

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
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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The spring flowers, the autumn moon;
Summer breezes, winter snow.
If useless things do not clutter your mind,
You have the best days of your life. – Ekai

Upcoming Events

December 31-January 1st:
Dojo Closed: New Year's

January 7th:
Kagami Biraki –
official opening of the dojo

January 14th:
2nd Doshu memorial service

January 21st:
Dojo Dance Benefit

January 28th:
Intensive Seminar

February 25th:
Intensive Seminar

March 3-5th:
Furuya Sensei Seminar
and Memorial service

Message From the Teacher
by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

明けましておめでとう
Happy New Year!

January usually brings with it a sobering reality because the harshness that comes with winter. Winter is the time of the year when we get to reap all that we have sown. All of our preparations, or lack thereof, are a stark reality when the winter's snow begins to fall.

Some dread the coming of winter and all its harshness, but within winter, January 1st brings with it the awareness of the beauty of winter too. Snow is both pure and beautiful and something to look forward to. Like all things Japanese the seasons have a *in* and *yo* (yin and yang). Winter and all its harshness has a sense

of beauty and purity not seen in any other month. Surviving despite the harshness of winter somehow makes it beautiful.

The winter season is the only season which cannot be mistaken for any other. In summer it may rain, in autumn it can be hot and some springs can even feel cold, but in winter there is no mistaking that it is winter.

Winter's are tough, but despite that we are still alive and living in the best moments of our lives. We can't see it because we are bogged down by the things that we don't have or the happiness we haven't yet achieved.

The beauty of our lives is that no matter what life throws at us, we are still here and we can still experience the beauty of life.

I wish you all a healthy and happy 2017!

Empty Your Cup

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

A Zen master named Nan-in once had a visitor who came to inquire about Zen who was also a local university professor. Upon meeting this well known Zen master, the professor immediately began to speak about all the things he knew about Buddhism. As he spoke, Nan-in served him tea. He poured tea into the visitor's cup until it was full and then kept on pouring until the cup began to overflow.

The visitor noticed this and was finally unable to restrain himself. "Don't you see it's full?" he said. "No more will go in!"

Nan-in smiled and said, "Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

Throughout the year our minds get filled up like the cup in this story. Logically, as the story illustrates, when our cups get filled up, we can no longer objectively take in any more information and when we can't take in any more information, we can no longer learn. There is a Japanese proverb that best illustrates this idea: "When a bonsai stops growing, you know it's dead." Thus, in order to keep growing, we must keep learning which is the only way to reach our highest potential.

When our cups are "full," our minds are closed and dense and become bogged down with the weight of what we not only know but also with the embarrassing realization of what it is that we don't know. Either way, this "knowledge" causes our minds to "stop" because our minds become agitated by the things that we "know." For one's mind to stop is what is referred to as "abiding" in swordsmanship. To abide means that our minds lose their ability to be open and fluid and can be "stopped" by the littlest of things. In athletics, this full cup place is frustrating and is referred to as a plateau. In Aikido training, the three hardest training plateaus are 3rd kyu (*sankyu*), 1st dan (*shodan*) and 3rd dan (*sandan*). More than any other time, these three incidences are the most difficult and thus the times when most end up quitting. (I don't count the non-ranked white belt who just started because they don't really reach a plateau and quit as much as they never find the love or passion to begin with).

At *sankyu*, a student's cup becomes full through several years of practice and leads them to become disillusioned because they can't see the beginning anymore but also can't see the end either and think, "I'm hopeless." The person who reaches the level of *shodan* sometimes becomes full from the fatigue of the journey of several

years which culminates with a long and hard testing process and they end up thinking "I can't go any farther." *Sandan* is probably the hardest because their cup becomes full from the ego of accomplishment and knowledge and they think "I know."



When our cups are "empty," our minds have a certain pliability to them in which they become not only open but willing to learn. When I say empty, I don't mean nil or vacuous, but instead the absence of preconceived thought leads to this state of awareness. In Buddhism, this open mental flexibility is called *shoshin* (初心) or the "beginner's mind." Whenever we start something new, we are filled with wonderment, passion and curiosity. This beginner's mind is the ideal state for learning because we are not filled with preconceived notions or ideas about what is right or wrong and yet still open. In Buddhism, this open mind that does not abide is called equanimity. An equanimous mind is one that is calm and composed with a sense of awareness. This open mind enables us to be sponge-like absorbing anything and everything. A wonderful quote illustrating

this idea of equanimity by Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Sensei was "One becomes vulnerable when one stops to think about winning, losing, taking advantage, impressing or disregarding the opponent. When the mind stops, even for a single instant, the body freezes, and free, fluid movement is lost."

The month of January is typically about redemption and new beginnings or for the sake of this article, the empty cup. In the western world, every person waits for January 1st with bated breath hoping the day makes everything anew. In Japan where every person turns a year older on January 1st every person starts the year with a clean slate and the opportunity for a prosperous year.

2017 could prove to be more prosperous than years past as this year is the year of the Rooster. Roosters typically crow to awaken us. This awakening can be mental or spiritual but it could also be in terms of the context of our lives. We have the chance to become beginners again – we have the chance to reach our highest potential – we have the chance to empty our cups.

The only criterion for true and lasting success is *how* we approach what it is that we want. Success is not some elusive thing that only fortunate people get to enjoy – it is out there for all of us. No matter whom we wish to become or what it is that we want to accomplish, it can only be achieved with the proper mindset and attitude.

So, what is the rooster calling you to do in 2017?

I wish you all the prosperity and wealth this year. May peace prevail for us all.



Happy New Year!

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz
Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

With the start of 2017, I am sure that many of us have new goals or projects. In the short or long term, some goals are small and other major goals. But, from experience I also know that as the days and months go by, some things causes goals be made, others to be transformed and many others to be postponed for yet another year, stored in the tray marked "pending."

But from a martial arts perspective these type of setbacks, or changes in our plans are not a defeat or a waste of time, but rather I think our lives should take advantage of any situation good or bad and continue to move forward and look for what the situation wants to teach me.

Maybe I'm too optimistic, but I like to think that I'm one of those who see the glass always half full and if it were empty it would just be a good opportunity to fill it.

In training, personal life, and work, it is the honest truth that bad things may happen to us. We all have setbacks in our lives that we will have to overcome, but the option to overcome it and to follow it to its end is ours and nobody else's. We are then responsible for our own happiness.

To my students I usually say to them, "do the work." I try to emphasize to them that they shouldn't worry too much because today their technique might not be so good, but if they put the work in they will eventually get good. In order to improve, they have to get up and do it regardless if the teacher criticizes them, they don't feel like going or had a bad day at work or at home.

Whatever it is that we want in life, we should maintain a martial arts fighting spirit and fight for what it is we want and if it does not happen get up and try again. Most of the time there are no shortcuts to get things in this life that we want and the practice of Aikido is no different. Furuya Sensei often used to quote the Bishop Yamashita who said, "Most of the time things do not go as expected" and so that's no excuse to give up.

In the dojo when new students arrive I like to know what attracted them to training, or what the expectations are that have made them want to practice Aikido. It can take a couple of months of practice to get oriented which gives them the opportunity to see if their initial vision is similar to what they are doing. Most times, it is not as they expected and most will agree that it is more complicated and difficult than they expected, but I hope most still like it.

It is at this point where the real work or real training begins. This is where our real martial arts discipline begins – we are aware that it will be difficult, complicated and that most of the time we will not understand it but we like it and want to get good. This is the time when we "do the work" day by day to achieve our goals and progress. That is the true secret of this art – in order to get good, we just have to keep going.

So if this year if you want to get better at Aikido or achieve your other goals, don't worry too much and just keep doing the work and eventually your attitude and effort will lead to success.

From my family and dojo to yours, Happy New Year 2017. I hope that this year brings you much success but above all good health in order to do everything that you want to achieve.



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.



Gung Ho

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

First of all, I would like to wish a “Happy New Year” to all of the ACLA students and their families. Lately, we have had a large influx of new students and it’s so nice to see new faces on the mat eager to join our practice. It’s very important for the senior students to help acclimatize the beginners and get them used to our dojo. Working together enables everybody to focus on the training.

It’s important to work together smoothly, not only with the new students but with all the students. In Aikido, the word harmony gets thrown around a lot. There are sayings like, “Harmonize with your opponent’s *ki*”, or “The art of Harmony” and so on and so forth. Harmony is one of those lofty concepts that’s easy to say like, “Be a good person” but very difficult to put into practice.

The United States Marines have a saying, “gung ho.” When people hear the term “Gung Ho,” it conjures images of enthusiasm, or hard charging Marines come to mind. While the modern definition of *gung ho* might be “eager” or “enthusiastic,” but the original phrase in Chinese means “to work together” as in, working together harmoniously towards a common goal. In the context of practice, in the most basic sense, it’s learning the technique and helping your fellow students to develop.

Everything about Aikido training is designed to develop this sense of harmony. When being thrown or pinned – taking “*ukemi*” – it is improper to resist your partner too much. Instead, the *uke* – the student who is taking the *ukemi* – moves with the technique trying to match its movement while the *nage* – the student who is throwing or pinning– practices the technique’s movements, smoothly, without pushing or using too much physical strength. In practice, it’s easy to resist someone, or use too much muscle. After all Aikido is a martial art and martial arts to most people means “power!”

It might seem that moving with, as opposed to against, their partner shortchanges the training and somehow makes it “fake.” In terms of what the layman knows as “fighting”, moving with your partner’s technique might seem counterintuitive. It might seem that by going with your partner’s movements they won’t develop a strong technique, but martial arts at its highest levels goes beyond simple physical strength.

What makes Aikido training so sophisticated is that the way the student uses their energy in a way that develops the energy in their partner, not by resisting them but by moving *with* their partner; that is, working together with them to develop their technique. It’s important to develop the proper energy in your practice. Energy is different than strength. Strength involves pushing, pulling, yanking, and shoving.

Proper energy in practice does not only mean “concentration” in the way we normally think of the word. It’s not bending spoons or trying to light your arch enemy’s head on fire. Proper energy involves clarity, focus, awareness, and movement, both physical and mental, in the technique.



Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

By practicing harmoniously – cooperating – with each other, we can develop strong technique in which the flow of energy is constant and smooth, without any lapses in concentration or movement, in short, a technique with no openings vulnerable to attack.

If we are constantly resisting each other, it might help build up muscular strength, and muscular strength is impor-

tant to a degree, but in Aikido and in the highest forms of other martial arts, training goes beyond how much one can bench press or the number of pushups they can do. Occasionally, strong *ukemi* is necessary to test oneself, but the most important part of training with your partner is how to foster the energy in the practice, bring it to life, and use that energy to match and take over your opponent’s attack.

Everyone wants to test themselves to determine their level and the easiest way to do this by fighting each other. The important thing to realize is that proper Aikido training goes beyond ego; beyond good and bad, winning and losing.

This mental aspect to the training is more difficult to practice than simply getting into shape, improving flexibility, or strengthening your muscles. This mental aspect is much more elusive to gauge. It’s not like measuring physical fitness test results. This is why it’s important to practice with your partner in a thoughtful and cooperative way, yet in an energetic way that won’t reduce Aikido to an empty, ineffective struggle of who’s physically stronger.

Continued on page 6...



Let's Celebrate the Year of the Rooster and Join Us

Dancing for the Dojo



**A Benefit for
The Furuya Foundation & the
Aikido Center of Los Angeles**



www.aikidocenterla.com

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st, 2017

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

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**After JAN. 15: \$50 / Person & at the Door*

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Make checks payable to: **Furuya Foundation**

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

Contact Name: _____ Email for Confirmation: _____

By Jan. 15, 2017: _____ TABLE(s) of Ten @ \$350 \$ _____

_____ Individual Ticket @ \$30 / person \$ _____

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*Table Guests: List Names in Back

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426 Kingsford St.
Monterey Park, CA 91754

Gung Ho *continued from page 4...*

Part of developing your energy in your practice is reading your opponent's energy, and that is impossible if the only thing we think of is our own progress and how to lord our skill over everyone else. Without being mindful of our partner's skill level and experience, it is possible to be strong, but it will not be Aikido, or even a martial art.

There are many new students in the dojo so it's important to take care of them by working together. Part of mastering the technique is, of course, learning how to do it effectively; that is, so it will always work. This doesn't mean pounding your partner relentlessly into the mat but understanding what makes the technique work, yet throwing and pinning your partner sensibly, in a way that helps them practice energetically, yet safely.

It is not enough to understand this sense of harmony intellectually, but to know it with our bodies. The only way to realize this is by practicing regularly and trying to catch onto the form of the techniques and the spirit of the training. From the way we clean up to the way we throw and pin each other during practice, Aikido emphasizes this sense of working together. Like any other technique in Aikido's repertoire, even working together becomes a skill that requires honing.

The dojo is nothing without all its parts in working order and, in turn, working together. We develop ourselves in Aikido, not in a self-centered egotistical way, but in a way that helps improve everyone's level. Please remember this in your training.



Osame Keiko – Last practice of the year



We Are Also Judged By What We Don't Do

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Throughout our lives we are judged and we also judge ourselves by our accomplishments and deeds. Everything we are, it seems, depends on our abilities and what it is we can do. This is the rule of the physical or materialistic world.

In the spiritual world, however, we are judged by what we don't do. Maybe this sounds very strange to say but if we think about it, we will see that it is also true. Man is judged by his abilities and deeds but man is also judged by what he does "not" do.

We set up rules and standards for ourselves and we admire those who adhere to their ideals faithfully. Today, our view is so distorted that we only admire those who so-called "break" the rules. No! We don't admire those who break the rules, we admire and respect those who can surpass or transcend them.

During breakfast today, my student told me of a highly respected educator who, long retired at 78 years old, was passing by a school yard watching the children at play and a young kid came up to her and spit on her. She was very shocked at this and managed to trace who the kid was and filed a complaint with the school. Of course, the kid was caught and the mother called in and apologies were made. When they asked the kid why he would spit on this elderly lady, his only reply was, "because I thought it would be funny."

As much as I like going to the movies, I actually dread the experience nowadays. When I go, I am so surprised at how badly mannered people are. In the theater, they talk loudly and cause a commotion with no thought about who else they might be disturbing. They throw food on the floor, run around, and sneak into the other movie theaters. Not only do they shame themselves, I think, but they shame their parents and their whole family and friends. "Is this the kind of people you associate with?" "Is this the way you raise your children?" These are the questions and impressions that come to mind.

In society, we can only live together if we all follow the same rules and standards, we agree to drive on the same side of the street. We do not kill others. We do not steal or lie. We do not harm our neighbors and so on and so on.

In the spiritual world or the world of spiritual training, it is even more severe. Do not lie, do not smoke or drink too much, do not swear, do not think bad thoughts, do not be lazy, do not, do not, do not, do not! We are judged by what we do not do, we are judged by the strict ideals we bind ourselves to in order to develop and train ourselves. This is the true meaning and foundation of training.

Of course, we are free to do whatever we want. If everyone feels this way, we only have anarchy, chaos and eventual self-destruction of not only society but ourselves and others.

In martial arts, as warriors we live by a strict code of honor, respect and manners. Warriors and samurai are distinguished by the strict code of ethics and morals they bind themselves to. This is what makes them very special and this is where their true inner strength and spiritual energy come from.



Sensei with Nidai Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba in 1969 at Aiki-jinja

We have no respect for those who have no discipline or rules to live by. At the same time, we associate this carte blanche of morals to the way we do business. Anything goes as long as we make a profit, or, in other words, no-profit or loss means failure and this is wrong and not acceptable! What we have encouraged is a generation of people who think they can do anything they feel like as long as they can get away with it and as long as fulfills their immediate goals.

In this way, a young kid can justify his action – to get a laugh, let me spit on this elderly lady! To make a little money, let me kill this person and take his money. I want some fun, let me rape and abuse this girl. The movie is boring so let's make a lot of noise so people will know who we are. It is all the same thing. It all comes from a sad, undisciplined mind which has no direction to go and can only occupy itself by feeding on its own indulgences.

Teachers too have a strong ethical perspective and I was taught that there are many things we shouldn't do in order to maintain our dignity, honor and respect. Today, this no longer holds true. Teachers are not real teachers, warriors are not real samurai, and students are not real seekers of knowledge. I see a lot of money hungry people who will do anything for a few dollars. I see many power hungry people who will not let anything stand in their way to accomplish their own thirst for fame. We are all here to grab what we can and "screw" everyone else! We are raptors! We are cannibals! We are ghouls! Because this is how monsters, not human beings, behave.

In the dojo and in your training, you must follow the strict rules of the art. I know that you do not like to be told what to do. I know that you do not like to have restrictions or rules in your lives. Of course, you do realize that because some people think that they can do anything they please, we may be going to war and throw our whole world into deep chaos. . . for exactly this same reason.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on January 6, 2003.

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

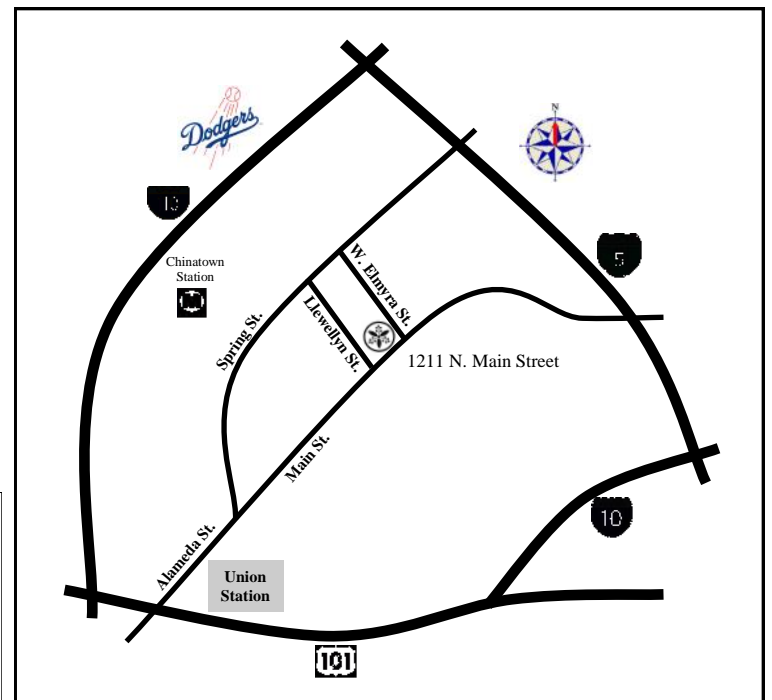
Sundays

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
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*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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*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.*