

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

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Upcoming Events

December 31st - January 1st:
Dojo closed: New Year

January 5th:
Second Doshu memorial

January 19th:
Dojo benefit dance

January 26th:
Instructor's intensive

February 23rd:
Instructor's intensive

March 9 - 10th:
Annual Seminar

March 30th:
Instructor's intensive



あけましておめでとうございます！

Letter From the Editor
by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

On behalf of all of us at ACLA and The Furuya Foundation, please accept our best wishes to you, our readers, for a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. *Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu!*

This holiday always seems to stir our hopes and ambitions, and this month's contributors share their appreciation of this impulse while urging us to consider other feelings we might spur on to fuel our development and enjoyment of this life. Our branch dojos send messages that, while different in content, share the common theme of gratitude. David Ito picks up on that theme and thoughtfully develops it as a means towards our spiritual evolution. Gary Myers encourages us to plan for improvement so that we open ourselves to learn-

ing and set the stage for our own development through commitment to the process. Sensei speaks to us once more from the archives, this time giving insight to our Western audience as to the significance of all the New Year symbolism that pervades Japanese culture around the globe. And in a rare event, we found an article recently that touched us and seemed in keeping with the spirit of the dojo, even though its author and subject focus on medicine rather than martial arts. That it presents as an open letter from father to son seems appropriate as a tradition learned, nurtured, and shared for the future. We try to do that here, and we think Dr. Tokeshi did it very well. I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

In 2013, much will certainly change; so goes life. May you weather all changes that come your way for the better. I hope to see you on the mat. Take care and thrive until then!

The Dawn of Gratitude

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

As the day dawns on a new year it seems natural to think about the future, and New Year's is a natural beginning. For many people, this is the time of the year to think about what they want. The Japanese especially pay special attention to all things "first" on New Year's Day with the rationale that such things bring good luck. On New Year's Eve they flock to their temples or shrines just after midnight for *hatsumode* or the first prayer of the year, which is supposed to be the luckiest. Everything "first" is considered good luck, such as the first tea ceremony of the year or *hatsugama*, and *hatsugeiko* (the first practice of the year); even seeing the first sunrise of the year, known as *hatsuhinode*, is considered fortuitous.

The new year is more than just a new beginning and a time to think about what we want or our desires for good fortune; it is also a time of reflection to feel grateful for what we have. This aspect of the new year gets overtaken with the more popular ideas of resolutions or desires for good luck. But, beneath all the best intentions, good luck charms, and prayers for health and wealth lies the heart of gratitude.

It is so easy to forget with the parties and festivities that we made it to January 1st. In Japan, the winters can be very brutal so surviving it to January 1st was historically considered a cause to celebrate. Rather than just wish for what we want, we should remember to celebrate what we have.

The other day, I was talking with Ken Watanabe about one of our peers who quit the dojo after falling on hard times. I explained to him about our friend's situation and how I wanted to help him.

After hearing my justification about my desire to help, Ken asked me, "Does he have a job?"

I answered, "Yes, he has a good job."

He scratched his chin and asked, "Is he homeless?"

I chuckled and answered, "No."

Then Ken casually blurted out something that I will never forget. He said, "Then he is doing fine." That really resonated with me because it was the truth. This person has a good job and a place to live, which is more than most. I forgot one of Sensei's favorite admonishments: "Training is a privilege." If this person chooses not to train, that is his choice; if he needs help, he will ask. All things being equal, Ken is right in that this person is doing well. Sure, he feels a bit lost and upset with his life, but he can still appreciate all that he has.

The same goes for all of us. The statement that training is a privilege does not mean that it is only for the elite or only for good boys and girls. It is a privilege

because it is something which can truly enhance our lives but is not necessary for life. After we are fed, have clothes on our backs, and a roof over our heads, everything else becomes a cause to rejoice. So this year I hope when you made your New Year's resolutions or praying for good health and lots of wealth that you remembered to feel thankful for what you have. The secret to getting what we want begins with being appreciating what we already hold in our hands.

Thanks to everyone for your kindness over the years; may you enjoy a 2013 filled with good luck, and get everything you want.



Giving thanks at midnight on New Year's Day

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Happy New Year 2013

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

Happy New Year to all the members of ACLA, the Kenshinkai section, the Furuya Foundation Board, and all of our friends who receive the newsletter! Each year we write a New Year's greeting that focuses on the possibilities and opportunities before us in the new year. We all hope to accomplish great things in the coming year. Typically, when the year ends we look back with satisfaction and disappointment over the things we have done and not done. This dual feeling is, of course, natural: We often run out of time, resources, or patience to complete all of our projects, and we also have to contend with surprises along the way.

Most businesses have a planning process in the last quarter of the prior year so that they have a blueprint of what they want to accomplish in the next year. They develop a plan, and a budget of time and resources to accomplish it. Businesses that don't do any planning are usually more reactive than proactive, letting chance dictate their strategies. They are always pulled in the direction of the thing that seems the most urgent, whereas businesses that do strategic planning establish a plan for improvement.

People in larger businesses are all too well acquainted with this process and sometimes find it an intrusion on the time they are trying to allocate to the prior year's plan. But the strategic planning process is essential if the business is to remain viable. Perhaps because we are subjected to it in our business life we tend to shy away from it in our personal lives. We feel that there should be a little more spontaneity and serendipity to life rather than planning everything out for the next year. Although we do plan big events, when to take vacations and the like, there are enough surprises thrown at us to make us feel that planning everything out is a futile exercise.

In Iaido, the "start" is all-important. Iaido is one of those arts that requires a correct start because there is no way to compensate for a bad start. When I say "start," that goes beyond the beginning of the technique. It even goes beyond clean-up outside, how we enter the dojo, put on our uniform, warm up, bow in, etc. All of these things are important in making the transition from our daily life to the concentration required for Iaido, but it is not the "start" I am referring to. When I say, "start" I am referring to commitment, attitude, and what we are willing to sacrifice. Iaido requires a commitment of time, discipline, and dedication: if you cannot budget those aspects in your life, Iaido is probably not for you. These things are important to consider when we start the New Year in Iaido and how we plan for improvement. Everyone

should plan of what they want to accomplish, prior to each day's practice. For example, "Today I am going to focus on coordinating both hands in *nukitsuke*", or "I am finally going to grip the sword properly". While showing up at the dojo is a commitment to practice, it is not necessarily a plan or strategy for learning. Each of us should pick one or two things that we would finally like to learn. It is impossible to improve everything at the same time, even though we would love to do so. When we come prepared to

improve one or two things we have a focus; this focus becomes our plan for improvement.

When we have a preplanned focus on improving, we have already budgeted a portion of our focus and concentration. While we might not get it the first time, the second, or even the tenth, our focus and commitment will eventually make it work. We have to be proactive rather than reactive in the learning process so that when we make the correct movement on our own and do it consistently, we can tackle the next planned improvement. That's why Sensei used to say, "Make your worst technique your best, then make the next worst your best." We all must plan for our own improvement; no one else can do that for us. May everyone's New Year be a happy, healthy and productive one.



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 also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.

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仁_{Jin} 義_{Gi} 禮_{Rei} 智_{Chi} 信_{Shin}

Letter to the Editor – An Open Letter to My Son: Five Virtues
by Jinichi Tokeshi, M.D.

Editor's Note: We rarely publish material written for other publications, but the following article, published in 2011 in the *Hawaii Medical Journal*, resonated with us, not only for its discussion of the five classical virtues, but also for its heartfelt message from father to son, something that at this moment feels close to home.

From Tokeshi, J. "Letter to the Editor – An Open Letter to My Son: Five Virtues". *Hawaii Med J* 2011 August; 70(8); 178-179. Reprinted by permission of the author.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3158382/>

May 2011

Dear Brad:

I have taught generations of medical students, sons and daughters of other fathers, for over three decades. For some reason I failed to talk to you about what I thought was very important as a physician and a person. As you are launching a new life as a physician I would like to share my inner thoughts and principles that I have lived by in a form of an open letter. It is called five virtues. There are many variations of five virtues quoted in the literature and the concept is nothing new. It goes back to an ancient Chinese philosopher.¹ The idea was also used as an instrument to educate the children of *samurai* the *bushido*,² the way of warrior, in Japan prior to Meiji Restoration. Here, I include *Jin*, *Gi*, *Rei*, *Chi*, and *Shin* with my personal interpretations that guided me in the way of medicine.

Jin is the first virtue. *Jin*³ is compassion or empathy to fellow human beings as its kanji character suggests. Incidentally, my first name, Jinichi⁴ means *Jin comes first*. It embodies your grandfather's prayer and wish for me to become a person of *Jin* from birth. I can tell you what *Jin* is but it is not something I can teach anyone. You either have it or don't have it. Consequently, if you have it I do not need to tell you about it and if you don't it is futile to talk about it. However, for the sake of discussion let me pursue this subject. Your ability to sense and share your patient's pain, loneliness, sadness, fear, anger, and desperation is probably the most important quality of you as a physician. In your training you will see patients with those feelings one at a time or all at once. I know you have *Jin* in you as I have watched you growing up. If you did not you would not have chosen medicine as your career. It has been said, "The way of medicine is through the art of *Jin*."⁵ Indeed, medicine is half science and half art. Based on a concept of *Ichigo Ichie*⁶ examine your patient with your heart and soul as if this is the last time. Please greet your patients with a smile. Touch your patients in ICU with your warm hand even if they appear unresponsive. They may be aware of what is happening. Sit at the bedside and talk to your elderly patients in the nursing homes. They are lonely. Gently hold the hands of your patient whose death is approaching. They are frightened. I trust you do not become accustomed to the pain of your patients and get desensitized along

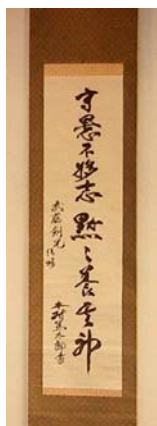
the way of long training. If we misplace our *Jin* we should relinquish being a physician immediately.

Gi, I take it to mean the duty. The duty of a physician is nothing like any other profession. Once you have chosen to become a physician you have forfeited many routines in your life that other people would take for granted. When your patients need your assistance you will drop all your activities and run for the aide. Yes, it means even if you are sleeping or eating. Here lies the origin of the precept for my students, "eating and sleeping is optional." You are charged with awesome responsibility of saving lives and alleviating the pain and suffering of your patients. Please don't forget your duty as a physician even when you are sleeping, eating or spending time with your loved ones. Even if the disease is incurable do not abandon your patient. Support your patient at times as a cheerleader or a coach. At the end of the day your presence at the bedside could be more comforting than any medicine that you can prescribe. Let us not forget our duty extends to comforting the family left behind. There is no word to ease the pain of losing a loved one; however, your presence will let the family know that you understand their grief. This is the reason why I come to pronounce my patients no matter what time it is. It is the last service a physician performs for the patient.

Rei means to respect and be humble. First, respect your patients. Your patient is the sole reason why you decided to undergo the vigorous training to become a physician. In a word, you are a servant to your patients. Talk and act like a servant. Never give an order or talk condescendingly to your patients regardless of their illness, age, gender, ethnic, educational, socioeconomic, and cultural background. Even if the patient is intellectually challenged he can sense if you are talking down to him. You are never superior to any of your patients even if you have reached the highest peak as a physician. Let it be known to all that you are simply the best educated and the best trained noble "servant" to your patients. Thank the patients who seek out to see you. Say, "thank you" for being patient and apologize for making them wait.

Respect and thank your parents who taught you how to say, "thank you," "please," and "excuse me." Treasure and honor your parents who gave you unconditional love and unending support even after they can no longer hear, see or remember. Thank your long line of ancestors who gave you the traits to excel. Thank your spouse who supports your work and does not complain about your hours of work. I deeply appreciate your mother for supporting me all these years. Without her understanding I could not have done what I did. Thank your future children who understand your commitment to your patients. Please spend not large quantity but quality time with your children. I thank you for sharing quality time with me and growing up to be a responsible adult. Respect all your past teachers from kindergarten on who taught you how to read and how to count. Respect all your future teachers who will give you the knowledge and teach the skills in the way of medicine.

Continued on page 6...



Moving Forward

by Mike Van Ruth

Chief Instructor, Aikido Renbukai of Arizona

On one of my recent visits to ACLA, a particular scroll was displayed in the tokonoma which roughly translated said, “Stay strong, stay humble, and keep moving forward”. This message inspired me in a significant way as I found myself struggling with two major challenges: the end of a seven year long relationship with a woman I loved dearly, and a debilitating knee injury. Both incidents left me wallowing in my feelings of failure and defeat.

To me, this scroll represented at its heart the fundamental idea of what it means to be a warrior, and that warrior spirit keeps me moving forward. Sometimes doing so feels difficult, but I do my best to stay strong – not so much in the physical sense, but spiritually. I try to keep up my hope and faith that all will turn out for the best and that this chapter of my life holds a lesson for me to learn that I may not understand now, but will if I hold fast to the path and keep moving forward.

I have found that moving forward becomes easier when I acknowledge and appreciate all that I have. Many times I will

catch myself fixating on what I have lost, and this fixation momentarily blinds me to all the wonderful things that I do have: a dojo full of dedicated and faithful students, friends and teachers at ACLA who believe in me and whom I love, and a beautiful daughter whom I adore. As trying as I might find the recent blows to my ego, life has blessed me with so much. I keep working to remember that whenever the urge to sulk over my losses makes itself felt.

I also found in the scroll the timely reminder to keep my eyes focused forward rather than back. Fixating on the past, and especially on past events that cause me pain, only keeps me from looking and moving forward towards all the possibilities that my life has to offer. I have many goals I want to achieve and anchoring myself to past failure and grief will only keep me from reaching them. I have to accept these episodes as lesson (hopefully) learned and let them go, and continue to move forward.

In the coming year, may we all keep looking forward, feel gratitude for the blessings in our lives, and let that feeling fill our hearts. Just as light chases away the dark, may our positive and loving feelings chase away our negative ones. I hope we all surround ourselves with family and friends this season and share that love. This to me is what truly matters.

Happy New Year to all, and best wishes for a safe, healthy, and prosperous 2013!

Happy New Year 2013

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

The year ends and a new year begins in order to continue to enjoy our friends and family. Friends and family are two things we should try to keep close. As a good friend once told me, “If you walk alone you’ll arrive faster, but if you walk in company, you will go farther. . . .” It is a time that fills us with hope; for kids and adults alike, it seems a time of year that makes us more sensitive to everything around us. It creates the illusion that we have begun something new, like starting a new year knowing that we’ve reached a new beginning, a start from zero, an opportunity to start doing things better at work, with family and friends: to get better with time.

Most times we have great intentions for the new year; the most important thing that helps us is the illusion to keep working to do better every day in everything we set out to do. That illusion must exist in our daily practice: we can get better with time by improving today over what we did in class yesterday, continually applying ourselves to learn and practice more and better each time we step on the mat. The end result, though, is often not as good as we wanted. Enjoyment and illusions, nonetheless, are critical for our purposes: the daily struggle over adversity, criticism, or envy.

So my message this year goes out to everyone who felt thrilled with something we discussed in class or stayed five minutes after class working on their *ukemi* or practicing a technique from the

day’s lesson, to those who knew how to ask for help to tie their *obi* or put on their *hakama*. All of these people with their enthusiasm and motivation to learn give me the strength to go one more step, one more year. Just as the dojo is still working and Sensei’s legacy continues forward another year over adversity, it perhaps feels true that some things would work out better if we could all work together more or attend class more, but the truth is that all who are in the dojo daily do their best so that everyone can share this treasure that our teacher left us and to those people we should be thankful. For this I congratulate all of you who are pushing this wheel one more year to help ACLA keep turning forward.

Recalling the late Yonemochi Sensei, what surprised me was the vision and desire to teach that he had. It was spectacular; he always wanted to teach more classes, transmitting a force, a love of training that was worthy of admiration. Perhaps that is why he was such good friends with Sensei. But besides all this, between classes he stayed to watch people to see how they practiced, corrected them or helped them, answered questions, and perhaps he just enjoyed watching students engaged in the practice of Aikido.

That illusion is very hard to see today but not only in Aikido. I would therefore like to thank all those people who give me strength and hope to go a bit further and make me enjoy this art and life. Happy New Year to all. Cultivate your illusion!



Letter to the Editor - An Open Letter to My Son: Five Virtues continued from page 4...



Jin Gi Rei Chi Shin

Respect and thank everyone who made you who you are today. Thank your co-workers, nurses, aides, ward clerks, housekeepers, and cafeteria/dietary workers. Greet them with a smile for they will help you become the best servant that you can be to your patient. You did not become who you are by yourself and you cannot do what you set out to do alone. Respect your instruments to do the job of the way of medicine. Your stethoscope invented by Laennec⁷ almost 200 years ago is your soul as the sword was the soul of a *samurai*. Train to use it well and keep it warm with your body at all times. Never let it leave your possession while you are on duty. Respect the places of healing as a physician as the dojo⁸ was the place of training and enlightenment for a *samurai*.

In martial arts we bow countless times in the process of training. Bowing is the outer expression of the inner humility; however, you do not necessarily have to bow if you have the inner humility.

Likewise, a bow without inner humility is just an empty act. Your inner humility

will manifest itself by your eyes, facial expressions, body language, choice of words, and in the manner the words come out of your mouth or sometimes just being silent. Silence is akin to an empty space in a Japanese brush painting that has a very powerful statement and accentuates your message. Remember your eyes and silence can speak louder than your words at times or to put it another way, you do not have to speak loud or spend many words to be heard by your patients. For an example, keep your eye level slightly lower than that of your patient to let them know they are superior than you are.

Don't ever get angry or show your anger to anyone. It is a sign of immaturity, insecurity and lack of training. If a *samurai* gets angry he reveals *suki*⁹ in him and gets struck by his calm opponent. That is acceptable. However, if you, as a physician, get angry you become irrational and might harm your patient. This is absolutely not acceptable. Thank the person who tries to anger you for he is giving you the chance to discipline yourself. Lastly, train yourself to eliminate surprise, fear, doubt and indecision¹⁰ from your mind as a physician.

Chi is the fourth virtue. It is the knowledge in medicine; an important weapon to fight the illness. You may be filled with compassion, have a sense of duty and know how to respect but if you don't have the knowledge you are doomed as a physician. Study, study, and study more. You study every day so you are better equipped today than yesterday and tomorrow you will be wiser than today. Your life as a physician means you commit yourself to learning

constantly in a rapidly changing environment and advances in medical science. You know medical information will turn over much more rapidly in the 21st Century than the previous one. In addition, study history and other general topics to be well-rounded person. At the same time, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." There is always something we don't know. You just need to study to find the answer or consult the expert. Do I study, you ask? You bet. I study every day. You will be in the position to teach soon. Consider whatever knowledge and skill you have as a common property and share it freely without compensation. Teaching means learning twice. Sharing your knowledge will not diminish your own; instead it will enrich you. The ultimate beneficiary of your teaching is not your students you teach but their future patients. Regardless of the boundary of geography or time the patients are all the same.

Shin is a belief and conviction. Believe in your patients and yourself. Believe in something superior than any one of us. Have a firm conviction in your principle and goals that you can pursue the rest of your life. Believe that you can improve the lives of your patients and condition of the society. Maintain a perpetually burning flame of passion in your heart as the first day you decided to become a physician.

Five virtues, this, I firmly believe.

Sincerely,

Dad

Footnotes

¹Confucius (551–478 BC). His quasi-religious philosophy dominated much of Japanese education of children and studying his books was a sign of educated person until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

²The term *Bushido* was introduced to the West by Nitobe Inazo (1862–1933) in his book written in English with the same title, *Bushido*. He was a western educated Japanese scholar (5 PhDs), Christian, philosopher, educator, author and politician.

³仁: Consist of symbol 亻=人 that represents person and 二 that represents numeral two.

⁴Jinichi: 仁一 *Jin* followed by numeral *one*.

⁵医者仁術也: Aphorism from ancient Japan.

⁶The word originates in Zen and tea ceremony. It literally means *one time one meeting*. It is usually translated as "for this time only" or "one chance in a lifetime." Even if you meet again the person and you may have changed. Further, venue may have changed and the time has definitely changed. It emphasizes the importance of present and transience in the universe.

⁷Rene Theophile Hyacinthe Laennec (February 17, 1781–August 13, 1826); a French physician Born in Brittany, France, invented the stethoscope in 1815 but he did not obtain patent so it would benefit all the physicians and their patients in the future.

⁸*Dojo* literally means "place of the way". It usually refers to the place of training of the way of martial arts (i.e. Kendo, Judo, Kyudo, Iaido) but also refers to a training place of any other art (dance) and religion (Zen). It is mentioned in the earliest Buddhist sutra as a place of enlightenment.

⁹*Suki* is an opening or break in concentration or readiness; a moment of vulnerability. Famed swordsman and an author of *Gorin no Sho/Book of Five Rings*, Miyamoto Musashi, was a master of psychological tactics and made his opponent angry to create *suki*. He won 68 consecutive duels.

¹⁰*Kyo, ku, gi, and waku* are considered four forbidden states of mind in martial art.

Brief Introduction to the Japanese New Year

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

*“Akemashite Omedetou Gozaimasu.
Hon-nen mo yoroshiku onegai-shimasu.”*

This is how Japanese say, “Happy New Year”. The occasion of the New Year is one of the most important festivals for Japanese. They call it *O-Sho-gatsu*, or “Honorable First Month” (January). The first day of January is called *Sho-gatsu gantan*.

Before the New Year, houses are cleaned, business is taken care of, the local temple is visited, friends and business associates and co-workers are sent greetings for the New Year. Presents or gift tokens of gratitude, called *O-seibo*, are exchanged. Mothers and housewives are busy preparing the New Year’s feast referred to as *O-sechi-ryori*. And, families, companies, businesses, and clubs hold *Bo-nen-kai* or “Forgetting the Old Year” parties. On New Year’s Day, families celebrate with big feasts of traditional Japanese foods. Many families dress up in their best *kimono* and visit the local temple to pray for success and good fortune for the New Year. From New Year’s Day for one or two weeks, everyone takes a vacation so hardly any business is done in the first part of January in Japan.

Not so much today, but years ago in the Little Tokyo neighborhood in Los Angeles, local markets were busy selling New Year’s foods and the local *manju* shops such as Mikawayaya and Fugetsudo only made *mochi* for the New Year. It was hard to buy *manju* during this time. From New Year’s Day for about one week, all the shops in Little Tokyo were closed but people would still come to Little Tokyo to see all the beautiful New Year’s displays set up in the windows of every shop. Now this tradition has, for the most part, faded away. During those days, shops like Asahi Shoes and Rafu Shoten always had huge displays.

One of the most important symbols of the New Year is *Sho-chiku-bai* – the pine, bamboo, and plum. Every family would decorate their place of honor or *tokonoma* with this type of flower arrangement. In Japan, an arrangement of *Sho-chiku-bai* is placed outside the entrance of every house and business. This is called *kado-matsu* (literally, “entrance pine”).

These symbols are auspicious for the Japanese representing good luck and good fortune. The evergreen pine represents long life or “ever-green”. Also, the pine needles (*matsu-ba*) are the only leaves which are completely round. Most leaves have two sides. Thus, the pine needle means that people should not be “two-sided” but “well-rounded”, showing the same face from every side.

The bamboo is flexible and bends with the wind. This means that we should bend with adversity or hard times, ever ready to spring back. In Japanese weddings, women traditionally wear a *kimono* with the design of snow-covered bamboo. This means the newly married wife is loyal and is always able to endure difficult times.

The plum blossom is the only blossom to bloom in the cold winter. This means that everyone should show their best in the face of adversity where no one else dares to go. Also, the plum blossom is the symbol of “Tenjin-san”, the patron saint of students. Students pray to him for success in their studies and exams. “Tenjin-san” was a famous aristocrat named Sugawara Michizane, who was known for his wisdom and learning. His picture is on one of the highest value cards in the *hana-fuda* deck (Japanese playing cards) that shows an aristocrat watching a frog and a willow branch. He



saw the frog trying to catch the hanging willow branch and realized that man should try his best in every endeavor. Later, he was falsely accused as a traitor and exiled, where he died a lonely death. Soon after, there were many disasters across the countryside which were thought to be caused by his unavenged spirit, so the Emperor made him a deity and prayed to put his spirit at rest. As a deity he is popularly known as “Tenjin-san” and many students hang his picture above their desks for good luck in their exams.

Another popular symbol of the New Year is the *Tsuru-kame*, or crane and turtle. Both represent “long life” of 10,000 years and 100,000 years, respectively.

In the New Year’s feast, one may see in the center of the many delicious foods the lobster, or *Ise-ebi*. Its long antennae represent “long life” and its curved body is like an old man who has lived a long life. I remember during my childhood, I used to watch my grandmother prepare the New Year’s feast every year. She was always very careful not to break off the antennae of the lobster because she thought it was bad luck. I also remember during hard times, we couldn’t afford the luxury of lobster so we had to settle for shrimp.

Making *mochi* or “pounding *mochi*”, called *mochi-tsuki*, is one of the most active events of the New Year. Originally, these small, rounded cakes made from pounded sweet rice were offerings to the gods to pray for good harvest and good fortune. It is popularly said that the sticky, chewy *mochi* can be pulled like “pulling out or elongating your life” when eating it.

For New Year’s, one often sees *kasane mochi* (“stacked” *mochi*) or *kagami mochi* (“mirror” *mochi*) on display. On a *sambo* (a traditional wooden tray used in Shinto ceremonies for offerings), two large *mochi* are stacked and topped with a tangerine or orange and decorated with *kombu* or seaweed. This is an auspicious symbol of harvest for the land (*mochi*), air (tangerine), and sea (seaweed). This larger type *mochi* is called *kagami* because it looks like an old style Japanese mirror, which was a large round plate of highly polished metal in olden times.

Towards the end of January, a traditional *kagami-biraki* or “mirror opening ceremony” takes place to signify the official beginning of all activities for the coming year. Happy New Year, everyone!

Editor’s Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, in a pamphlet for *mochitsuki* at the Union Church in Little Tokyo on December 29, 1990.

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

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

Mondays

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

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Advanced*

Wednesdays

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

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Bokken

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.

We are directly affiliated with: **AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

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.*

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.



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Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

7:15-8:15 AM Beginning
8:15-9:15 AM Intermediate/Advanced

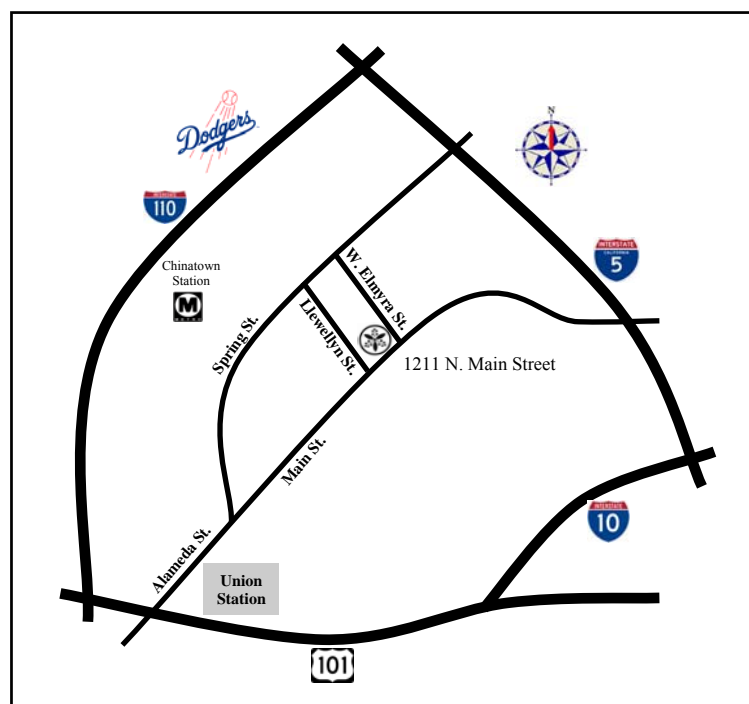
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM (Bokken Practice)
7:30-8:30 PM

No classes on the last weekend of the month.



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.*