

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba's 18th year meinichi memorial service.

Upcoming Events

- February 22nd:**
One night seminar with
Didier Boyet Shihan
- February 25th:**
Intensive Seminar
- March 1-10th:**
Santiago Almaraz Sensei visits
the dojo with students
from Salamanca, Spain
- March 3-5th:**
Furuya Sensei seminar
and memorial service
- March 7-14th:**
Ito Sensei visits
Kyoiku aikibudo Aikikai in Cuba
- March 25th:**
Intensive Seminar

Message From the Teacher by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

It seems like this year has been especially wet and rainy and as I write this we are expected to have rain for the entire week. The rain makes me think of this poem I read in R.H. Blyth's book called *Haiku*:

To wake, alive, in this world,
What happiness!
Winter rain.

– Shoha

Blyth commented on Shoha's poem by saying:

Happiness is from within. Though winter rain is almost a symbol of dreariness, the poet finds the cold rain no hindrance to joy.

This poem and Blyth's commentary seems apropos for this year.

2017 is the Year of the Rooster. The rooster or *tori* (酉) in Japanese are known as the "dawn

awaker" as they symbolizes the dawning of a new day, but another word for awakening is enlightenment. Enlightenment is something that all practitioners of the Way strive for and so the rooster represents the hard work it takes to improve one's self in training but also the courageousness in battle to strive for victory.

This year is also the 10th anniversary of Furuya Sensei's passing. Sensei was a Zen Buddhist priest who's Buddhist name was *Kensho* (顕正) which means "To reveal the truth."

Reading Shoha's poem made me think of how it parallels this year for us. The rooster awakens us to the *kensho* of actually living life. Part of this realization might come as we "celebrate" Sensei's passing and come to appreciate being alive and truly live our own lives. The winter's rain is not unlike all things that occur at every moment of every day which are opportunities for *satori* or the moments of enlightenment.

Don't worry so much about the rain. Wake up, be happy, and enjoy every minute of your life!

Copy the Example

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The best teachers lead by example. With that being said, I hope that someday I can become what some people might refer to as a “good” teacher.

In the old days, knowledge and skill weren't readily available and one had to apprentice with a “master” for many years in order to gain that person's skill, ability and thus wisdom. People with great ability or talent in those days weren't seen as teachers as much as they were considered masters of their respective arts. Masters didn't teach like we understand teaching today and students didn't learn like people in those days either. People in the old days learned out of necessity rather than for enjoyment. If one wanted to learn, they had to literally throw themselves

at the mercy of the master who then taught them as they saw fit regardless if they had any teaching acumen or not. A student was only judged by how hard they worked despite any adversities.

Generally speaking, the initial training period usually took about 10 years before a master started trusting a pupil with more and more information and then ultimately the secrets

of the art. For instance, if one wanted to become a sushi chef, one had to study for more than a decade closely living and working with the master while only being “allowed” to sweep the floors. From there they moved up to rice maker then to fish cleaner and so on and so forth all the while watching assiduously as they could because this was their only source of learning at that point in time. Starting at the bottom was supposed to create desire in the student while simultaneously striking down their ego with the hope that a student would want to learn for the sake of the art and without the ambition of going out on their own because, most times, an apprentice was only taken on to carry on a lineage and not to create a competitor. Therefore, because the master was usually only looking for an heir, a prospective student needed to be vetted. The vetting process was rigorous and designed to expose a person's true character and motivations. For lack of any better method, starting at the bottom with a painstaking slow and grueling ascent was the best snapshot into a person's inner heart.

An earnest student had to be patient and faithful but more importantly they had to completely trust their teacher. It was very much like the Mr. Miyagi and Daniel *san* relationship in the *Karate Kid* movies, “The teacher say, student do.” The master says and the pupil does without hesitation and without judgment. It is said



that the interval with which a person replies, “Hai” after the direction is given can be measured as the amount of ego they have. Therefore, the haste with which a student follows direction shows that they are moving without judgment or really without thought. Over time and after thousands of repetitions, the student learns not by understanding but by spontaneity of movement which means that they can only copy the movement because there is no time to think. Just as “a picture is worth a 1000 words,” copying the movement without thought enables a student to pick up more because conscious thought is too slow. Understanding the movement is something that is supposed to come much later. Only after one learns to copy without thought is true skill born.

Copying is the ability to see what is being shown but more importantly what is not being shown. From there a student must be

able to then do it the right way at the exact right time. Copying is not a conscious thing and that is why one has to learn to do it without conscious thought. The problem becomes that because it is done without thought or unconsciously, good students will pick up both the good and the bad characteristics of the master or teacher.

Years ago, I worked at a Japanese *mochigashi* sweet shop in Little Tokyo that was down the street from the dojo. One

day, Furuya Sensei came in to buy some sweets. We chatted for a minute or two and he talked with many of the ladies who worked there that he knew from his time working at Zenshuji temple. After he was gone, all the older women who knew him started to make fun of me. One said, “Oh now that makes sense, you walk just like him” as she pantomimed an overweight person walking while puffing out her cheeks. Others scolded me for not being a better student and complained out loud to each other that I had been so hard to teach. One of the ladies even said, “You study Aikido, you should really work harder” and from that point on she was meaner to me than ever before even though she had already been really cruel to me. That same lady was the “sensei” of the shop and went out of her way to nitpick everything that I did and berate me at every turn and this was all before she found out that I was Sensei's student (but that's a story for another day.)

As with the story above, a good student will sometimes follow the teacher so closely that they might not even be aware of the things that they are copying, which is the whole goal, despite the fact that some things might be good or bad.

Continued on page 6...



Does Aikido Work?

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

When starting a martial art and especially one as complex as Aikido, many people are a little curious about its effectiveness. At some point in time in their practice, students get around to asking me if Aikido really “works” to which I normally respond, “Yes.” I have no doubt that Aikido is effective but it is deeper and more complex than the surface of effectiveness. Aikido is effective in bringing me personally a sense of security and confidence with respect to my ability. However, it really “works” for me because it teaches me respect, humility, patience and hard work.

Obviously I intuit what they really want to ask me, but this is my true and honest answer. What students don’t understand is that there is a fundamental difference between studying a mar-

tial art and just memorizing techniques. It always brings a smile to my face when students ask me to clarify between the two. Most perfunctory students of the martial arts focus primarily on what the “art” can do physically by learning a series of techniques to defend themselves which coincidentally barely scratches the surface of the art. A true student of the martial arts realizes that it takes an open mind to learn all or everything that a martial art can teach them and see the other hundreds of qualities that are not readily apparent.

There are people who practice the art of Aikido for years and years and move incredible well, but that is only the obvious part that everyone can “see.” The most important and most powerful part of the art cannot be seen and cannot be taught either. This hidden part of the art must be discovered by the student. It is the aspect of the art not found in the books and can only be learned with many, many years of dedicated practice.

Does Aikido work? Is it an effective martial art? Of course. My answer is based upon Aikido being an “art.” That is why when I talk about effectiveness or whether it works or not, I am thinking about it on a much deeper level that benefits me both inwardly and outwardly. The Aikido that Furuya Sensei taught me has so much more to offer beyond the mere physical aspects of the technique. The techniques and skills in Aikido are very important but it must encompass the deeper aspects of respect, humility, patience and hard work. Without the deeper elements of Aikido training it would not be true Aikido. True Aikido is deeper than the muscle and bones of the movement and can only be truly learned deep down from the bottom of one’s heart. Aikido is effective but you will have to look much deeper to see it really “work.”

One Night Only Seminar with Didier Boyet Shihan



February 22nd
6:30 – 8:00 PM

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Thank You
Duverger Macrons



For your generous donation
to the Dojo Dance.

Something Special

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

Remember Saturday morning cartoons? There was a time when kids' animated programming was not available around the clock. There were only certain times they would be aired; weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings. I remember waking up extra early on Saturday morning before regular TV or adult programming started – yes, there was no TV available during the middle of the night; only a test pattern – in order to get my weekly Saturday Morning cartoon fix. Many of these shows only aired once a week and if you missed an episode, you would have to wait until the episodes cycled over again, and if you were a kid, that felt like an eternity. And don't even try to understand the depths of my disappointment when my Saturday morning cartoons were preempted by a football game.

Now we have cartoons available at all hours of the day on cable channels devoted to children's programming. Today, if I was a kid, I wouldn't even need to wait for Saturday to come around; I could simply stream the show I wanted to watch. What was once a special time for children on Saturday is no different than any other day of the week now.

We are living in a time when almost anything is available and almost nothing is special anymore. Information is readily available on the internet where anyone can "Google" anything, Christmas decorations are up before Halloween, and we can order almost anything we want on Amazon-dot-com. In Japan there is a saying: "You can get anything in Tokyo." That might seem like a big plus, but it's actually a subtle insult. In Japan, most of products are regional as well as seasonal called *meibutsu*. One would have to travel there personally during the appropriate season to enjoy a region's specialty. Once an opportunity was missed, it's gone until next year's season. In Tokyo, what was once available only during a certain time and at the certain place becomes nothing special.

In the pasts, Japanese martial arts were a very special and exclusive thing. Schools and teachers vetted any prospective students. Often, letters of recommendation were necessary or prospects were required to demonstrate their perseverance and spiritual strength. Teachers only accepted those who they felt were trustworthy and those who only showed a true desire to learn. Nowadays, anyone can come in, sign up, and pay the first month's dues, and join practice. In a way this is more democratic – everybody gets a chance, but when this idea of fairness becomes corrupted, it turns in a sense of entitlement, "I deserve to learn this!" When the ego enters into the equation, true training stops and self-satisfaction sets in.

It's easy to take training for granted, especially when it's available every day of the week. When my teacher was training in the sixties, an Aikido dojo that was open every day for training was non-existent. In order to practice every day, he had to practice at a different location each day, the practice space often shared with another martial art. He thought, "How nice it would be if there was a place to practice every day!"

When something stops being special it becomes easy to take for granted and even thrown away. Because Aikido training was so difficult to come by, to my teacher, training became a very valuable thing. It wasn't something one could just put off. Thus, to a student who has the desire to learn any kind of art, the practice area then becomes a sacred space. This is why we say a silent "thank you" to Aikido and the dojo by bowing at the entrance and at the edge of the mat; this is why we keep the dojo neat and organized; this is why students conduct themselves in a certain way during practice.

Aikido is, or course, not a cult; and this sense of sacredness should not be abused. It's easy for our egos to take this idea and go crazy with it, demanding unwavering loyalty, but when someone truly cares about something, the art is never far away in their thoughts, and their actions reflect this attitude.

When training is approached with the correct attitude, all of the rules regarding training fall into place. When practice is approached with a selfish attitude, it will be impossible for the student to find their true selves.

With so many options available for training, it's easy to simply leave when things don't go our way or our expectations are not met. Because it's so easy to run away when things get tough, no one needs to persevere or work hard to achieve something that is, in their minds, ordinary. A student's best tool in their training is not experience, physical strength, or personal connections but having the proper attitude. Practicing regularly may become routine in a student's life, but it's important to not let it become ordinary.

When we realize that this kind of training is not something we can order any time on Amazon, then we begin to realize how important it is to us. It is up to the student to realize this in their hearts and minds, not in order to become a "master" or for some other self-serving reason, but simply because the act of practice itself becomes important to us.





Why Do I Train?

by Kay Sera, Aikido 2nd Dan

It's been 16 years since I gingerly stepped into the old dojo off the dark alleyway in Little Tokyo. It was early October, cool and brisk. When I entered the doorway I was astounded by what I saw. With trepidation and eagerness, I immediately joined the dojo.

My first experiences in Aikido were pure joy. It felt so good. Why is that? I love the movements. Something about them feels so right. After class, rinsing out the rags, I always want to exclaim, "That was fun!" It's pretty much always been fun and enjoyable except for the scary stuff – break falls, *koshi-nage*, *irimi-nage*, etc. I don't think there's ever been a day in my training where I did not feel good after practice.

For me, Aikido satisfies my physical needs to work out and keep my body reasonably fit. I feel stronger at my work, my posture is better, my body is trimmer, I have more energy and with my increased practice schedule, I'm actually feeling younger! Wow! There is also improved body awareness – am I balanced? How is my posture? The exciting thing about posture – correct balance of the body – is that I can be much more effective when my posture is correct. I move better, I'm stronger, I have more energy and, I imagine, I should look better – always a plus.

Besides the physical benefits, I also train for the mental benefits such as focus. Where our mind goes, our *ki* flows. This is very important for me as an acupuncturist. As I'm progressing in my Aikido practice, the use and application of my *ki* is of great interest for me. What is fascinating is the combination

of the mental aspect with the physical aspect that allows the technique to work. They combine in a magical way! And, as one gets older and physical strength declines, we can always develop our mental strength.

One of the more subtle benefits of Aikido is how it can help us to see ourselves. Perhaps unwittingly, I am trying to fight or be strong in my technique. "I'm just trying to do the technique!" or so I think. But in my failure, I see my own shortcomings – how I don't feel secure in my ability to just be or just connect. Done correctly, there's no fighting, no pushing against and, no resisting, just Aikido.

I am enthralled by the whole connection concept – the "ai" in Aikido. This joining together which can be extended into our life and into the world. It's that joining which also enables one to develop trust – trust in oneself in order to be really open and trust in the other. What is life about but relationships? – this awareness and connection to everything. Aikido helps one to blend and ultimately become one with everything. Isn't that amazing?! (One thing that I have been noticing in my practice recently is my connection with the *nage*. How do I grab and stay connected? It's a new(er) thing for me. (My intention is to work more on my *ukemi* skills after my next test).

All of the above will never be achieved by just intellectually knowing how these things work. It all takes time and practice. There is no getting around practice, aware practice, in order to develop oneself in these myriad ways. We are so lucky to have Aikido and to have our dojo!



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.



Copy the Example *continued from page 2...*

Understanding that a really good student will follow without thinking or conscious thought, a teacher must then be very careful about what they do consciously and unconsciously. Another famous

quote from the Mr. Miyagi character was, "No such thing as bad student, only bad teacher. Teacher say, student do." Some people don't like this quote because it somehow criticizes their ability as teachers but that is not the point. The point of the quote is that at the beginning and middle stages, the students will follow a teacher's every move so they must be diligent and disciplined.



Sensei used to say, "Teaching is just the natural next stage of learning but it is a privilege." A student has to give themselves whole-heartedly to the teacher but not blindly but faithfully. Realizing this, a teacher must then drive themselves even farther with a greater sense of purpose, diligence and discipline because they realize the influence that they wield.

Teachers have to start seeing things as a two-way street. A student has to be strict with themselves, but a teacher must be even stricter. Today, with the availability information, there is even more transparency than ever. Understanding this, a teacher must be even more disciplined because students can see them even when they

can't see the students. This time in history is the most transparent of all and Voltaire's admonition that "With great power come great responsibility" seems more apropos than ever before.

Students and teachers alike sometimes think that becoming a "master" or teacher is the end where one gets a free pass to be themselves and do whatever they want. This type of ego lim-

its our ability to learn and to ultimately grow. What is sometimes forgotten is the responsibility that comes with teaching or leading others. Without knowing it, a teacher is influencing the future and consequently must take great care with the power that they wield. Understanding this, a good teacher is one who leads by example not just on the mat, but off the mat too. I only hope that someday people will look back on my teaching career and think that I somehow was a good teacher.

Furuya Sensei 10 year Anniversary Memorial Service and Seminar

Seminar Schedule

March 3rd - Friday

6:30-7:30 PM - David Ito

8:00 PM - No host dinner

March 4th - Saturday

6:30-8:00 AM - David Ito

8:00-9:00 AM - Breakfast

9:15-10:00 AM - Ken Watanabe

10:15-11:00 AM - James Doi

11:15 AM-12:00 PM - Santiago Almaraz

12:00 PM - Sensei memorial service in dojo

1:00 PM Lunch

6:00 PM - Seminar social at dojo

March 5th - Sunday

7:45-8:45 AM - Ken Watanabe

9:00-10:00 AM - Brunch

10:15-11:00 AM - James Doi

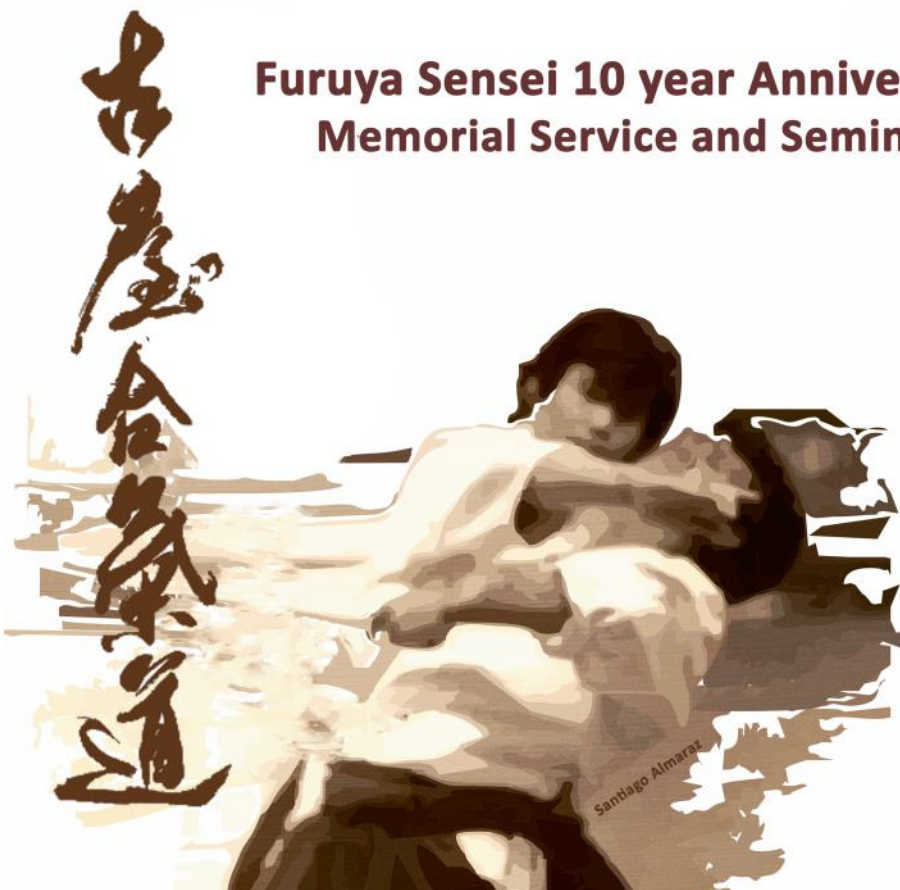
11:15 AM-12:00 PM - David Ito

12:00 PM - Sensei grave site visit

Schedule subject to change without notice

\$120.00 per person

Everyone is invited to attend regardless of affiliation.



Warming the Cold

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

The other day, a magazine came to the dojo. It deals with the “business” aspects of martial arts. Nowadays, I hear this type of magazine is the biggest seller in martial arts magazines, outdoing those publications devoted to traditional martial arts or technique. In the front part, there was a letter from a reader complaining about an earlier article dealing with the “loyalty” of the students. However, this was not loyalty in its very finest sense, this was loyalty to the teacher in the sense of “stay here and continue to pay your dues,” or “if you leave, I lose money!” The angry reader wrote something about, “Yes, there is loyalty of the students to the teacher, but what about loyalty of the teacher to the students?”

Such a total lack of understanding and appreciation of martial arts on both sides. Loyalty comes from a strong bond between the teacher and the student. In my own experience, students come and go so freely, yet, I am always here. I think that I was thinking about this in my dreams as I was freezing in this cold, cold dojo all night. The dojo is so cold and there is no way to keep even a little bit warm and I can even feel myself catching a slight cold this morning. In times like this, I wonder why am I here freezing for my students? Why am I not in a warm, comfortable bed with decent heating? When I was young, I could endure anything no matter how hot or cold the dojo became, but as I get older and more tired, it gets harder and harder. Freezing here in the dojo all by myself, I somehow consider this

“loyalty” to my students! Ha! What student is freezing for me at night? I have asked many times, to have a bed put into my office so I don’t have to sleep on the floor or in a chair and hmmm – that was almost two years ago! Students today don’t listen, or don’t care or don’t think about these things. I think when I was younger, I thought of it as a part of my training to sleep on the hard floor but now it just effects my health too much because of the harsh cold against my old, tired bones.

Students will always come and go. It is so hard to become truly committed to most students because you never know how long they will stay. Usually, they are here today and gone tomorrow. I don’t know why these teachers and students even worry about “loyalty” – I wonder if such thing hardly exists today. Teachers are only wor-

ried about money and fame, students are too spoiled and run around to different dojos and teachers like they are shopping for bargains and can never find the best deal. Today, I guess, students think they can learn enough in one or two years and are ready to teacher and be called, “sensei.” For them, being the sensei has nothing to do with “being” a sensei, it is just a selfish desire for fame and prestige. I rarely see students who devote themselves for years on end as students under a teacher. In my dojo, I see how they “naturally” become teachers – this is the only thing that makes me feel good. As opposed to, “hey, I want to teach.”

We never know ourselves, when we will become a teacher – it is

those around us who make this decision. And finally, there is no greater honor and sense of achievement than when the teacher himself finally encourages and recognizes that the student is ready to accept students. Everyone today, is in such a hurry, that only a few enjoy this truly wonderful experience.

What do teachers have to do to get students? It is no longer to be good and a competent teacher – we must be charming and user-friendly and bow our heads to the students and make them feel good. I guess I come from a different age. Students are so spoiled today – no wonder they cannot learn anything! And teachers! Terrible! All they talk about is money.

It drives me crazy. Probably this is only because I am one of the poor ones. Ha!

This morning, you are not listening to a teacher, I guess, just a very cold, grumpy old man. I guess, after all these years, this

is what I have become.

In my youth, I had so many dreams and worked so hard to build a wonderful dojo for my students, nowadays, I just want to warm my feet! This cannot be enlightenment, so it must be failure!

In Japanese chess – they have a saying which they borrowed from martial arts, *Makete Tozen, Katte Guzen!* which means, “It is only natural to lose, you only win by luck!” As I freeze here this morning, I realize that I am not a winner! Keep warm!

Editor’s Note: Sensei included what seems like three poems with this posting. He originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on February 10, 2003.

Untitled

The bitter cold morning,
You are so hard to beat,
Bring a strong opponent,
At least I have a chance with him.

Nothing worse than being cold and alone,
Even the kind thoughts of my student so far away cannot keep me warm,
So nice tatami for my students downstairs, and only a hard floor for me,
Who can complain about my loyalty to you?

The loyal student devoted to his training,
Only his hard training downstairs can warm this cold room so well!
A teacher cannot ask for more than such a treasure,
Today, running around here and there, where did you lose your heart?
It is so cold, I suspect that it is no longer there. . .



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

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

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

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM Intensive Seminar* †

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Open

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

† Intensive seminar is offered the last Saturday of every month and is open to any Aikidoist regardless of school or style who is at least proficient in forward and backward ukemi.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

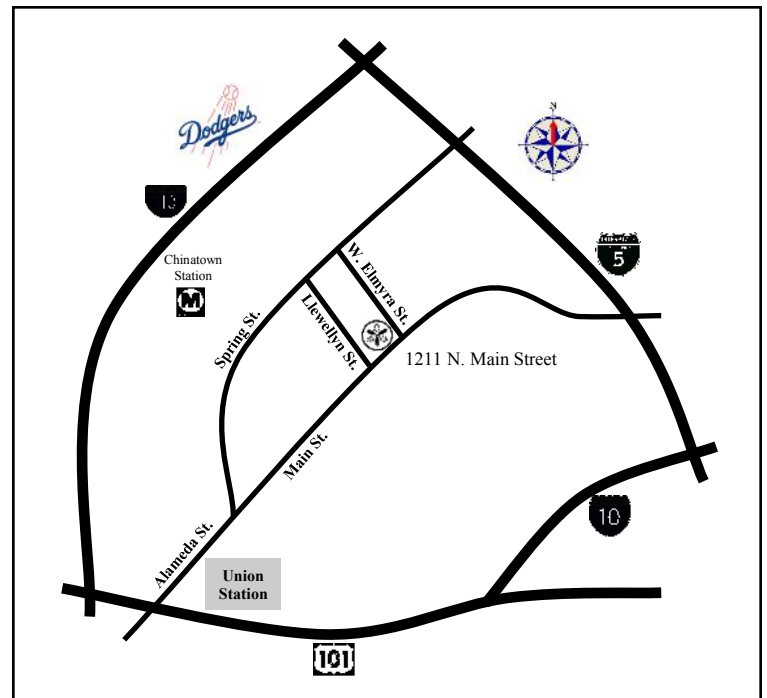
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded
Official Hombu Recognition by the
AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
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
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*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 will also dedicate yourself to your
training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido
and Iaido have to offer.*

Editor-in-Chief and Publisher: David Ito



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.*