

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

February 2014

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Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

February seems a rather special month this year. The world turns its attention to the XXII Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, the Year of the Horse officially begins, and *The Aiki Dojo* sports a lovely new banner celebrating its 40th anniversary, courtesy of friend and ACLA alumnus Alex Garcia. While I believe we can all agree how lovely it looks, I hope we also appreciate all the hard work and sacrifice it took Sensei over the years to build the ACLA into something sustainable. Please join me in showing your appreciation to Ito Sensei and Watanabe Sensei for their efforts by coming to class and training hard. A card, flowers, and chocolates might seem nice to give on Valentine's Day, but they fall short if we've not made the effort day after day to demonstrate how much our loved ones mean to us. Therefore, if we believe we've benefitted from the dojo in some way, let's come show our love for ACLA by demonstrating what our training has given us.

This issue of *The Aiki Dojo* concerns itself with matters of the heart as well, so to speak. One of our students shares his on again-off again "romance" with Aikido and his training, as well as some insights – perhaps even wisdom – he has gleaned along the way thus far. Ito Sensei writes about the legendary Miyamoto Musashi and his training manifesto as written in the *Dokkodo*, and urges us to find inspiration in such codes and the people who wrote them in our own more humble pursuit of the Way. Our in-house food expert

Maria Murakawa once again explores her favorite subject and waxes poetic about a well-loved Los Angeles institution and alleged home of a rather famous sandwich. And as is his wont, Sensei pays us a visit from the archives to admonish us on how to get more out of our training by giving more of ourselves when in class, and by so doing capture a hint of what lies at the heart of technique – the part we cannot see. We also share photographs of our annual *tsuito hoyo* for Nidai Doshu, as well as the annual *Kotohajime* performance, hosted by our friends at the Aratani Theatre and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. All this, along with our preliminary schedule for our annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar coming in April, points to how much we have happening this year. I hope you enjoy this issue and that you join us for some of the many milestone events we'll offer to mark this significant anniversary year.

Speaking of which, many hands make light work, so please plan to attend our members meeting on Saturday, February 15th. You'll get a chance to hear about projects in the works, and how you can help if you have the skills, time, and interest. I'd also like to take this opportunity on behalf of the board of directors of The Furuya Foundation to thank all those who donated their Saturday last month to help with our very successful foundation benefit dance. By all reports everyone enjoyed themselves immensely, and our volunteers got to spend time together socially as well. This year, let's try extra hard to do our best for ACLA, so that it can celebrate another milestone 40 years from now. Thanks for all you do. I'll see you on the mat!

Upcoming Events

February 15th
Dojo meeting

February 17th
Dojo Closed: President's Day

February 22nd
Instructor's intensive

March 8th
Sensei memorial

March 29th
Instructor's intensive

April 25-27th
O Sensei memorial seminar

April 26th
O Sensei memorial service

Inspiration and Integrity
by David Ito, Chief Instructor

Today more than ever we feel buffeted by the forces of life's daily grind and it can seem hard to know the right way to act at any given time. We sometimes suppose that in the past, practitioners of the Way may have had it easier because they had fewer distractions, thus allowing them to live simpler lives. I would argue that in spite of having less their burden felt just the same, with the notable exception of people actually trying to kill them. So, did they do it? Why does it seem so much harder to follow the Way today, even with all our advancements in science, technology, and knowledge? I really don't have the answer. Miyamoto Musashi, however, left behind a set of maxims by which he lived his life, which might give us a clue as to how to live ours.

Miyamoto Musashi is considered Japan's greatest warrior and even he struggled with following the Way despite all his talent and success. Just before his death he bestowed upon his student Terao Magonojō two manuscripts: the *Go-Rin-No-Sho* (*The Book of Five Rings*) and *Dokkodo* (*The Way That I Go Alone*). Scholars of the subject consider both texts as evidence of Musashi's greatness and consider them to verify his existence. The *Go-Rin-No-Sho* discusses swordsmanship and strategy as well as the character of one who follows the Way, but the *Dokkodo* seems to be Musashi's personal set of maxims by which he strived to live his life. The *Dokkodo* gives us some insight into Musashi's struggles with living the Way and to what he believed to be the way to live.

Over the years Musashi's *Dokkodo* has given rise to many interpretations, with the main confusion surrounding exactly how many tenets he actually wrote. In 1909 a book about Musashi, considered the gold standard on the subject, appeared



An original photograph of Musashi's Dokkodo

Dokkodo
(by Miyamoto Musashi)

- I will not oppose the ways of the world.
- I will not seek pleasure.
- I will have no preferences.
- I am nothing compared to the world.
- I will be free of desire.
- I will not regret what I have done.
- I will not be envious.
- I will not be saddened by separation.
- I will not resent or complain about my actions or others.
- I will not become attached to love or relationships.
- I will not indulge in beautiful or elegant things.
- I will have no preference for where or how I live.
- I will have no preferences for good food.
- I will not keep things that I do not need.
- I will trust myself and never be superstitious.
- I will train with my tools and engage in nothing else.
- I will die without regret following the way.
- I will not covet wealth or possessions in my old age.
- I will respect Buddha or the gods but I will not rely upon them.
- I may sacrifice my life, but I will never sacrifice my honor.
- I will never deviate from the Way.

and it only listed 19, but we can see from the picture of the original manuscript a total of 21 precepts. Sensei placed a plaque in the *tokonoma* that he got from a shop at Musashi's grave site which only shows 19. Yet regardless of the number, hopefully his personal maxims can help guide us in our lives.

We can never be Miyamoto Musashi just as we can never be O Sensei or even Sensei. All we can be is inspired by them as to how we live our lives. They went through countless trials and tribulations in order give us the opportunity to learn from not only their mistakes, but their insights as well. We will always have a myriad of excuses as to why we cannot train, but there exists only one thing that can keep us training even when we would rather not – integrity. Integrity is the trait that ensures all others. We will do something, no matter how unsavory, because it lies on the path that we chose to follow. Musashi's 21 precepts amount to nothing

more than his commitments to live a life of integrity. Sensei's retort to students whenever they talked about the obstacles to training was always, "Just train." People who follow the Way have struggled with this deceptively simple statement since the dawn of time. The more I learn, the more I see that we are all the same and that our struggles are all the same. The Way is simple, but we make it hard because we fill our lives with so many distractions and excuses. Please make the most out of your lives and get the most out of your training. *Odaiji ni* (take care)!



A plaque of the Dokkodo that decorates our tokonoma

Our Neighbors, Our Food

by Maria Murakawa, Aikido 3rd Dan

Savoring the Past Through a French Dip Sandwich

I think in our dojo it seems we like to embody the past, in that we try to keep Sensei’s Aikido alive in the present, and hopefully preserve it for generations to come. Interestingly enough, we have a like-minded neighbor, perhaps older (66 years older to be exact) but no less dedicated to preserving a bit of the culinary history of LA. **Philippe**

the Original, located less than a half a mile away from ACLA, is an institution dedicated to one thing – serving the French dip sandwich the way it has done since 1908, when the restaurant opened. As soon as you walk in and cross the sawdust-strewn floor, you are greeted by long lines of people waiting to place their orders, deli case as long as a city bus, a jar of pickled eggs that you might suspect is as old as the restaurant, the “carvers” who prepare your sandwich wearing the same uniforms from 50 years ago, and long communal tables where people from all walks of life sit down to grab a meal, much like I would imagine it was in years past.

So, two things you have to order here: the French dip (ask for it to be double dipped, you won’t be sorry) and the baked apple (when in season from October to June). The biggest decision is choosing which meat – beef, pork, ham, lamb, or turkey – and whether to add cheese. The *au jus* is not served on the side, but can be single- or double-dipped, or “wet” by the server. Pick one of the wooden booths straight out of train station legend lining the dining hall for more privacy or a communal table with stools. Black and white photos of trains adorn the wall, and there is a candy counter near the exit, adding to the historical atmosphere.

Biting into a Philippe’s French dip seems nostalgic in itself. It huddles humbly on the plate, just a French roll with meat (and cheese if you so choose) expertly dipped in the juices of roasted



Philippe The Original

1001 N. Alameda St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 628-3781



Nostalgic seating with communal tables



The French dip sandwiches



Potato salad



Baked apple



Apple crumble pie



Boysenberry pie

meats. It is a simple meal recalling simpler times. One bite and you imagine for a moment Formica tables and your mom wearing an apron, making home-cooked food which took all day to make, in a kitchen with avocado-colored tiles, and your sandwich was just an after-school snack to tide you over until everyone sat down to a family dinner. The size of the sandwich looks modest, yet the carvers layer the meat densely in the crusty roll. Although the prices have gone up since the time that it opened, it’s still just \$6.75 for a beef dip. What remains priceless is the flavor of marbled meat, still pink from the roast, nestled in a sturdy loaf and glistening with its *au jus* glory. The sandwich comes cut in half, easy to eat, and does not fall apart despite having been dipped. For dessert opt for the baked apple (\$2.50). It’s simply an apple baked with cinnamon and sugar, yielding creamy fruit on the inside and a tender skin saturated with roasted flavor on the outside. It tastes as satisfying as and feels less filling than an apple pie.

This is food before the fattening of America, before meals served at restaurants doubled in size over the course of 50 years, and vegan restaurants popped up to act as a Band-Aid. As the gentrification of

Downtown LA spreads ever more east, food like this seems more relevant than ever before. It marks a moment in time we can never go back to, but reminds us of our roots. It offers a brief respite from our busy lives and shows us a glimpse of how people lived not so very long ago. I never thought eating a sandwich could take me back in time, but Philippe’s succeeded in doing just that.

Nidai Doshu Memorial Service *Tsuito Hoyo* 回忌法要



**Nidai Doshu
Kisshomaru Ueshiba
1921-1999**



O Sensei Memorial Seminar

April 25-27, 2014

April 25th (Friday)

6:30-7:30 PM: David Ito
8:00 PM: No host dinner

April 26th (Saturday)

9:00-10:00 AM: David Ito
10:15-10:50 AM: Ken Watanabe
11:00 AM: O Sensei Memorial service
12:00 PM: Lunch
1:15-2:15 PM: Ken Watanabe-Weapons
2:30-3:15 PM: James Doi
6:30 PM: Seminar social

April 27 (Sunday)

9:00-10:00 AM: Ken Watanabe-Weapons
10:15-10:50 AM: Santiago Almaraz Garcia
11:00-11:45 AM: TBA
12:00-1:00 PM David Ito

Schedule subject to change without notice

**Everyone is welcome to attend
\$100.00 per person**



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The Furuya Foundation

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.



KOTOHAJIME 2014:

The First Performance of the New Year at the JACCC
January 4, 2014
At the Aratani Theatre



Japanese American Cultural & Community Center
Where Arts, Culture & Community Come Alive!



So Many Failures

by Edward Ecolango, Aikido 3rd Kyu

Nearing my two-year anniversary of joining the Aikido Center of Los Angeles to begin my training I find myself reflecting on the coldest, hardest times of my tenure. Remembering all too vividly my blunders and oversights, it seems that these moments overshadow all the other markers in my young career. Yet moments of success and smoother days of training still punctuate the vast stretches of otherwise rocky road. A smile comes to my face as I realize that it indeed has been a couple of long years; and although thoughts of quitting and picking up yet another hobby, passion, or part-time gig never fully leave my mind, I rejoice in the fact that I have not stumbled across this threshold but rather am striding across it with the eager hopes I can make it to 20, 30, or even 40 years of Aikido training, just like some of the senior students.

In my earliest days at ACLA, I found a single practice hard enough and, after throwing myself into that hour of training, once class ended I would sulk back into old habits and thoughts that led to nowhere. I used to seek external motivating factors because I often thought I lacked the strength to motivate myself; I really believed I didn't have what it took to keep going. One day, somewhere down the line, I started to believe in my teachers, my seniors, and most importantly, myself. "Be strong, be humble, and always keep going": so urged the last scroll Sensei had hung up just before he died all those years ago. Another quote from Mark Twain, the prolific

"This dojo was built not on success, but on so many failures. But by persevering, we have managed to come this far. I am so grateful."

master of American letters, often comes to mind as I retell myself just to keep going, day after day, practice after practice: "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."

The very first time my name appears in the dojo log book, is the same date as my fiancée's birthday. My Aikido anniversary is her day as well, so now it seems impossible to forget the day! I chuckle every time I think about it. The best gift I can give her on all of her future birthdays is to be the best person I can be. Whether that means a very insightful and thoughtful gift or a well planned



outing, the execution of any of these things falls back to my training. How well can I be mindful of the details, to what degree will I go to perfect and polish her special day? It's a pretty interesting thing to think that on a day like that I will definitely have to demonstrate the level of my training. How well do I blend and harmonize, how well do I care for her?

My outlook no longer feels bleak, at least not at this very moment, since thoughts of negativity never truly leave my mind. The Dalai Lama offered some thoughts on the subject which stick with me: "The way to overcome negative thoughts and destructive emotions is to develop opposing, positive emotions that are stronger and more powerful."

I have recently developed a strong sense of where I am going and who I will become, all because of the progress I have slowly, painfully made. As we near to the coldest, hardest months in the year it will seem difficult to bring ourselves to the dojo and even more difficult to train hard. At times we will feel discouraged, just like everyone who came before us and everyone will come after us. Take solace in the fact that we are not alone, not even close. If someone like me can make it two whole years (and that says a lot), I truly feel anyone can do it. Not surprisingly, Sensei said it best in *Kodo: Ancient Ways*: "This dojo was built not on success, but on so many failures. But by persevering, we have managed to come this far. I am so grateful." I too, feel grateful for everyone at the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

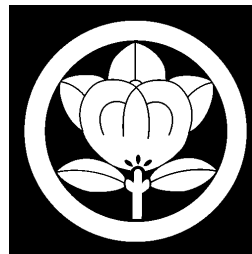


Orange County Aikikai's 50th Anniversary Seminar

April 11-13, 2014

For more information: <http://www.ocaikido.com/>

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Movement, Mind, and Spirit

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

One of the most significant differences I see in the way we practice Aikido today is that there appears to be less emphasis on *tai-sabaki* among many modern practitioners. In normal practice, the attack is either too static or non-existent so the *nage* or *tori* are not compelled to move their bodies effectively. Generally, we simply stand there and apply the technique, grabbing our partner's hand or wrist from a static position or simply holding out our hand to "represent" a blow. We do not even move with our whole body; the attack is usually never there.

In my own training experience, *tai-sabaki* was emphasized more than any other point in each technique. Perhaps it may be due to the particular teachers I had, but even today I cannot see the technique without proper *sabaki* movement. We must be careful in our practice to remind ourselves constantly, or keep in mind, the very fundamentals of Aikido upon which everything else stands. In our practice, we begin, after a while, to take everything for granted: we become concerned with just falling down instead of taking *ukemi*, we do not attack well because it seems too much trouble or we feel too anxious to have our own turn at throwing. Many times, we don't care or are not mentally alert in practice. Especially in a martial art, and even more importantly in Aikido, we can never neglect the mental and spiritual aspect of our training as well as physical movement and techniques.

It is said that "You can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs," "You can't learn to swim without getting wet," and sometimes, "You can't learn the danger of fire, without getting burned by a match." I definitely think that in a reasonable manner, we can develop better attacks in Aikido, to develop better Aikido practice. As in *shomenuchi* or *munetsuki*, we do not have to deliver a crushing blow to the head, but we can make contact and apply a little force to compel our partners to move out of the way or at least realize that if they does not move effectively, they are still stand in the

line of fire.

I have always felt that a good beginning leads to a good result. Without the proper initial neutralization of the attack, we cannot execute a good and effective technique. I think that with a more active attack in practice, we will not only move more but begin to see how truly effective Aikido techniques can be. I don't think many people will agree with me as Aikido moves away from a martial art to a more "social" activity. When I talk with martial arts instructors and masters of other disciplines, I hear the same story over and over: the general trend of martial arts is towards a sports or performance (spectator-pleasing) art, or "health"-oriented activity and thus, I think, begins to lose its edge.



Aikido should not be competition and Aikido practice should never be a competition of strength or contest to best our partner. Aikido practice, as a martial art, requires great awareness, mental alertness, and sensitivity in practice. The bottom line is that Aikido practice must always be intelligent, reasonable, positively oriented, and natural.

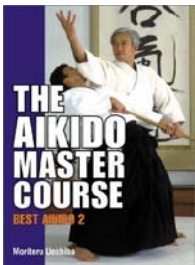
Aikido is like a *samurai* sword. We can easily see the curvature, the length, the width, the temper-line, its style, and on and on, but we cannot see the sharp edge. It is too fine.

Yet, the part that we cannot see easily is the most important heart of the sword. In Aikido, in the same manner, it is usually the part we cannot see that is most important. Actually, we can, in fact, see it; we just have to be alert and aware and constantly look for it.

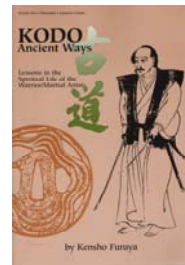
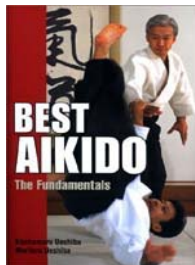
I think in my generation it was the great dream to "sit at the foot of the master" and receive the great teaching. Today, we are more innovators and creators and always trying to come up with something new and exciting. There is still nothing wrong with learning what the ancient masters learned. Please continue to train hard.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on February 14, 2002.

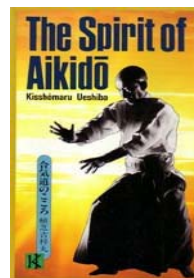
Recommended Readings:



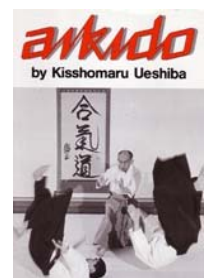
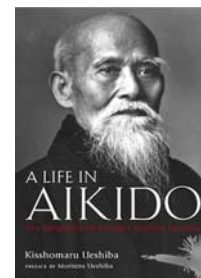
by Ueshiba Morihiro



by Kensho Furuya



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open
5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals
6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced*

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open
5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals
6:30-7:30 PM Intermediate
7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open
10:45-11:45 AM Advanced*

6:30 AM Instructor's Intensive:

*last Saturday of the month by invitation only.**

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

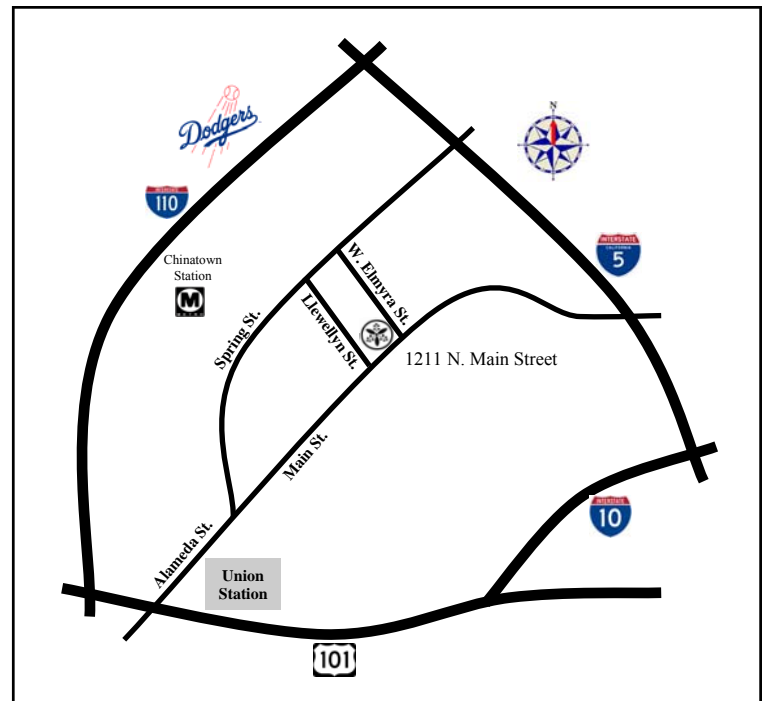
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



We are directly affiliated with:

AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

Aikido Hombu Dojo - Aikikai

17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.



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The Aiki Dojo
Official publication of
the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido Dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.

Publisher: David Ito
Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich

Finding Our Dojo

We are located at
1211 N. Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

We are across the street and one block northwest from the Chinatown Metro Station.

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:
You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.