

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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Message From the Teacher

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

To me, the summer time means festivals and celebrations as the local temple Obon festivals kick off the summer and then the summer book ends nicely with all the Nisei week festivities.

In the old days, our dojo wasn't air conditioned so the summer heat was unbearable and became something of that unrelenting and unreasonable training partner which we all had to surmount in order to make it through practice.

In the martial arts, the best training partners are the one's, like the summer heat, which are unrelenting and unreasonable. The adversity that they create for us is what makes us grow the most.

The lotus is a summer flower and the one most associated with growing despite inauspicious beginnings. It is born in the filth and muck of mud and only blooms when the summer starts to heat up and it breaks the water's surface. The lotus is the flower which best typifies our development as not only martial artists, but as human beings too.

The lotus is a beautiful flower but it doesn't begin that way. It starts out a feeble bud that

grows out of the darkness of mud. After it traverses its blight, it blossoms into a beautiful flower. In Buddhist cosmology, the lotus is the flower that bloomed at the beginning of the world.



A lotus painted by my Grandmother Nobu Yamamoto which hangs above my desk in the office.

There was a nice quote from the movie *Mulan* which epitomizes this change, "The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all." This is a nice metaphor for martial arts training.

For a martial artist to grow, much like the lotus, we must first confront ourselves and use it as an opportunity for growth. Every one of us comes from some adversity, no one is immune. From this battle we learn about humanity in that, like us, all humans suffer

and with that wisdom we learn to be more kind, compassionate and forgiving – in a sense more beautiful.

Learning the martial arts is not supposed to make us into indiscriminate killers. Studying the martial arts is really the study of humanity. We all have the power to do great harm, but like the lotus we transcend ourselves to become better and more beautiful people.

This summer, I hope that we can be inspired by the lotus and grow together to become not only great Aikidoist but better people too.

Upcoming Events

July 4th:

Dojo Closed: 4th of July

July 7, 9 and 10th

Zenshuji Obon volunteering

July 30th:

Intensive Seminar

August 9-12th:

Karita Sensei visit

August 27th:

Intensive Seminar

September 5th:

Dojo Closed: Labor Day

September 4th:

Intensive Seminar

Can You or Will You

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

More than 20 years ago, Furuya Sensei put out a nine video series called *The Art of Aikido*. Sensei designed it to take someone from a beginning level all the way to black belt. People have often ask me if it is actually possible to learn Aikido from Sensei's video series. If you were to ask me if it was possible 20 years ago, I would have said, "No." Fast forward 20 years, I would say that not only can someone with no Aikido background learn Aikido from his videos, but many actually have.

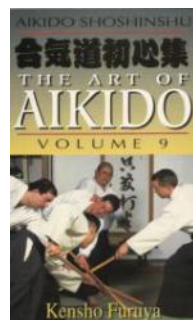
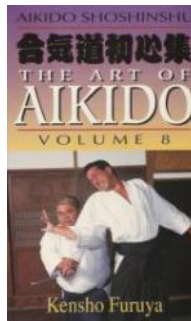
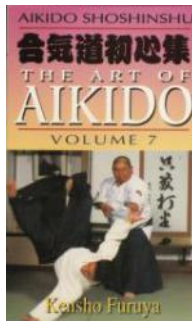
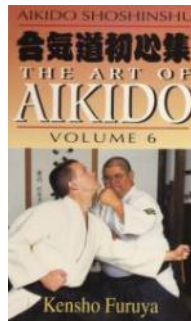
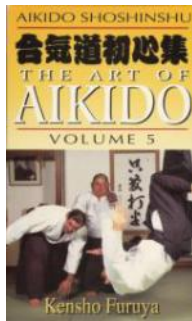
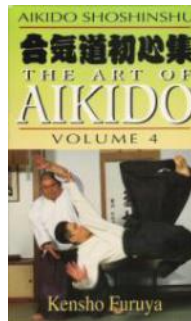
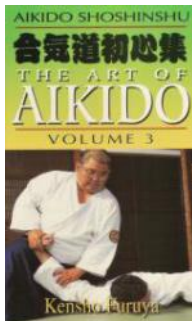
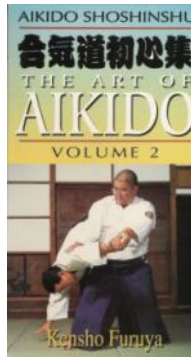
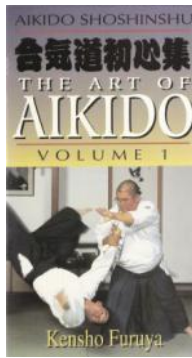
Years ago, a person from the mid-west sent us a video tape of himself doing the Aikido from Sensei's video series. Sensei called many of the senior students into his office to watch this person's submission. We all stood there in utter disbelief at not only how well this person did despite having no formal instruction but also how closely he followed Sensei's movements and speech.

This guy didn't tape himself doing the techniques from the videos, but rather he filmed himself re-enacting Sensei's video series. He did the moves as carefully as he could and he also repeated everything Sensei said. It was incredible how far he got just studying the videos. To me, the craziest part was when this guy said, "cough" as he copied Sensei at one point during his video. Sensei was blown away, but many of us didn't catch it. Most of us thought, "Why did this kid say 'cough'?" Sensei explained that during that part of the video he coughed and this guy copied it!

With this affectation, this person showed that it was possible to learn Aikido from a video and, for the most part, without a teacher. Now, he wasn't the best nor was his movement clean, but we could tell that his person put in the assiduous time not only doing the techniques but also "studying" Sensei. He did exceptionally well despite having no access to a competent teacher.

What was the deciding factor in this person's success? Was it Sensei's video series? Was it because Sensei is a great teacher? Was this young man some type of martial arts prodigy? Who knows.

The debate about what makes someone successful is as old as time and usually boils down to the question of nature versus nurture and which contributes more to a person's success. Who knows, it's probably a little bit of every-



thing. Finding that single pivotal thing may never be found and I am sure the argument will rage on forever.

There is a famous Chinese proverb that might help to shed some light on the "nature versus nurture" argument.

Tell me and I'll forget
Show me and I won't remember
Involve me and I'll understand

Here is story from Sensei's book *Kodo: Ancient Ways* that might help explain this Chinese proverb:

In ancient times in Japan, a thief began to think of retirement and decided to teach his son his craft of burglary. His son was eager to follow in the footsteps of his father, so he immediately agreed.

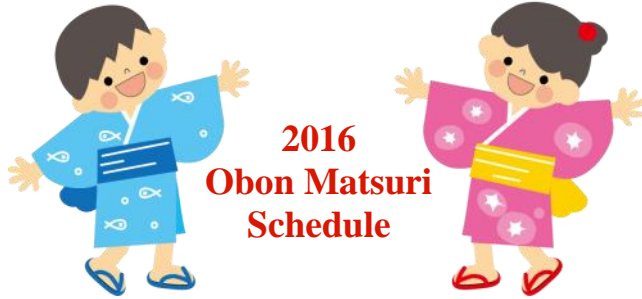
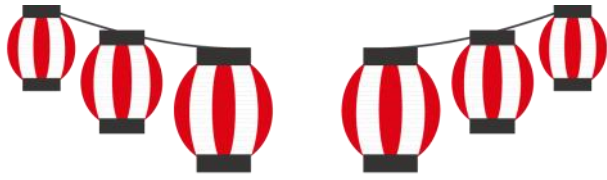
That night, the son went to work with him. They found their target, burrowed a small hole in the wall and entered the mansion grounds, easily entering the house. The expert thief had no trouble locating the hidden money. While he was gathering the gold coins, he told his son to check the large clothes chest for valuables. As the son peeked inside, suddenly the father pushed him completely inside, locked the chest and – yelling, "Thief! Thief!" – took off, leaving the bewildered son behind.

The son was angry to be betrayed by his father, but somehow he had to escape; he knew it would be the end if he was caught, and he wanted to give his father a piece of his mind. Hearing the mistress and her maid enter the room, he started to make scratching sounds like a mouse, and the mistress ordered the maid to open the clothes chest and look inside. As the maid opened the chest, he jumped out, pushed the maid to the ground, blew out the candle and made his escape. Hearing his pursuers, he threw a large stone into the well,

creating the illusion the he had jumped in. Thus he made his way back home. Immediately, he confronted his father and demanded an explanation for his betrayal. The father said, "Now, now, before you get so mad, tell me how you were able to escape the mansion." When the son finished explaining all he had done to escape, his father burst out laughing saying, "There! Indeed, you have mastered the art of burglary!"

Continued on page 6...

In The Community...



Senshin Buddhist Temple

July 2, 5:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Oxnard Buddhist Temple

July 9, 1:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm

Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

July 9-10, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Zenshuji Soto Mission

July 9-10, 11:00 am - 8:00 pm

Orange County Buddhist Church

July 16-17, Saturday, 2:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm; Sunday, 2:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Venice Buddhist Temple

July 16 -17, Saturday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Pasadena Buddhist Temple

July 23-24, Saturday, 4:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 4:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

July 30-31, Saturday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 5:30 pm; Sunday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 5:30 pm

West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple

July 30-31, Saturday, 4:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Gardena Buddhist Church

August 13-14, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm

Want to dance in the Nisei Week Ondo & Closing Ceremony or Grand Parade?



Join us this year as the Nisei Week Japanese Festival celebrates its 76th anniversary
August 13-21.

2016 Ondo Dance:

Soran Matsuri (Song by Yoshimi Tendo)

Hoshi no mai (Song by Megumi Date)

Choreographies by Hanayagi Rokufukumi

To help the public prepare for the Grand Parade (August 14) and Ondo street dancing/Closing Ceremony (August 21), free public dance practices are being held from 6:30 - 9 pm on Tuesday July 19, Thursday July 21, Tuesday July 26, Thursday July 28, Tuesday August 2, and Thursday August 4 on the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center Plaza

Please bring one set of naruko (wood clapper) to each practice.

Questions should be directed to Miles Hamada at (323) 620.0662 or milesamada@yahoo.com.



NISEI WEEK
Japanese Festival

2016 Nisei Week Japanese Festival

*Calendar of Festival Events as of 6/24/16
Dates and times subject to change.*

July 17 (Sun) Festival Opening Ceremony

July 23 (Sat) Baby Show

Centenary United Methodist Church, 9am – 3pm

August 14 (Sun) Grand Parade

Little Tokyo, 4:00 pm

August 20 (Sat)

Nisei Week Japanese Festival/JACCC Plaza Festival

Nisei Week Rubik's Cube Open

JACCC Plaza, 8:00 am

Day-Lee Foods World Gyoza Eating Championship

JACCC Plaza, 2:00 pm

August 21 (Sun)

Nisei Week Japanese Festival/JACCC Plaza Festival

Ondo and Closing Ceremony

1st Street, 4 pm

For more information visit: niseiweek.org

Over and Over Again

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

If insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results, then doing the same thing over and over again and finally realizing why you had to do the same thing over and over again might be enlightenment.

Outwardly, both actions seem the same, but internally they could not be more different. That difference is in the attitude the student brings to their training. One is fueled by their ego; that is, training with the idea that they will somehow be rewarded, while the latter trains without expecting praise or merit.

One aspect people don't like about traditional martial arts training is the repetition. In this modern, sped-up world, we have technology enabling information to be easily available to everybody. It doesn't take any effort or hardship to go out and find information. With this kind of atmosphere surrounding learning, practicing for years to perfect a specific skill might probably not be on a student's bucket list.

No one wants to practice one punch until they perfect it. Most are satisfied that they can punch someone hard enough to hurt them or at least to impress their friends. To them, this is "good enough." The popular notion nowadays is instant gratification is good; mastery obtained in six-months. Everyone wants to get good and nobody wants to practice only to be average. People want expertise right away but without putting in the work. It's popular to do all sorts of different things in order to gain mastery without doing the one thing that will make them good – practice.

Nowadays most people are satisfied with "I know". It's easy to mistake accumulating facts, figures, and trivia from the internet to assume mastery. It's easy to mistake this "I know" for the real thing, but without a teacher's instruction and regular practice this "I know" is just a bad copy of true mastery.

When the student begins their training, the student puts their complete faith into the teacher and when the teacher accepts a student, they put their complete faith into that student. They say teaching is like two people shooting a single arrow at each other hoping that they will hit midair – almost impossible! Without this trust between a teacher and a student, transmitting the art will be next to impossible. This is the kind of faith that both the teacher and the student must put into the teacher/student relationship.

Without the student's faith to follow the teacher and without the teacher's skill in transmitting the art, doing the same thing over and over can easily become empty or meaningless. Many times the student will wonder, while doing one of these tedious basics "Why am I doing this?"



"Torao 'Tiger' Mori, did 3,000 suburi cuts each day and from these 3,000 cuts, he deemed only maybe a few of them any good."

For example, in swordsmanship, one of the basics a student must master is the overhead sword cut or *kiriotoshi*. To a beginner, the practice of *suburi*, literally "many swings," can be monotonous, tedious, painful, and seemingly pointless. Some students often think, "When are we going to do some real techniques?"

Furuya Sensei's Kendo teacher, Torao "Tiger" Mori, did 3,000 *suburi* cuts each day and from these 3,000 cuts, he deemed only maybe a few of them any good. An expert will swing their sword millions of times over their lifetime in an attempt to perfect their sword cut; a movement seemingly simple, yet almost impossible to perfect. An experienced sword student at some point realizes the importance of *suburi* and that every sword technique is dependent on the mastery of this basic overhead cut. It is this kind of faith and dedication that is necessary to reveal the "Why" in what one is doing.

When Sensei trained his students he told me there was a time when he wanted to stop doing *kokyu dosa* at the end of every class. To him, it seemed like such a useless warm-down, but despite that feeling

he still made it part of the training because his teachers made a point to do it and he had faith in them. It wasn't until later that he realized the importance of doing *kokyu dosa* at the end of class.

There are many things we do expecting some kind of reward – maybe we want to get stronger, maybe we want to get smarter, or maybe we want to feel better about ourselves and gain confidence – yet we become disappointed when the results don't somehow meet our expectations.

We can do something over and over again selfishly expecting us to get better, stronger, and smarter or we can do the same thing over and over again and finally without any expectation of reward or sense of entitlement, finally understand the "Why". This is a journey possible for anyone yet is not a journey FOR everyone. Is it for you? Only you and your teacher will know for sure.



2016 Weapons Seminar



The Way it Looks

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Usually my barber cuts my hair in less than five minutes. I think my head must be too simple or not good enough for his skills. One time, I jokingly said, "Give me a good haircut, it is a special occasion," and then he proceeded to cut and cut while taking his time and I was surprised by the feel of his hands and that he knew so many different techniques of cutting, etc. The finished product looked about the same (unfortunately) but I really felt that I had gotten a great haircut and later in combing my hair, I realized that it was far above the normal haircut that he usually gives but, in the mirror, it looks basically the same.

Much of Aikido is the same way. I think it is not so hard to copy all of the moves and techniques in a fairly short amount of time. In several years of regular training, I think many can feel like they have caught on to most of the movements. Sometimes, one is good enough to look just like someone very skilled but there is always a big difference. Just like this layered look in haircutting (kind of a silly comparison here), Aikido techniques also have many layers. One should not simply concentrate on imitating the movements and becoming strong but seek to give depth and more

meaning to what they are doing in each and every movement. This is not simple and this is why learning Aikido takes many years.



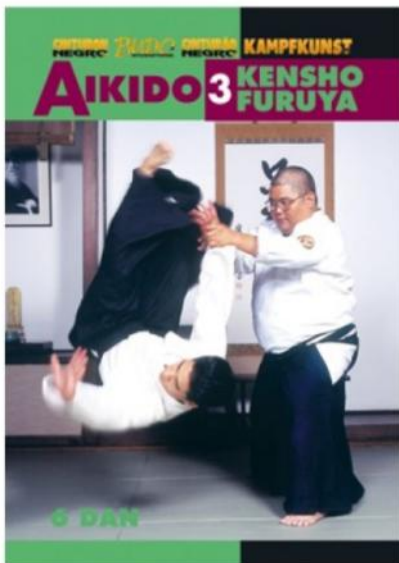
Sensei with martial arts legend Harry Wong.

I was watching a program on Japanese classical music and a teacher of *Ha-uta* was to give a lesson to some guests of the program to show how easy or accessible classical Japanese music is to the general public. *Ha-uta* is a popular form of singing from about a hundred or so years ago, favored by *geisha* in entertaining. The songs are simple, romantic, sometimes bawdy, melodies that were sung at parties and gatherings and were favored for entertaining the samurai class. In those times, these would be considered, "popular tunes." This is not one of the more sophisticated forms of singing. This teacher

would sing a few bars and the students would follow after her. Everyone got the words right and many were on key, but no one could catch the various subtle inflections of the teacher's voice that makes *Ha-tua* sound so beautiful and sexy. By contrast between the beginners and the teacher, it was startlingly evident how subtle and varied the changes in voice and inflections were. The teacher's voice had many complex layers of sounds where the beginners could only produce one sound or tone at a time.

Continued on page 7...

Can You or Will You *continued from page 2...*



Sensei's Art of Aikido volume 3 of the European version

Each of us *can* be successful, but most of us *won't* because success is more of a function of the will to succeed rather than the ability to do so. When the thief's father locked him in the chest, he was forcing him to succeed. Of course, it was kind of extreme, but it illustrated to the son that he has the skills to be successful and that to be successful was more of a function of his own desire and internal motivation.

This guy who sent us this tape had the internal drive to be successful and that one word "cough" illustrated just how much he wanted to improve by how closely and carefully he copied Sensei. Sadly, we never connected with this person and he never came to the dojo. It was one of those things that just kind of fell by the wayside. I only hope that someday he pops up as this prolific Aikido teacher who credits Sensei with lighting his internal fire which is all a teacher is supposed to do anyways.

Sensei used to say that Aikido is egalitarian – those who put in the work will get good. Success is not a matter of what one has or doesn't have, but rather what one is willing to do to get good. Is it nature or nurture? – Perhaps it is both. If one doesn't have it, how can it be nurtured by the teacher? Suganuma Sensei said it best, "The master simply does what he should do, not straining himself in an effort to teach. Therefore, the fact that some students' inner eye will open as a result of the master's words and actions and others will not cannot be helped. The master is like the rain falling from the sky without discrimination on the grass covered plain. Understanding or not is up to the student on the receiving side."

We are all capable of learning and therefore anyone can learn Aikido, but only those who are willing to learn will get good and that is why Aikido is egalitarian.

The Way it Looks *continued from page 6...*

When I was watching this program, I was thinking of Aikido practice too. For instance, many people have so much trouble with *kokyu-dosa*. Usually *kokyu-dosa*, at the end of class, can easily become only a sumo match of pushing against each other. Most of the time, students fail to catch the “roundness” and/or the “fullness” of the movement. Their hands move too simply, too straight or too small. Within the small movement of moving the hands and hips to throw the partner over, the hand movement is actually quite complex and quite fully round in order to catch and lead the partner’s energy and power. Students really have a hard time, it appears to me, to catch on to this.



Sensei demonstrating kokyu-dosa with Ryan Kageyama at an Aikido seminar with Monterey Park Karate Club.

As students gain experience, the movement outwardly appears the same, but as their understanding and experience grows, the movements gains more depth and meaning. I think some of you may not be aware of this. Outwardly, the movements may look the same or similar, but we should really judge them by their depth and meaning. It is easy to imitate a movement and actually become skillful at it but not have the slightest clue as to what one is doing or what its meaning is. Many of us are like this.

I once saw a singer performing a song in foreign language. She was able to imitate the song perfectly and sing like a native speaker but she had no idea what the meaning of the song was or what words she was singing. I think there is a big difference, although it may not be outwardly noticeable (like my haircut) between a singer who can know what the song and words mean and sing according to the meaning and someone who is just imitating the sound and blindly following the music.

I hope if someone ever (hardly likely) sings me a love song, they know what it means! When I was practicing *Utai* (singing) of the *Noh* drama, I could remember and sing the words but I had little knowledge of what I was singing or what the words really meant. Dancing and singing something I didn’t know the meaning of, I was just going from step 1 to 2 to 3 and 4, etc. I think I could do this much better, if I had an understanding of what I was doing! But understanding the movement and the meaning of each word takes years!!!

I think it is the same in Aikido for many beginners. Once you understand the steps and can imitate the movement, it may take many, many more years to actually find and understand its meaning. I think, we need to understand this to realize why Aikido training, like any fine art, is a life-time pursuit.

Many years ago, I had a student who liked to go out and try many different things. He was rarely in the dojo training but off here and there. Actually, he did not return for many years and later I found that he was trying out this other martial art and that he didn’t return to my dojo until he got bored with it. After all those years and after training in all of those different martial arts, I saw no improvement or development of skill at all. Maybe he learned a few tricks, but I could tell immediately by his posture

and the strength in his legs that he really learned nothing at all. It was so sad to think that if he had stayed in one place and really devoted himself to one art, he could have really been very good by now. Instead, he is just confused and misdirected as to what is important and vital in the art, any art, and what is just so much fluff and stuff. What a shame and what a waste. I guess, we are all, at least most of us, destined to learn everything the hard way. Learning one art may not seem like a reasonable choice or not as exciting as doing everything we can get our hands on, but there is a virtue here that no one can imitate or fake.

Take only one road at a time, or, as they say in Chinese, “You cannot have both feet in two boats at the same time!” How true!

The one question that people ask me which I hate the most is, “What is the minimum amount I have to train in order to get good at Aikido?”

For me, it is like asking for the easiest downhill road to get to the top of the mountain!

By the way, does anyone know the easiest and legal way to make a million dollars? Haha!

Editor’s Note: *Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on January 24, 2003.*



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.

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
 7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

Fridays

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

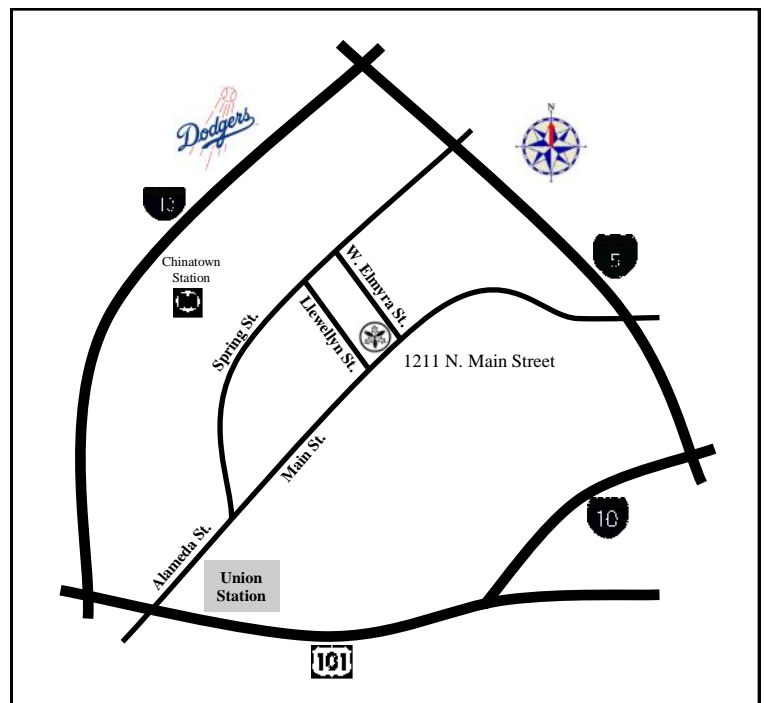
Sundays

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
 Official publication of
 the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido Dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you 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.