Aikido knowledge made him a major influence in Europe and the rest of the world for the past 45 years. Senpai (the way I call him) was well known as O-sensei's uke while he was uchideshi, and needless to say he was O-sensei's otomo when O-sensei went to Hawaii almost fifty years ago. For the Japanese at that time it was a dream to go to Hawaii so all of us envied him a lot.

Senpai's high quality Aikido movements and techniques came mostly from being O-sensei's uke. Nobody can copy him and if you try to do so, it just looks so funny.

However, I tried to steal from him whatever I thought would be helpful for me.

Last March, I was with him conducting an annual seminar in Madrid and in April he noticed some change in his condition. In May and June, I paid a couple of visits to his home. During my second visit, I was so impressed by his attitude, so calm, quiet and relaxed. It looked as if he was going on a long vacation.

Senpai was already uchideshi when I became uchideshi. We spent most of the time together. During hot summer nights, we fought against mosquitoes and on cold winter nights we put our futon close to each other, but the truth was mosquitoes only attacked me and we used two separate upper futon, instead of using one futon holding tight each other all night, just in case.

In 1964, I left Japan for New York and in the fall of the same year, Senpai also left Japan with his wife for France. Senpai used to say as a joke, "I waited until you went first and show us how you can do. Now you made it, so I can make up my mind." That is not true. There is no one who has stronger confidence than he did. Because of the strong confidence he had, he not only survived but was a big success in Europe.

I am writing this article during the annual summer course in the South of France. We have been doing this seminar together almost for thirty years, so it is very emotional to me. So what comes to mind are the many good moments we had together during the seminar in many countries.

We swam in Nice surrounded by topless beauties, rode on a donkey by a cliff of the mountain in Morocco, in Marrakish, Morocco, a snake was wrapped around my neck for a photo. We flew close to Angel Falls in Venezuela in a small Cessna plane. The smell in a gym in Yugoslavia was so bad that Senpai left the gym saying, "You take care of the rest of it." We traveled in our country Japan with members. During that trip, we went to Karaoke and I had to sing duet with Senpai who had no sense of music.

Thank you so much for those wonderful memories we had together. I'm so proud of myself for being his partner.

He used to say that meeting many people through Aikido was his happiness. Keeping that word in my mind, I will do my best to deal with the people whom I might meet in my life.

I believed in a miracle but it didn't happen. However, I was very happy to know that he was in his wife's arms in the last moments. He had always been with his beloved wife, almost 24 hours a day, so he deserved that. Let me say one more time, I'm so happy for him. And I envy him just as I envied him when I saw him as O-sensei's uke. I envied him for everything he did in his Aikido.

Please come back from your vacance as soon as possible. I have a 1995 Bordeaux waiting for us. Let's drink together again.

Y.Yamada