



# 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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Photos courtesy of Akkan Dojo

Ito Sensei teaching at Akkan Dojo

#### Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich  
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

Believe it or not, I love June in L.A. June Gloom, that time when the marine layer slips off the shoulders of the Pacific to rest in the lap of the city, stereotypically bothers Angelinos, but I like it very much. The thick cloud cover allows a soft light through that to my eyes sets off the skyline in a flattering way; it softens the harsher lines, accentuates the pleasing ones, and keeps the air cool into the bargain. It also reminds me of other places I've lived where the seasons have more decisive climactic shifts, and sometimes it's nice to have the atmosphere feel heavy with impending rain, without all the fuss and bother of actual precipitation. When I first moved to Los Angeles, I had no idea about June Gloom, and my first experience of it compelled me to explore and reconsider many of my assumptions about the place.

This issue, *The Aiki Dojo* takes up assumptions many – perhaps all – of us harbor about

our training and about our lives. Myers Sensei parses the difference between movement and action and challenges common misconceptions Iaido students, or indeed all students of the martial arts, have about these terms and the impact such misunderstanding can have upon practice. Ito Sensei puts himself in another's shoes this month, reflecting on his maturing perspective from his days as a student to his becoming a teacher of Aikido, and how our misapprehension of time can thwart the best of our intentions unless managed by rigorous discipline in all aspects of our daily lives. Maria Murakawa shares a little secret of the Old Bank district: a corner restaurant that definitely amounts to more than what meets the eye. Finally, Sensei pays us another visit with some wise words aimed to correct our assumptions about what we think we know, to help us open up to our very human natures, and thus (if we're lucky) catch our first glimpse of what embodies true Aikido. I hope you enjoy it.

*Continued on page 3...*

### Upcoming Events

#### June 4th:

Meditation class  
taught by Jake La Botz  
12:00 PM

#### June 25th:

Instructor's Intensive

#### July 4th:

Independence Day - Dojo Closed

#### July 9th:

Meditation class  
12:00 PM

#### July 30th:

Instructor's Intensive

## Summer

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

When I was younger, summer always seemed so far away and it took forever to arrive. When summer finally came, it seemed to go by in a flash. Today as an adult, every day seems as if life flies by as fast as those summers of my childhood. Every year, with hopeful affirmations in hand, we greet the New Year, and in a blink of an eye, the year is half over. Everything we wanted to do or planned to do is still left undone. We spend so much time busied by life that we forget to live it and just try to survive, not living in the present moment. We approach our Aikido training much the



*Every summer we would do numerous demonstrations and it was exhausting.  
To me, summers will always be about demonstrations.*

same way: hurriedly, running from place to place. We rush into the dojo, bring that same frenetic feeling onto the mat, and rush out of the dojo afterwards. We miss the opportunity to be part of something truly special, thinking that we will get back to it when there is more time; yet there never is any. In reality we are just wasting a tremendous gift.

For many years, Sensei would repeatedly ask me to begin Iaido training. I always turned him down, thinking that I would get back to it after college, when I would have more time. More time never materialized; college segued right into graduate school. I was always thinking, "tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow." Sensei has since passed on and today I think about how I wasted an opportunity. His specialty was weapons and he only taught them in specific classes (like Iaido) or when he felt that the students were being particularly diligent. I always thought I would have more time and I didn't want to be bothered with waking up early on the weekends. I always thought that Sensei would still be around when I felt like doing it. I could have been part of something special, but instead I chose to sleep in. Sadly, I never once saw Sensei do Iaido despite being a student at the dojo for 17 years. I missed such an opportunity.

Today I look upon my own students in the way that I am sure Sensei looked upon me. They rush in and rush out or miss training

altogether. They all have so much potential and could be so good if they invested the time. I see how they bring their lives into the dojo and spread it all over the mat, making their bad day my bad day. Their egos cloud their ability to learn and they think they know everything. It reminds me so much of myself when Sensei was alive. Like me back then, they think there is so much time left or that they will be young forever. They are squandering their opportunity to put a good effort into their training, just as I did. Life will always seem complicated and full of obstacles to prevent us from living fully. There will always be something apparently more urgent or more important that gets in the way. Life goes like that; as we struggle to survive, we forget to live.



I wish they wouldn't waste their opportunity, but this is the sickness of the student and most teachers too; you never know what you have until it's gone. As we slow down and live in the moment we will realize that there is no more time. "Tomorrow" is our battle cry and we chant it as we walk off into the sunset. Yet tomorrow never comes and so we never get into shape, stop smoking, train more, or start Iaido. That is why 80% of the people who make New Year's resolutions fail by Valentine's Day.

Everyone gets busy. Everyone has a life filled with all sorts of urgent matters, but how many of us are really present when we deal with them? When we are at work, we think of home. When we are at home, we think about work. When we are at the dojo, we are thinking about a million other things. In Aikido, we strive for balance, and balance is the key to life. When you are at the dojo, be at the dojo. When you are work, be at work. What we are really learning at the dojo is how to be present. After all, there is nothing more in the "now" than being struck *shomenuchi* on the head. When the opportunity presents itself, please train hard and diligently. Drop your ego and loose yourself in whatever it is you are doing. Don't be right; be right now, because there is no tomorrow. Please remember to live your life and slow down and enjoy your summer it won't last forever.

## Ito Sensei teaches at Akkan Dojo



Special thanks to everyone that attended. It was a wonderful time and many friendships were forged that weekend!



Photos courtesy of Akkan Dojo



### Letter From The Editor *continued from page 1...*

As our dojo continues to grow little by little, I would, in the spirit of what the aforementioned authors have written, urge our senior students to continue their practice through the summer months and help our newest students get their bearings. Let me emphasize that the best way to do this, in fact the only way Sensei tolerated, is not so much to teach them anything as such, but rather to learn alongside them with a joyful spirit. Approaching your training this way sets the tone for the class, gives the new students a proper role model, and allow everyone to receive the instructor's lesson with an empty glass instead of a full one, so to speak. If you find this idea unpleasant or distasteful, I applaud your honesty and challenge you to take it on anyway; it could be you've found the path towards your next phase of development. See you on the mat!

## Kotowaza: Japanese Proverb

**“One kind word can warm three winter months.”**

*~Japanese Proverb*



The world as we know it today is an enormous place and with the advent of the Internet it has become simultaneously global and accessible. In many ways it can be friendly or hostile based on our own doing. In this day and age, we can connect with someone halfway around the world, yet spend the day with someone in the same room and barely know they are there. Interacting with other people is what makes us human. A kind word to someone, regardless if that person is our friend or a stranger, can go a long way. Each of us has within our power the opportunity to change the world and all it takes is one kind word.



## AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES AFFILIATED DOJOS

### INTERNATIONAL

#### Spain

**Aikido Kodokai**  
Salamanca, Spain

Chief Instructor: Santiago Garcia Almaraz  
www.kodokai.com

#### Mexico

**Veracruz Aikikai**  
Veracruz, Mexico

Chief Instructors:  
Dr. Jose Roberto Magallanes Molina  
Dr. Alvaro Rodolfo Hernandez Meza  
www.veracruz-aikikai.com



### UNITED STATES

#### California

**Hacienda La Puente Aikikai**  
Hacienda Heights, California  
Chief Instructor: Tom Williams

#### Arizona

**Aikido Renbukai of Arizona**  
Surprise, Arizona  
Chief Instructor: Michael Van Ruth

Visit us on the Web at [www.aikidocenterla.com](http://www.aikidocenterla.com)





## Our Neighbors, Our Food

by Maria Murakawa, Aikido 2nd Dan

### It's Amore in Downtown L.A.

Delicious, casual, reasonably priced Italian food has been hard to find in downtown . . . until **Portofino Cucina Italiana** came along. The owner, Diego, hails from Naples, and every dish is his interpretation of Italian food from all across Italy; he offers accessible food with a touch of sophistication. So here is the rundown of the dishes which you need to experience for yourself:

First of all – complimentary bread. Housemade focaccia covered with thin slices of tomato, shimmering with olive oil and sprinkled with sea salt, toasted leaving the bread crisp and golden on top, soft and pliable on the inside. They'll even give you seconds!

On to the *polpette al sugo* (\$5) – An appetizer of juicy Angus meatballs in a savory tomato sauce, topped with parsley and parmesan cheese. Just like homemade, reminiscent of a certain Italian mom's, in short: the real deal. Sampling them became that glorious moment when restaurant food actually tastes homemade. They come cradled between two slices of garlic bread, rich and buttery. The experience is what dreams are made of.

The highlight – *fetuccine a la Piemontese* (\$12.50) – This is the dish that's spotted on every table, featuring meaty wild mushrooms (mostly shiitake) mingling with al dente flat pasta, enrobed in a subtle, creamy wine sauce. Soft and firm, rich and voluptuous, the perfect combination of texture and flavor. Pungent sage gives a warm aroma while truffle oil gives it decadence.

Pasta is the star at Portofino. One night we had *tortelloni* stuffed with a mixture of finely ground meat and cheese. The *tortelloni* were big, thick, freshly made pouches set in a delicate wine sauce with herbs and sage. The *lasagna* is true Italian, according to Diego, because it lacks the giant amounts of mozzarella cheese and ricotta so prevalent of typical American-style *lasagnas*. Instead Portofino's version is made with fresh sheets of pasta, each delicate layer sandwiching a rich beef ragu with a touch of cream sauce, and finally the glorious stack gets topped with a generous shaving of parmesan. Simply satisfying and not too heavy.

Ambience – what was once an empty Mediterranean deli, the new owners have completely renovated the space into a warm and inviting atmosphere with dark wood furniture, Tuscan orange walls, and an army of empty wine bottles lining the shelves – fitting trophies memorializing exceptional meals enjoyed in the past. Located on a corner adjacent to Skid Row, Portofino is a beacon shining its light on one of the shadier areas of the city. The restaurant is BYOB with no corkage fee, which seems to be popular as many guests take advantage of the delivery service via bicycle from a market a few blocks away. Down the street from the Nickel Diner, Portofino is also paving the way for a more inviting stretch of Main Street. The location may be downtown, but the meal you have, I think, will be uplifting.

## Portofino Cucina Italiana

464 S. Main St. (at Fourth St.)

Los Angeles, CA 90013

(213) 239-9019

www.portofinocucinaitaliana.com



*Fetuccine a la Piemontese*



*Polpette al sugo*



*Tortelloni*



*Housemade focaccia*

## “Never confuse movement with action”

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

I was reading an article several weeks ago and the above Ernest Hemmingway quotation was highlighted in bold. It immediately struck a chord since it has application in life and Iaido. We are always creatures of movement but we are not always creatures of action. Movement means life: the heart beats, blood flows even when we are sitting still. It is one of those autonomic functions, like our immune system, that we don't have to think about yet our lives depend on it. We are complicated beings, requiring the brain to act for us; but there are other things we have to focus on diligently to accomplish.

Many of us tend to confuse and interchange the words movement and action, yet their meanings are quite different. The dictionary best defines the difference between them. To paraphrase: movement is the process of change in position; action is the process of doing something to achieve an aim. It is very easy to fall into movement, not action, when we repetitively do things. The body already knows the movement, because the neural pathways developed in the brain make the movement happen. We no longer have to think consciously about each movement. For example, we have all experienced that sensation of questioning if we did something already done. It is easy for us to disengage our minds from the movement because the brain makes it more efficient to do so. When we begin to learn a new technique the brain focuses on the movement, but the cognitive mind also begins to interpret that instruction into movement. Similarly, it is easy to fixate on just motion because it is the first step in learning. It is harder to teach action in Iaido because there is not a visible opponent to react to. Action requires you to go beyond yourself. Movement is self-contained and ego-driven. There are many who know how to move in Iaido, but there are fewer who know the action of Iaido. This unfortunately also applies to people who are too inexperienced to teach.

When I first joined the dojo there was a student (who shall remain nameless) who would literally zone out, and lose all sense of the surroundings. It was eerie to watch; you could actually see his eyes glaze over. Sensei would shout his name loudly to bring him out of his own fantasy world. He was moving, but his mind wasn't in the present. Eventually Sensei had to tell him that Iaido wasn't for him, because it was almost inevitable that either he would hurt himself or someone else. Although he was moving, his mind was not in the action, nor in the present.

The most powerful weapon in swordsmanship is not the sword; it is our mind. Given equal technical ability with the sword, the swordsman with the superior mind and spirit will win. It is not the opponent's sword that defeats, it is the mind. Our mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy. Swordsmanship requires an intuitive response, a mind that does not linger on one thing but is open to everything. If the mind focuses just on movement there is no action. So on one hand, the brain tries to make us disengage from

the movement and the mind fixates on it. It is little wonder that we have difficulty going beyond just movement into action. The mind and our spirit must extend beyond the confines of our skin.

The basic components of Iaido are: *nukistuke*, *kiritsuke*, *kirioroshi*, *chiburi*, and *noto*. These elements combined apply to all *kata*. But without an aim or purpose they are just movements which lose the essence of the martial art. Without the ability to visualize what the intent is in each *kata's* movement, it is only dance and art for art's sake. That projection of purpose and aim defines the movement and makes it an action. In Japanese it is called *riai*, the combination of our technical ability with our spirit. In addition to *riai*, there is *zanshin*, or the act of readiness and awareness. *Zanshin* is sometimes misinterpreted as a settling of the mind after action has taken place, but *zanshin* should always be present. It is the projection of our spirit and an awareness of the situation. There is also *kiai*. We tend to think of *kiai* as the shout at the moment of action, but in Muso Shinden Ryu we don't shout. *Kiai* is the spirit and its decision to act decisively.

# 氣 劍 体 一

*Ki Ken Tai Ichi*

We often hear the saying, “He's just going through the motions,” meaning he really isn't serious about accomplishing what he intends to do. The motion is there but the intent, aim, and purpose of the movement is not. Movement without purpose is wasted energy. It is a disconnect between the mind, body, spirit, and the sword (*ki ken tai ichi*). What defines Iaido is the striving for that unification, and the total awareness of what surrounds us.

What is the thought process that makes one expend energy, but without an aim or purpose? If we are making such a large commitment of time why would we not put all that we have into it? Of course, there are days when we don't feel well or we have partied a little too much the night before and it's hard to focus all our energies on Iaido. But it is just those times when we have to put in that extra effort to dig down deeper and provide our full energy, when movement is lacking and the spirit is necessary to carry the action.

All too often, we try to get by on minimal effort, but that is not what Iaido is about. We cannot coast or put in minimal effort. People that don't like their work tend to put in time, but not the effort. We should never do what we are not fully committed to do. If you hate your job you will never be fully committed to it. That's the way Iaido should be as well. I don't get particularly upset when someone signs up for Iaido and then, after a month or two, drops out. These are folks that discover that Iaido is not for them, which is fine; better to discover sooner rather than later. They may realize that it is harder than they thought. They might have thought that it just required them to pull the sword out and swing it. Realizing that that's not the case, they won't commit to the time and effort it requires. Iaido was never really meant to be marketed to the masses; Sensei always said that it is better to have ten good, ardent students than twenty just going through the motions.

**JAPANESE  
LESSON**

日本語

**Kisetsu: Season**

Pronounced: Key-sets-sue

季節 (きせつ)

*Haru* (Ha-ryu) spring  
*Natsu* (Nah-sue) summer  
*Aki* (Ah-key) fall  
*Fuyu* (Foo-you) winter

Talking about the seasons is an integral part of making conversation in Japanese. The time of the year, weather and the seasons make up the backbone of all Japanese small talk.

Japanese people are proud of the fact that Japan has four distinct seasons. In Japan when children learn to recite the seasons, they always begin with spring. The common rote memorization phrase is *haru-natsu-aki-fuyu*. The reason they start with spring is possibly due to the cherry blossom season, which is eagerly awaited all year long and that it feels like the beginning after a long cold winter. The rainy season, called *tsuyu*, is dreaded by all Japanese but technically isn't a season. The Japanese language is rich with vocabulary describing the seasons called *kigo*, which are poetry-inspired words.

Common kigo words:

*Haruichiban*: First gale of spring  
*Kisetsufuu*: Seasonal wind  
*Yuku haru*: Spring is gone  
*Harukaze*: Spring breeze  
*Harugasumi*: Spring haze  
*Natsu kinu*: Summer has come  
*Natsu no hate*: Summer is ending  
*Aki no shokuyoku*: Autumn's appetite  
*Akiguchi*: Early Fall  
*Akikaze*: Autumn breeze  
*Akigare no ni*: Perfect autumn day  
*Kimastu*: End of a season  
*Kouyou*: The changing of the colors in the fall



festival fans  
called uchiwa



Children's Day  
koi flags called  
koinobori



Snow covered  
statue of Jizo



New Year's  
kagami mochi

春

*Haru*  
*Spring*



Cherry blossoms

夏

*Natsu*  
*Summer*



Summer festivals

秋

*Aki*  
*Fall*



Colors changing

冬

*Fuyu*  
*Winter*



Snow falling

**Helpful Phrases**

- *Haru natsu aki fuyu no naka de, dono kisetsu ga ichiban suki desu ka*: Which season do you like?
- *Nihon no fuyu wa samui desu*: Winter in Japan is cold.
- *Nihon wa moo haru desu ne*: Japan is already in Spring.
- *Moosugu sakura no kisetsu desu*: Soon it will be cherry blossom season.
- *Inaka no haru wa kirei desu*: The countryside is beautiful in the spring.
- *Watashi wa, natsu yori, fuyu no ho ga suki desu*: I like winter better than summer.
- *Natsuyasumi ni nattara yama ni noborimashoo*: When summer vacation comes, lets go to the mountains.

## How Real Aikido Begins

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Today, one student in my children's class is leaving, moving to Hawaii with his parents. I also received notice that one of my Iaido students is leaving for her new job in Memphis. It is always sad to see my students go, especially when they are getting so much out of their training.

In the dojo, we must always be like a family and try to stay together, be committed to each other, train together, share with each other, and help each other. Of course, this is difficult because we live in such a transient world. Children always leave their parents. I think this is the sad part of life. In ancient times, families always stuck together; students became like members of the teacher's family. I like this system very much. Maybe it is because I don't have any family of my own, but this is what happens when you try to maintain a traditional dojo and not a business. In a business, we only care about our customers when they are spending money or buying something.

Most people today like the "business" style of practice. The teacher really doesn't have to have any responsibility for the student, nor the student for the teacher. Most people find this to be a very easy and convenient proposition because there is no "burden" of loyalty, commitment, patience, and forbearance. If I wanted simply to make money, I suppose I should run a video store, not a dojo. I hope all my students will understand this very well.

Someone from Canada wrote to me about how a woman complained about the price of tea in their newly opened tea shop. They were very concerned about what to do. I don't know the situation since I wasn't there but really there is nothing to do; it is not their problem as far as I can see. I think it is the problem of the woman herself. This situation reminds me of the funny story about how two people are looking for something in the tall grass.

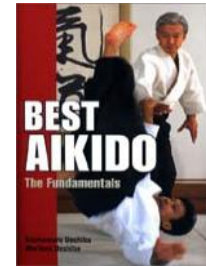
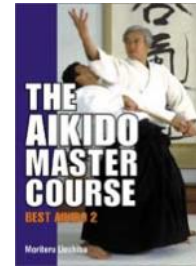
"Why are you looking over there?" one asks the other. "I lost it over here," he continues.

"I am looking over here because the light is better to see," replied the other.

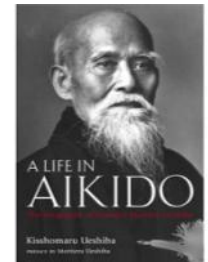
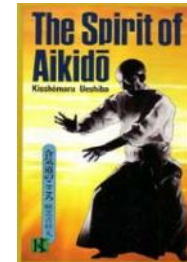
I think the woman must have a much more pressing and insolvable problems on her mind which she has no way to resolve. Rather than dealing with the real problem, she only lashes out at something which is more convenient and "easier" to deal with. It is not the shop owners' problem because it really has nothing to do with the price of tea or their shop. We should show compassion because this woman must be suffering greatly within herself. Whether we know the problem or reason or not, we should always show compassion and understanding. In this case, it is not to yield to the woman, but it is not to oppose her either. We must simply be ourselves and carry on with our own duties. Sometimes we can help, sometimes we cannot. It is always sad when we cannot help others. It is always sad when we see others suffering on their own. It is from this feeling within ourselves, that real Aikido begins.

**Editor's Note:** Sensei originally posted this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on June 24, 2002.

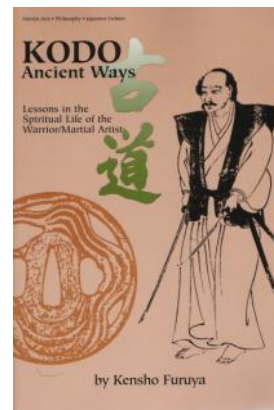
## Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



***Kodo: Ancient Ways:  
Lessons in the spiritual life  
of the warrior***

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

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1211 N. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Tel: (323) 225-1424 • E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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## Questions/Comments?

We welcome all questions and comments. Please send us a letter or an e-mail and our team will do our best to come up with an answer. We reserve the right to edit questions and letters for clarity and length.

Please e-mail submissions to: info@aikidocenterla.com

# 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 Open

## Wednesdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals  
6:30-7:30 PM Open  
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 Weapons\*

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.



# Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

## TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

## Saturdays

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

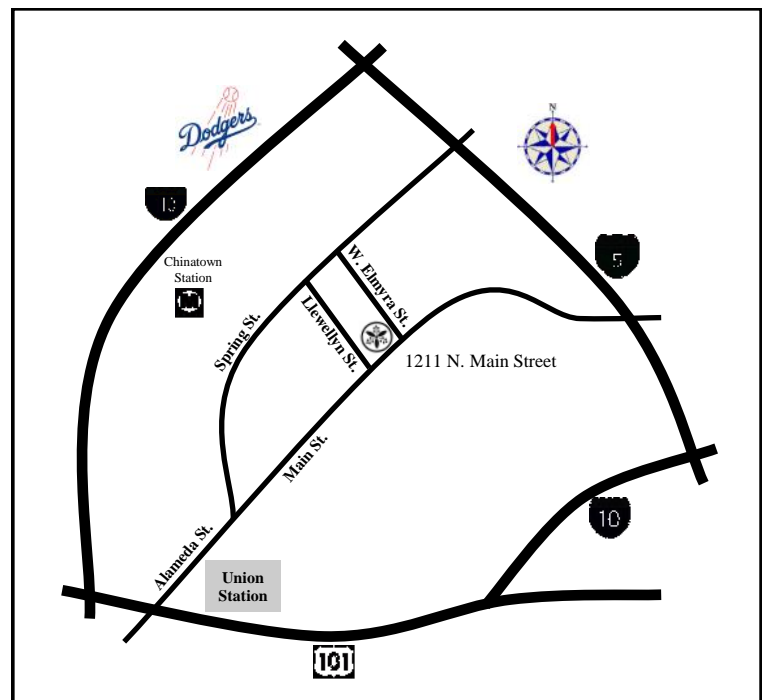
## Sundays

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](mailto: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.*