

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 2015

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Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

Welcome to the Year of the Sheep!

This month has seen everyone returning to their regular practice schedule, now that the holiday season has finished and school and work routines bring life back to its usual rhythm. I did find our rhythm interrupted by a wonderful surprise: several readers from around the world reached out to thank us for the monthly publication of *The Aiki Dojo*, and forwarded donations to support the cost of production. While I think most people appreciate how much time we invest in putting together each issue every month, year in and year out, I also think that not many people imagine just how much money it takes to prepare each issue. Many, many thanks to our donors for their generosity. Your contributions fund our continued effort, and give us encouragement to imagine that what we do here seems helpful in some way.



Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba's meinichi memorial service on January 10, 2015.

respect and their essential involvement in traditional martial practice. Ken Watanabe considers if the wealth of martial arts information available via the Internet can help us in our training – or if it even proves to be wealth in the first place. We review a book written by two Aikido teachers, Michelle Tate and Lisa Tomoleoni, that shares the trials, tribulations, and joyful moments inherent in a life focused on *budo*. And no issue would feel complete without Sensei sidling out the archives to give us his perspective, in this case taking a look at the Chinese New Year and how the world calls us more and more to raise our global acumen. I hope you find this issue . . . well, *helpful*.

Speaking of which, please note that we'll once again host our annual benefit dance at the end of this month; you can use the flyer on page 5 to purchase tables or individual tickets. Students and friends of the dojo who live nearby, note that we can use volunteers that evening starting at six o'clock. Thanks for helping to make it a success. Take care until next time, and I'll see you at the dance!

Upcoming Events

February 28th:
Dojo benefit dance

February 28th:
Instructor's intensive

March 7th:
Sensei memorial service

March 28th:
Instructor's intensive

April 24-26th:
O Sensei memorial Seminar

April 26th:
O Sensei memorial service

May 25th:
Memorial Day: Closed

May 30th:
Instructor's intensive



Nidai Doshu
Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Our February issue examines that which might prove helpful to our training, as well as that which might seem so, but in fact can distract from proper practice and lead us from the Way. David Ito kicks things off with first principles, focusing on etiquette and

Etiquette and Respect

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Yaiba ni tsuyoki mono wa rei ni suguru.
A great swordsman surpasses all others in decorum.

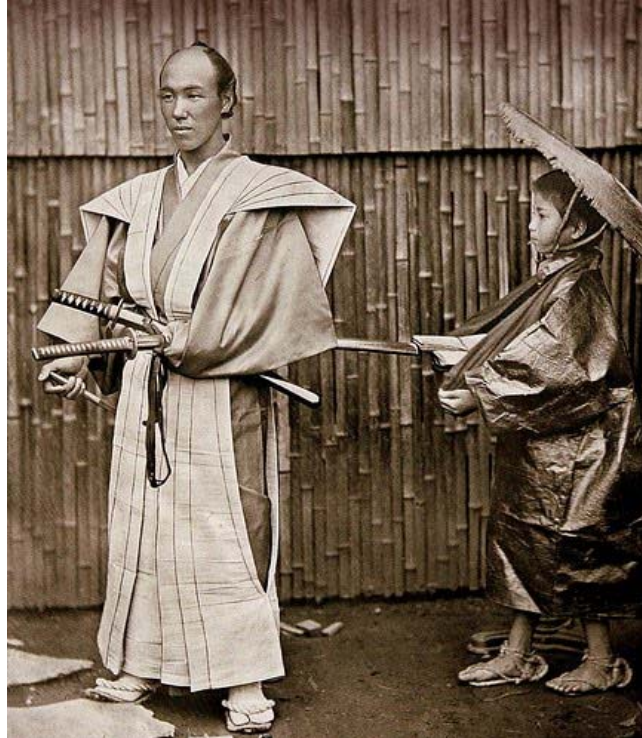
Good etiquette prevents miscommunications, while bad etiquette can cause miscommunications.

In olden times life was very cheap. For one reason or another *samurai*, especially *ronin* (master-less *samurai*), would fight each other over just about anything.

Some fought for the sake of fighting while others did it as a form of self-promotion to become a retainer under a local lord, but for whatever reason duels became very popular in the Edo period (1603-1868). In order to stay out of trouble certain etiquette developed to prevent people from falling prey to useless combat. An example of this etiquette involved people riding horses on the left side of the street, which by the way still exists today in Japan with cars. Riding on the left side of the street prevented people from “accidentally” touching another person’s sword (*samurai* wore their swords on the left side of their body, so if they approached each other from the right side of the street their swords would face each other). Touching someone

else’s sword without permission posed a huge *faux pas*. A common practice of the time to force someone into a duel involved “accidentally” touching one’s *saya*, or scabbard, with theirs. When *samurai* touched another person’s weapon, even accidentally, they had to engage them in a match even if it amounted to a harmless or careless mistake. It didn’t matter if it was a mistake or not because as a warrior or someone who followed the Way they held themselves responsible for their actions and thus anything even as slight as a touch meant they must have wanted to fight.

Fast forward to today and we as a society have lost most if not all of this warrior type of etiquette. Today, people barely say *please* or *thank you* and if they do they think of such words as the place where etiquette begins and ends. The other day I reprimanded one of my assistants and he fell asleep. I became very angry but it seemed barely a blip on the radar for him. His only retort was, “I just closed my eyes for a moment,” and he didn’t even say he was sorry. I am not sure if it’s the times or it’s just our contemporary

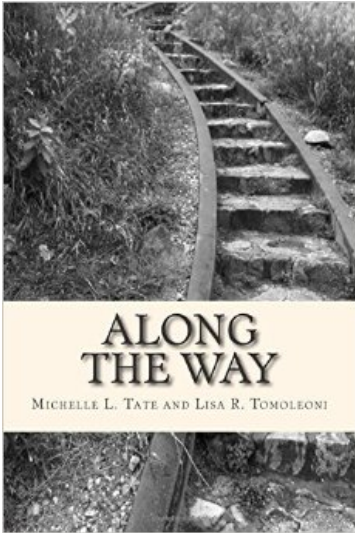


culture as Americans, but I would have never even attempted something like that when Sensei lectured me and I would have definitely never tried to talk my way out of it. If Sensei was alive and I did that I would have been kicked out for at least a month! It is too bad that I lack the conviction or character like Sensei to do what would be the best for this student.

The hardest thing for teachers is striking the proper balance between freedom and discipline. If teachers seem too strict, then students won’t feel able to bear it and will leave. If teachers come across as too laid back, then students won’t respect them and will eventually leave. What is the right balance? I could just beat students up, but what would that solve? I could just be their buddy or pal, but will that give them the necessary discipline to get better? I don’t know the answers because I am not much of a teacher and have little to no experience. Maybe someday I will know what to do. Maybe someday I will know the right things to say. Maybe each student just serves as a rehearsal for the very last student a teacher teaches, hence the saying, “If a teacher can find one good student in his lifetime, he can consider himself blessed.” Who really knows? I know Sensei himself struggled with this question and you can see his personal take on being a teacher by the *kaban* (or sign) he hung over the entryway to the old dojo. The *kaban* reads 萬拙庵 or “Bansetsu-an” which means *the retreat of the untalented teacher*.

In the old days if students did not show the proper respect or etiquette teachers would never teach them and sometimes outright ignore them, because if someone can’t do something as simple as say *thank you* or *I am sorry*, then they probably can’t be taught and thus will just waste everyone’s time, especially their own.

The etiquette exists to protect us. It prevents misunderstandings or miscommunications. If students can observe the etiquette then they can also stay out of trouble or at least show the teacher that they really want to learn and will not waste everyone’s time. Today nobody is trying to get into a fight with us or kill us, but that does not mean we should lose that edge. Observing etiquette helps us maintain this edge and foster the spirit of learning and not oppression. Everything is training and thus our conduct is very important, but that conduct does not begin or end at the dojo or at its door. We will do well to take care as to how we act, what we say, and especially what we think because the teacher is watching. She always watches and waits for our *real* self to come out. It all matters, so in order to prevent any mishaps from occurring, please remember *rei ni hajimari, rei ni owaru* – everything begins and



Book Review: Experience Builds the Ties That Bind

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

I recently picked up a copy of *Along the Way* written by Michelle Tate and Lisa Tomoleoni. I consider Tomoleoni Sensei a friend: about eight years ago, she was supposed to come to ACLA to teach at our annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar, but Sensei died unexpectedly and her trip didn't work out. From that time on, Tomoleoni Sensei and I became good friends over the phone and through e-mail. We met a few times abroad, but until recently hadn't spent any real time together. I had always thought that we shared some unspoken kinship but couldn't put my finger on it until I read her book. Reading *Along the Way* was like going through the pages of my own life and my own trials and tribulations in Aikido. I have often wondered what it was like for Tomoleoni Sensei to train in Japan and as I read her book it seemed not that dissimilar to my own training: trials and errors, great effort and small victories, wrestling with a stubborn, slippery ego. Many times throughout her book I found myself smiling and nodding as many of her lessons and experiences mirrored my own.

Along the Way is filled with wonderful stories and lessons learned from these two teachers' martial arts journey thus far. I am grateful that they have generously allowed us to glimpse their private journeys so that we may gain perspective on our own. For practitioners of any art, there are great anecdotal stories about training and the lessons we can (and would do well to) learn along the way.



April 24-26, 2015

Everyone is welcome!

\$100.00 per person

For more information, please contact us
at info@aikidocenterla.com

O Sensei Memorial Seminar

Seminar Schedule

Friday, April 24th:

6:30-7:30 PM: David Ito

8:00 PM: No host dinner

Saturday, April 25th:

9:00-10:00 AM: David Ito

10:00-10:45 AM: James Doi

11:00-11:45 AM: Santiago Almaraz Garcia

12:00-1:15 PM: No host lunch

1:30-2:30 PM: Ken Watanabe

2:45-3:15 PM: TBA

6:30 PM: Seminar social

Sunday, April 26th:

7:45-8:45 AM: Ken Watanabe - Bokken

9:00-10:00 AM: Breakfast

10:15-11:00 AM: Ken Watanabe

11:15 AM-12:15 PM: O Sensei Memorial Service

12:30-1:15 PM: No host lunch

1:30-2:15 PM: James Doi

2:30-3:15 PM: David Ito

Schedule subject to change without notice.

Too Much Information

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

I, like most modern people, love the Internet. If I needed to see the difference between a Manet and a Monet, I can just do a Google image search; if I want to research whether or not a restaurant is any good, I can go online and read a bunch of Yelp reviews; if I want to learn how to crochet and needed to watch a demonstration, I can access any number of YouTube videos. Nowadays, finding information on a myriad of subjects is simple. The Internet, in all its magical wonder, makes accessing information quick and easy.

If I do a Google search for “honey badger”, within a fraction of a second I get rewarded with over 3,220,000 results. Among this deluge of information includes a bunch of Web sites such as the honey badger’s Wikipedia page, the famous YouTube video, and everything in between that has anything remotely to do with the words “honey badger”. When I was a kid, if I wanted to find out anything about honey badgers, I would have to go to the library, spend a couple of hours finding the proper book, and read it. An even better way involved finding experts on honey badgers and learning from them directly.

Nowadays, we can easily make the mistake of equating knowledge with understanding. In Eastern traditions, when someone said they understood, it meant more than simply memorizing facts and regurgitating them; understanding meant knowing on both an intellectual as well as a practical level. I can describe how to perform the basic overhead cut in swordsmanship, reciting how to grip the sword, how to stand when holding the sword, how to place the feet, how to swing the sword properly, but if I only understood it academically, what good would I be to my students if I couldn’t demonstrate the technique for them? All that information, as a teacher, becomes pointless if the students couldn’t see a proper example of the technique.

On the other hand, I know how to drive a car with a manual transmission. Correction: I *read* about how to drive a car with a manual transmission. I also saw a lot of videos demonstrating it, and I visited some Web site with instructions on how to drive “stick shift”. I think it included a section on how to “drift” when making a turn. It doesn’t look too hard – press the clutch and shift into

gear, and then presto, I’m driving! However, just because I understand how to drive a stick shift car on an intellectual level doesn’t necessarily mean my hands and feet will. Without practice, or a friend there to help assist me, I doubt that my first outing in a stick shift car will go smoothly. It will take a few hours of trial and error as well as practice time before I can drive a manual transmission car safely and without severely damaging the transmission.



Manet, The Rue Mosnier with Flags



Monet, The Rue Monotorguil

Likewise, a Google search for “martial arts” gets over 104,000,000 results. With a few deft keystrokes, the secrets of martial arts lay revealed before me. Mastery, here I come! I’ll know a whole bunch of stuff about fighting techniques!

Yet, among the millions of search results, how many seem relevant to my practice? What source is reliable and what isn’t? What information seems genuine, what looks simply made up? How many years do these so-called

“experts” have under their black belt? The Internet has no quality control enforced onto any search engine regarding any subject, yet there it is: tons of information available on martial arts.

Hundreds of years ago – even within my lifetime – it was still difficult to find research on some of these martial arts styles. Some of these fighting arts were still secretive. To these schools, preventing the school’s techniques and strategies from being revealed to the public, or worse, an opponent, was sort of like a form of gun control. Teachers were very careful about who they taught. It not like today where we can search for the school closest to our house, with a good deal for tuition, and drop by to watch a class. In order to learn martial arts, aspiring students had to first, and above all else, look far and wide to find a good teacher, and even if one was found, there was no guarantee the school would accept them. It took years of training before a teacher would trust a student enough to reveal the secrets of a school. To let these secrets become public might diminish the technique’s effectiveness or render it ineffective. In today’s terms, only the most trusted student gained the proper clearance to access this classified information regarding a school’s techniques, strengths, and weaknesses.

Continued on page 6...



Join Us In Celebrating the Dojo



**A Dance Benefit for
The Furuya Foundation & the
40th Anniversary of the
Aikido Center of Los Angeles**



www.aikidocenterla.com

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28th, 2015

Nishi Hongwanji Kaikan

815 East First Street, Little Tokyo, Los Angeles

Doors Open: 7:00pm

Dance: 8:00pm - 11:30pm

*Opportunity
Drawings*

*Door
Prizes*

Music Performed By

Kokoro
Music with Soul

Information: Dale Okuno / daleokuno@gmail.com / 626.585.3500 x7220

Carol Tanita / cntanita@mail.com / 626.281.8894

Reserved Table of 10: \$400

Individual Tickets: \$35.00/person

**After Feb. 20: \$50 / Person & at the Door*

Cash Bar

*Complimentary Light
Appetizers*

*The Furuya Foundation is a 501(c)3,
Non-Profit Corp, Public Benefit
EIN# 20-0026129*

RSVP FORM/CUT & RETURN BY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2015

Make checks payable to: Furuya Foundation

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH / Table Reservations: ONE CHECK ONLY

Contact Name: _____ **Required: Email for Confirmation:** _____

By Feb. 20, 2015: _____ TABLE(s) of Ten @ \$400.00 \$ _____

_____ Individual Ticket @ \$35.00/person \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____

*The Furuya Foundation is a 501(c)3,
Non-Profit Corp, Public Benefit
EIN# 20-0026129*

RETURN ADDRESS:

ACLA / The Furuya Foundation
c/o Carol Tanita
426 Kingsford St.
Monterey Park, CA 91754

**After February 21, 2015
Individual Tickets At
The Door: \$50 /Person*

**Table Guests: List Names in Back*

Unable to attend but would like to donate: \$ _____

Too Much Information *continued from page 4...*

As recent as maybe 30 years ago, there was no Google search and very little written material available to students. Before students understood the techniques intellectually – the “why” – they first had to understand it with their hands and feet – the “how” – and verbal instruction, if there was any, was sparse. Teachers taught through example and it was up to the students to use every mental resource at their disposal to “steal” the technique from the teachers.

During my teacher’s training days, many of his teachers said very little regarding the minutia of the technique, but instead concentrated on seemingly useless and impractical exercises, with any verbal instruction being very general and repetitive. Whatever instruction the teacher did say had to be committed to memory. More than likely that instance might be the last time the teacher ever mentioned that particular point.

Nowadays, with all the information available on the Internet, people know too much about martial arts. Today, it’s easy to look up information about a particular martial art. Who needs to pay attention, or be hungry to learn when there are all sorts of cool stuff to see online? Everybody has seen mixed martial arts events, grappling, groundwork, arm bars, as well as other techniques and styles. It’s a cornucopia overflowing with kicks and punches, throws and pins. Almost anything we want to see or read about martial arts is available with a few keystrokes. Sitting at the com-

puter is much easier than being on the mat trying to perfect the same old boring basics during every class.

With so much information readily available, students should take care. The Internet can act like a produce stand filled with all kinds of fruits and vegetables. Those with experience and knowledge know what is fresh and what isn’t, which fruits are sweet, and which vegetables are delicious. They know what is useful for their needs and choose appropriately. Amateurs might pick a vegetable because it is trendy, yet not have a single idea how to prepare it properly. They might pick their fruit based on impulse, “Ooh, this apple looks nice and red! It must taste good!”

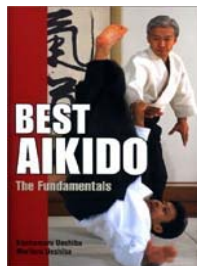
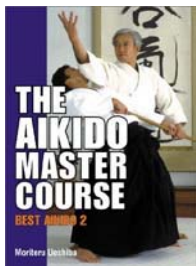
Likewise, how useful is all this information and trivia to our practice? Does it truly benefit our practice? Is it something we don’t really care for but still vital to our training? Have we just accumulated facts so we feel better about our level of training? Only through regular practice can students begin truly to understand the art, both with their mind and body.

A little while ago, I read a quote that seems appropriate that went like this: “Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put it into a fruit salad.” Taking the quote a step further, “Knowing *how* to put a tomato into a fruit salad and making it delicious is mastery.”

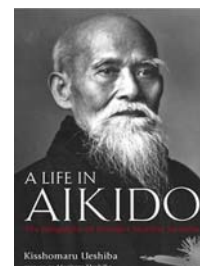
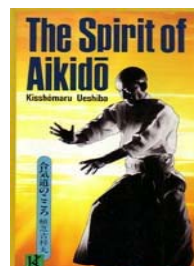
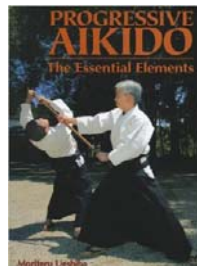
It’s said that a little information is dangerous, but also make sure not to drown in too much of it as well.



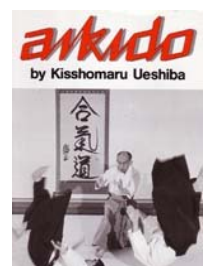
Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



The Furuya Foundation and The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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.



New Year, New Perspectives

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Happy Chinese New Year! *Gung Hay Fat Choi!*

It may seem strange to many of you to receive a New Year's greeting at this time. In Asia, all countries still follow the New Year by the lunar cycle. Japan is the only Asian country which goes by our Western calendar and celebrates the New Year on January 1st as we do. In Asia, this year's New Year comes very early; usually the lunar New Year arrives sometime in mid-February. A few years back, Taiwan tried to convert the New Year's celebration to January 1st but what happened was that everyone began to celebrate two New Year's – on January 1st and on their own traditional lunar date.

I think we usually think of years in terms of decades, but in the East, the years are calculated by their zodiac. The Asian sense of time revolves around cycles of 12 – the number of animals in their zodiac. This year [2004 at the time – Editor] is the Year of the Monkey.

The Asian zodiac is quite a bit different from our Western zodiac of Taurus, Pisces, Aquarius, etc. The 12 animals of the Asian zodiac follow the order of animals that arrived to the Buddha's deathbed to give their greetings. The rat represents the first year in this cycle. Although the rat is very small, the rat is considered very smart. Actually, the bull was to be the first to reach the Buddha's bedside as the biggest and fastest animal, but the rat jumped on the bull's back and just as the bull arrived, the rat jumped off and was first. Thus the rat is the first and the bull became the second symbol in this cycle.

I think we are used to our "own" world and how it is set up but as we look around, the worlds of other people around the globe are quite a bit different from ours. There are so many different cultures and beliefs and customs quite a bit different from our own. Given this fact, it is so important for us to keep an open mind and realize that our world is not the only "way of the world" and consequently we must appreciate the customs of others. As in Taiwan, as much as it would be convenient for them to follow our Western custom of January 1st as the New Year as decreed by their government, the people still continued to follow their own traditional custom and enjoy it more. We may believe that we are right and the best, but for others, it may not seem so at all.

Aikido comes from a different culture than ours here in America, much different in many, many ways. We like to look at Aikido through our own eyes and see it in terms of our own culture, viewpoint, and standards but, in many ways, they differ significantly from original Aikido, which is Japanese. It is good to adopt Ai-

kido to our own lifestyle and Aikido can fulfill our needs and wishes, right here where we are, but in order to understand Aikido, we do need to see it in its original context as well.

One of my students used to say that he never liked Chinese cuisine. I thought this was so strange. Chinese cooking, of course, is very different from our own here in this country. Actually, he didn't like "Chinese American" cooking because when he began to try more authentic Chinese cooking, he liked it very much. If we understand or experience more authentic, ethnic Chinese cooking and then see how it evolved in this country, it becomes more easy to understand and appreciate.



In America, we are lucky, I think. I celebrate January 1st as is our custom, but I have many friends who celebrate the lunar New Year too. Because I can enjoy both, it is much more fun and interesting to me.

I believe we should try to understand Aikido in its own context and then understand how this can be adopted to our needs here. Just to think that the way we live and think is the only way to live and think makes for such a narrow view of the world. To think that we are "right" and everyone else who does not follow what we do is "wrong" is also not open-minded. The world is very broad and

we must appreciate everyone's point of view.

In an interview with the Dalai Lama, the well-known scientist, Carl Sagan, once asked him, "What would you do if I could prove that the concept of reincarnation was false?" The Dalai Lama said, "Well, I would stop believing in it immediately!" Carl Sagan was so surprised at this reply. Then the Dalai Lama asked, "How will you prove that there is no reincarnation?" And Dr. Sagan could not answer at all.

We, in our own culture here, do not believe in reincarnation and some of us may even reject it as heresy against our own beliefs. Yet, there is another world on this planet where live countless people who have held this belief for thousands of years. Although we say it is "wrong", we have no way to prove it . . . who knows, maybe they are right and we are wrong?

In Aikido practice, be opened minded and accept all ways of thinking intelligently. More often than not, it is not a question of right and wrong, it is simply what we see from where we happen to be standing.

Happy New Year!

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on January 20, 2004.

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 Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

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 Open

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

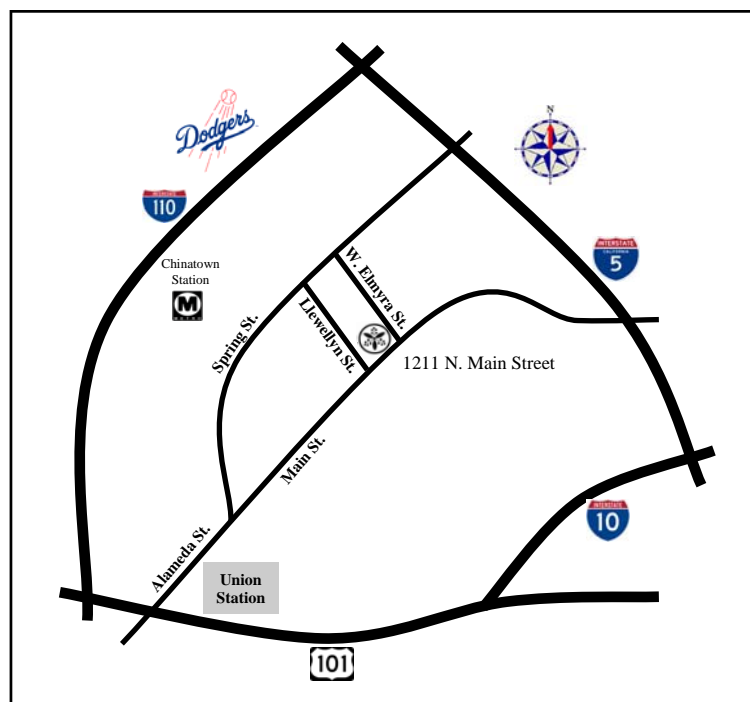
Sundays

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.