



# 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

**September 3rd:**  
Dojo Closed  
Labor Day

**September 29th:**  
Instructor's intensive

**October 28th:**  
Children's Halloween Party

**November 22nd-23rd:**  
Dojo Closed  
Thanksgiving

**November 24th:**  
Instructor's intensive

**December 1st:**  
Dojo Christmas Party

**December 2nd:**  
Dojo Ceramics Sale

**December 15th:**  
Year-end clean up

### Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich  
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

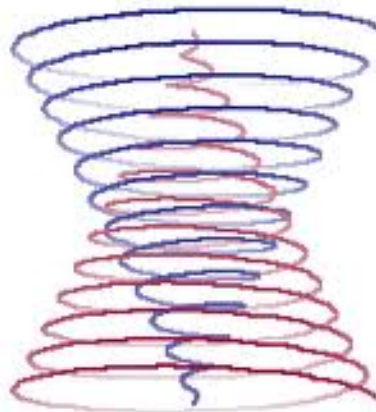
The older I get, the more I appreciate Shakespeare's genius, particularly as evidenced in one of his comedies when he has a character describe time as a "whirligig". To me, he could have chosen no more perfect a word than this to describe time: even if it sounds unfamiliar to our ear, the word feels right, like a curious toy that takes us up and then drops us off down the line, dizzy, breathless, and wondering how it all works. Time, to me, feels like a whirligig indeed.

I say this because our days at ACLA seem packed to the brim: we have fuller classes again as people return to real life, we see more visitors these days (some to enroll as students, some from elsewhere who've come to train with us a day or two), and we have another crop of students preparing to take their various dan grade tests. At times like this, I wonder how it all happens: we all have lives and careers on the outside which demand all the attention one might expect, so how does everything get done that the dojo needs? Of course, I know the answer, as do you. Thank you, ACLA students and friends, for all you do. You make all the difference in the world. You make us possible.

This issue of *The Aiki Dojo* we consider what it means to make a difference in the world, to

impact others – some whom we may never even know – for the better. David Ito gets us going by offering a thoughtful review of a wonderful Japanese-language documentary (subtitled in English) that examines a master chef and considers how his way of living and working categorically defines mastery and gives us lessons to apply in our training. Gary Myers provides us with a well-considered account of arguably one of the giants in the history of Japanese budo whose legacy we can still feel to this day. One of our newly minted shodan students, Mike Hatfield, shares how his training over the years

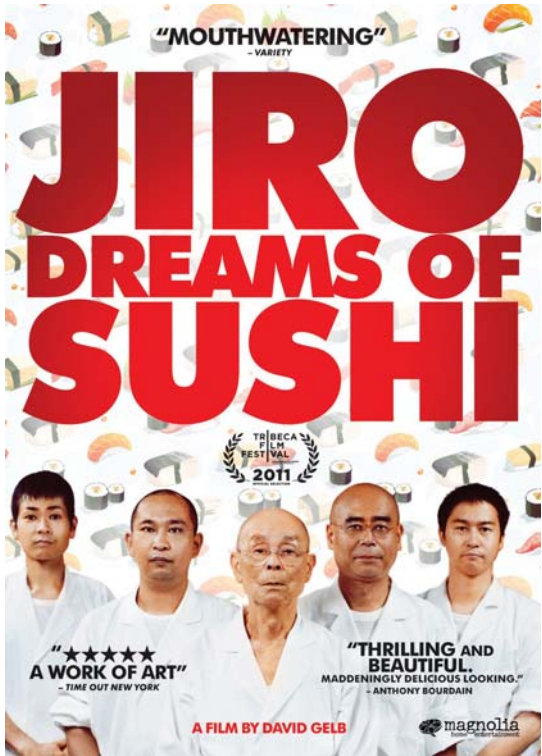
has impacted his sense of – well, impacted his sense of impact. (You'll see what I mean if you read on!) And last but certainly never least, we've dug up another article from Sensei's archives to share with you, and in this essay Sensei gives his perspective on the impact holding the correct mindset has on our training, whether on or off



the mat.

I appreciate everyone's efforts to get this issue out in a more timely way, and feel rather proud of the quality of our contributions this month. I hope you do, too; please read, let us know what you think, and feel free to contribute.

I look forward to seeing you on the mat soon. Take care until then!



## Movie Review: Masters Share Many Qualities

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

*Jiro Dreams of Sushi* is the story of 85 year-old Jiro Ono, considered by many to be the world's greatest sushi chef. He is the proprietor of Sukiyabashi Jiro, a 10-seat, sushi-only restaurant inconspicuously located in a Tokyo subway station. Despite its humble appearances, it is the first restaurant of its kind to be awarded a prestigious 3-star Michelin review, and sushi lovers from around the globe make repeated pilgrimage, calling months in advance and shelling out top dollar for a coveted seat at Jiro's sushi bar.

For most of his life, Jiro has been mastering the art of making sushi, but even at his age he sees himself still striving for perfection, working from sunrise to well beyond sunset to taste every piece of fish, meticulously train his employees, and carefully mold and finesse the impeccable presentation of each sushi creation. At the heart of this story is Jiro's relationship with his eldest son Yoshikazu, the worthy heir to Jiro's legacy, who is unable to live up to his full potential in his father's shadow.

The feature film debut of director David Gelb, *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* is a thoughtful and elegant meditation on work, family, and the art of perfection, chronicling Jiro's life as both an unparalleled success in the culinary world, and a loving yet complicated father.

Source: <http://www.magpictures.com/jirodreamsofsushi/>

*Jiro Dreams of Sushi* is one of the best films I have seen that depicts not only what it is like to be an apprentice of a master Japanese craftsman, but also what it is like to be the master. There were numerous times when I felt a chill run down my spine as Jiro interacted with his apprentices or when the apprentices talked about their training. At one point, when the chef making egg dessert talked about how it took him thousands of tries to perfect the dessert before the master said, "Yes, this is correct", that I found myself about to cry seeing how overjoyed this man felt that he finally gained the master's approval (only to bungle it when the cameras were filming him). As they interviewed a local food critic named Yamamoto-san, he adeptly described the attributes that all masters have in common that I thought was particularly poignant:

### BECOMING A MASTER...

"There are five attributes to a great chef:

1. Take your work seriously
2. Aspire to improve
3. Maintain cleanliness
4. Be a better leader than a collaborator
5. Be passionate about your work."

— Yamamoto, Food Critic

Having spent time training under my own teacher, I can tell you that this list seems pretty accurate. I was especially touched and reminded of Sensei when Jiro shared his personal philosophy with the audience. He said, "Once you decide on your occupation, you must immerse yourself in your work. You have to fall in love with your work. Never complain about your job. You must dedicate your life to mastering your skill. That is the secret of success and the key to being regarded honorably."



Master sushi chef Jiro Ono

I wholeheartedly recommend this movie to anyone who practices martial arts or studies a traditional art because I know it will ring eerily true for you as much as it did for me. For anyone who doesn't study an art form but just wants to know what it is like to apprentice under a Japanese master, *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* deftly delivers. The goal of all documentaries, I think, is for the filmmaker to transport us to another world where we get to see and feel another person's story. This documentary masterfully paints a picture of what it is like to not only be a master but to apprentice under one as well.

## Yagyū Tajimi no kami Munenori

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

It has been a while since we had an article about famous people in Japanese history so this piece is about one of the most famous swordsmen, political advisors, and philosophers in Japanese history, Yagyū Munenori. Munenori was the master of the Edo Yagyū Shinkage Ryu school of swordsmanship, and teacher of swordsmanship to three successive Tokugawa Shoguns: Ieyasu, Hidetada, and Iemitsu. He was also in charge of the intelligence arm of the shogunate. He was a political adviser to two shoguns: Hidetada, and more so to Iemitsu. Iemitsu relied on his counsel so much that, even years after Munenori passed away, Iemitsu would say, "If only he were here, I could ask him about this." To understand how he rose to this position one must go back at least one generation, to his father, to understand how the family came into this prominence from some rather obscure beginnings.



## Yagyū Muneyoshi "Sekishusai"

The Yagyū family village was located in the hills in the northeast district of Nara. The Yagyū had lived in that area since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. They were considered a small sort of ancillary clan in a hidden village. This area is situated between two well-known clans who specialized in the arts of Ninjutsu: the Koga in what is now Shiga prefecture, and the Iga in Mie prefecture. It is not too large an assumption that the Yagyū were also well versed in the arts of espionage, subterfuge, and assassination. These arts certainly flourished during the years of the *senjōku jidai*, the Age of Civil Wars. Although the Yagyū village was situated in a hidden area, its location didn't prevent the clan from being drawn into the conflicts of the times, whether they wanted to be or not. Munenori's father, Yagyū Muneyoshi, was born in 1529. He studied both the Tomita and Shinto schools of swordsmanship and had earned the reputation of being a skilled swordsman in the Nara and Kyoto area. An indication that the Yagyū at least had some affiliation with ninja was that Muneyoshi's wife Shunto Gozen was the daughter of the Okuhara family of Koga.

## Kamiizumi Hidetsuna "Nobutsuna"

One of the more famous sword masters of that era was Kamiizumi Hidetsuna. Hidesuna was assigned to a clan that was defeated by Takeda Shingen's army in a territorial battle in 1563. There were two options for defeated soldiers of that era: death by execution, or assimilation. Shingen wanted Hidetsuna to become part of his army, mainly due to his outstanding performance on the battlefield. Hidetsuna asked for a third option: to be released from any obligation so that he might perfect his individual fighting skills. Shingen was so impressed by Hidetsuna's request that he allowed him to leave to pursue his objective, and he gave Hidetsuna one of the characters from his own name which is why Hidetsuna is also called Nobutsuna. Nobutsuna did perfect his swordsmanship skills and developed what he called the Shinkage Ryu school of swordsmanship. Shinkage Ryu was a further refine-

ment of Kage Ryu, which he had previously studied. One of Kage Ryu's major tenets was to be able to anticipate the opponents' next actions before they put them into action.

Both Nobutsuna and Muneyoshi were acquaintances of In'ei, the head priest of the Hozoin Temple in Nara. The Hozoin was noted for perfecting the technical aspects of the spear. In 1565, In'ei, who was also proficient in sword and spear, arranged a meeting (i.e., a challenge) between Muneyoshi and Nobutsuna. Muneyoshi immediately challenged Nobutsuna to a duel. However, Nobutsuna deferred that challenge to one of his students. Muneyoshi and the student met in the courtyard of the temple and within a few minutes Muneyoshi was soundly defeated. Undeterred, Muneyoshi once more challenged Nobutsuna, but once again an even lower ranking student was assigned to the duel. Once more Muneyoshi was quickly defeated. After the two defeats Nobutsuna surprised Muneyoshi and said he would have a match with him. Although stories vary, eventually Muneyoshi bowed before Nobutsuna and asked to be his student. Nobutsuna had seen something in Muneyoshi that compelled him to take him on as a student. Muneyoshi invited Nobutsuna and his students to stay in the Yagyū village, which they did for two years. Muneyoshi received a mastery certificate and the *inka* (formal recognition) from Kamiizumi and was allowed to establish his own school called *Yagyū Shinkage Ryu*, or the Yagyū New Shadow School.

The subsequent years were not kind to Muneyoshi. He was wounded in the hand by an arrow in one battle. He was soundly defeated in another battle, during which his oldest son was crippled. The clan that he supported lost to Oda Nobunaga's forces. In 1585, the Toyotomi confiscated a large portion of Yagyū territory, claiming that they were using untaxed lands. Muneyoshi retired from military service and became a lay priest, taking the name Sekishusai.

In 1571, Munenori was born the youngest of five sons and six daughters. He showed the most promise and talent in swordsmanship, and was instructed in the secrets of Yagyū Shinkage Ryu. In 1594, Ieyasu was looking for not only loyal allies but also talented swordsmen. Ieyasu was also talented with a sword and supposedly practiced each morning in a dojo. He was always on the lookout for sword masters. Ieyasu had heard about the Yagyū No-Sword technique and wanted to see a demonstration of it. By this time Muneyoshi already had a reputation as being one of the finest swordsmen in Japan, and in him Ieyasu found both ally and sword master. Muneyoshi was 66 when Ieyasu invited him to his villa in Takagamine, north of Kyoto. He was accompanied by 23 year-old Munenori, who had just returned from fighting with the Hosokawa at the Battle of Odawara.

*Continued on page 4...*

**Yagyū Tajimi no kami Munenori** *continued from page 3...*

It was a pleasant evening, with Ieyasu asking questions about Yagyū Shinkage Ryu and the Yagyū men answering them in both physical and metaphysical terms. Ieyasu wanted to know in great detail about the No-Sword technique, and finally decided he had to see it for himself. He retrieved a *bokutsu* for his own use. Meanwhile, Sekishusai stood up, walked to the other side of the room, and then crouched over with his arms dangling down, elbows in front of the knees, rocking to and fro. Ieyasu immediately attacked, but in the blink of an eye his sword was flying to the other side of the room and Sekishusai's right fist bumped Ieyasu's chest, sending him in the opposite direction. Still not believing what just happened, Ieyasu requested another try, but that one ended much the same. Ieyasu quickly apologized for making him demonstrate again and immediately requested Sekishusai to be his personal sword instructor and retainer. Sekishusai agreed, but stated he was too old for such a position and asked that his son Munenori assume the position of sword instructor. Ieyasu agreed and a contractual paper was immediately drawn up.

During the next several years Munenori was with Ieyasu during his overseeing the construction of Fushimi Castle. He learned much about the political maneuverings of the times as he instructed Ieyasu in Yagyū Shinkage Ryu. In 1598, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the regent of Japan, died. A five-man elder council was appointed to rule until Hideyoshi's son was old enough to take power. However, factions soon formed between those loyal to the Toyotomi and those loyal to the Tokugawa. Munenori went to his father to rally support of the local clans of the area, in particular those in the Koga and Iga areas. By September of 1600, it was clear that a major battle was going to be waged at Sekigahara to determine the ruler of Japan. Troop movements of the Toyotomi allies were reported through intelligence sources, and some troops were attacked using guerilla tactics. Although it cannot be known for sure, many believe that Munenori was instrumental in causing the major defection of Kobayakawa Hideaki, which shifted the battle to the Tokugawa; Goroemon Munetoshi, Munenori's elder brother, was the sword instructor to Hideaki. Munenori also experienced battle action by killing eight of the enemy that charged Ieyasu's encampment. (A similar situation would occur years later with Ieyasu's son Hidetada.) The Tokugawa forces won the Battle of Sekigahara and began the reign of the Tokugawa that would last for 250 years. For their various services to the Tokugawa, Sekishusai and Munenori were given back the lands confiscated from them, giving them a 2,000 *koku* fiefdom. [Editor's note: A *koku* historically measured a quantity of rice sufficient to feed one person for one year; in this case, the fiefdom, properly managed, could have fed 2,000 people per year.] Another 1,000 *koku* were added the next year and Mune-

nor was appointed a *hatamoto*, a direct vassal to the Tokugawa.

### Hidetada

Munenori moved to Edo with his family. His second student was Hidetada, Ieyasu's son. It is generally thought that Hidetada was not really interested in learning swordsmanship. He was more impressed with the trappings of being the eventual ruler, but for most of his life he lived in the shadow of his father. In 1603, Ieyasu was named Shogun. In 1613, he abdicated the title to Hidetada, but really retained rule with his son acting as the figurehead, much like the cloistered emperors had done before him. In Munenori's position he came in contact with all the top thinkers and artisans of that time. Munenori regularly corresponded with the famous Zen priest Takuan, and his philosophy of swordsmanship would later be shaped by these discussions.

He joined the Summer Battle of Osaka with Hidetada in which the Tokugawa finally eliminated all of the forces loyal to the Toyotomi. Toward the end of that campaign a band of the enemy made a desperate attack and stormed Hidetada's encampment. This surprise attack threw the Tokugawa forces into turmoil and the soldiers allowed the enemy to get to within a few yards of Hidetada. Munenori was the only person between 20 attackers and the Shogun. By the time the Tokugawa forces regrouped to drive off the remaining attackers, they found that Munenori had killed seven of the attackers and was back in his post position acting as if nothing had happened.

### Iemitsu

Ieyasu's grandson Iemitsu was as enthusiastic about swordsmanship as Hidetada was indifferent. Munenori took over sword instructor's duties for Iemitsu in 1620, three years before he became the third Tokugawa Shogun. He was always pressing Munenori to tell him the secrets of Yagyū Shinkage Ryu. Iemitsu was headstrong, intelligent, and very demanding. Munenori's life was no longer his own. Munenori was now Iemitsu's mentor, not only advising him in swordsmanship, but also in political and bureaucratic matters. Iemitsu began to rely on him on all matters. There is no doubt that Munenori's wise counsel tempered Iemitsu's rather brash and unruly nature. Of course, Munenori was rewarded for his duty: his lands eventually reached a level of 12,500 *koku*. In 1630, he issued a mastery certificate stating that Iemitsu had been initiated into the secrets of the Yagyū Shinkage Ryu. In return, Iemitsu gave Munenori a sword made by Masamune. Shortly after receiving his certificate, Iemitsu sent Munenori a now-famous letter accusing him of holding back instruction. Of course, Munenori denied this, but the Shogun continued pressing him, even up to Munenori's dying day.

*Continued on page 5...*



*Tokugawa Hidetada and Tokugawa Iemitsu*

Yagyū Tajimi no kami Munenori *continued from page 4...*

### Munenori and Soho Takuan

Soho Takuan was the most famous Zen priest of that early Edo period. Rather than delve into his history here, we will save him for a future article of his own. However, for an insight into the man, this story pretty well sums him up: He was so well thought of that the huge Zen temple Daitokuji named him as their abbot. Takuan stayed only three days, then resigned his post and went back to his home town temple because he felt that such a large temple was too much part of the “world” and the “way” cannot be found in the world. No one knows exactly when Takuan and Munenori met, but Takuan had a close relationship with the Hosokawa, and Munenori was assigned to the Hosokawa in his late teens and early twenties. In 1628, Takuan protested an edict stating that the shogunate had control over temple promotions. Takuan was exiled to Dewa but was later pardoned when Hidetada died. This pardon was due in part to Munenori’s intervention. Soon thereafter Takuan wrote the *Fudochi Shinmyoroku*, or *The Unfettered Mind*, specifically addressed to Munenori. It set forth Takuan’s philosophy of the interrelationship between Zen and martial arts. By removing all attachments, the swordsman is free to move without doubt or fear. It is interesting to note that in the last few paragraphs, Munenori is severely criticized by Takuan for his child-rearing techniques, his pride in his *Noh* performances, and possible bribe taking for influence to the *shogun*. The *Fudochi Shinmyoroku* so influenced Yagyū that he freely quoted from it in his own sword treatise, *Heiho Kadensho*. In 1634, Munenori arranged to introduce Takuan to Iemitsu. Just as Munenori had anticipated, the *shogun* immediately found Takuan fascinating and the three cultivated a relationship that lasted until Takuan’s death in 1645.

### Heiho Kadensho -The Life-Giving Sword

Whether it was Takuan’s writing that inspired Munenori or a sense that it was an appropriate time to write his swordsmanship treatise, Munenori wrote the *Heiho Kadensho*, or *The Life-Giving Sword*, in 1632. It was not only an amalgamation of the schools that were the basis of Yagyū Shinkage Ryu, namely Kage and Shinkage Ryu, but it also blended Zen and swordsmanship more than any other sword treatise. While Takuan’s writing talks of the intersection of sword and martial arts, the *Heiho Kadensho* infuses the two so they become inseparable. The treatise is divided into three parts: *The Shoeffering Bridge*, *The Death-Dealing Sword*, and *The Life-Giving Sword*. In some sections the instruction is quite straightforward, while in others the vocabulary needs deciphering since it is couched in some esoteric Buddhist language. We will write an article specifically about the *Heiho Kadensho* in the near future.

### Munenori’s final days

In 1645, Munenori was granted a request to visit the Yagyū village. After spending several months there, Munenori returned to Edo in a state of ill health. He had never been sick more than three days in his life. Iemitsu paid him a visit in his Azuba area mansion and seeing how seriously ill he was, summoned the famous doctor Takeda Doan from Kyoto. By the time he arrived, Munenori was already near to his last breaths. Munenori’s last requests to Iemitsu were to erect a monument for his father Sekishusai in the Yagyū village, and to convey the teaching positions and patronage to his sons Jubei Mitsuyoshi and Matajuro Munefuyu. Iemitsu granted these requests. On March 25, 1646, Yagyū Munenori died at the age of 76.



An excerpt from the original Heiho Kadensho

### Munenori Anecdotes

Munenori’s insight into human political relationships was never more apparent than in 1537, when he disagreed with the appointment of Itakura Shigemasa to lead the suppression of the Shimabara rebellion in Kyushu. Munenori knew that Shigemasa was a capable soldier but felt that he was too low in rank to lead the troops. He believed that the situation would end badly for Shigemasa. Munenori went to Iemitsu to request

a reappointment, but was refused an audience. Munenori stayed all night in the waiting room and eventually, the next morning, Iemitsu consented to see him but would not reverse his appointment. Just as Munenori predicted, Shigemasa could not rally his troops successfully to put down the rebellion. Eventually, the Shogun did appoint someone else, but when Shigemasa heard this he tried to make a last-ditch effort to take the castle and was killed in the attempt. After this incident, Iemitsu followed Munenori’s advice more closely.

There is a story about Munenori and one of the artists of the age that highlights an aspect of swordsmanship that was featured in our previous article. Munenori was attending a *Noh* performance with the Shogun Iemitsu; Kanze Sakon performed the piece. The Shogun turned to Munenori and asked him to observe the performance keenly and to report to him if the actor let down his guard and could be open to an attack. Munenori continued to observe his movement and as Sakon came close to a column, Munenori turned and said, “Right there he was open. I could have attacked him then.” After the performance was done Sakon left the stage drenched in sweat. He asked someone “Who was that sitting next to his Excellency?” The other person said it was Yagyū Munenori. Kanze smiled and said he that he could feel Munenori’s scrutiny on him as if he was prepared to attack, so he made sure he kept his guard up. “The only time I relaxed and breathed in was when I was next to the column.”

*Continued on page 6...*

## Reflecting Life

by Mike Hatfield, Aikido Shodan

In Freudian psychology, the pleasure principle describes people as very simple creatures: we either seek pleasure or avoid suffering in order to satisfy our needs. We may not be professional musicians but love learning and playing the guitar, just for pleasure. On the other hand, while we don't necessarily love our jobs, we do show up for work every day to avoid the suffering caused by not paying our bills.

There's a belief that if you find something you love to do, you'll never work a day in your life. We all have things we do for money and things we do for love. Most of us work for money because it's a necessity. On the other hand, we come to practice for different reasons. No one's paying us to show up. If there's something else to do that we decide is more important, or if we decide that it's time to take a break and sleep in, we can do it without the same penalty expected if we missed a day of work. Money makes it easier to get motivated and show up every day, even when you don't feel like it. What would the world look like if love, not money, was the bottom line?

I have a friend whose sister is a quadriplegic and he's her primary caregiver. She was born with cerebral palsy, so for him, taking care of her is second nature, as he's been doing it since he was a kid. He obviously loves his sister, but I'm sure it's a hard job with few immediate rewards. I was telling this to another friend, and he told me that he too was a caregiver, for both his elderly parents.

He went on to describe how hard it is at times to make things work smoothly, especially in the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. When his emotions got to a point where he felt ready to give up and run away, he would either go sit on the beach and meditate or take a long walk in the local mountains. He described to me how being alone in nature would help to calm his emotions, restore his energy, and remind him of what's really most important about life.

With all due respect to the author of the pleasure principle, training in Aikido is not so simple. I believe we all have fears and doubts about our abilities to learn and progress. With that comes a form of suffering that through practice we seek to overcome. On those days when the alarm goes off and it's time to get ready for practice, and the only thing I want to do is hit the snooze button, I would argue that's my real life. Not my work life. No one is paying me to get out of bed and go to practice, to suffer through the emotional challenges raging inside my brain. And no matter how I feel, or what story I tell myself to rationalize how much I deserve a day off, through experience I've discovered it's 100% guaranteed that after every practice I feel great and wonder why I would even consider not training.

Just like sitting in meditation on the beach or hiking to the top of the mountain, Aikido training offers the opportunity to practice the acceptance of suffering in order to experience deeply satisfying pleasure. Ultimately, the reason to show up for practice is to experience your real life.

## Yagyū Tajimi no kami Munenori *continued from page 5...*

Iemitsu liked to arrange sword matches with the most talented swordsmen from all schools. At one such match, Iemitsu saw Suwō Bunkuro, a known master equestrian, standing on the side. Iemitsu asked him to participate. Bunkuro said that if he could fight from horseback he would defeat everyone. This was quite a boast, but it turned out that Bunkuro did defeat all he faced, since swordsmen of that time were not used to fighting from a horse. Iemitsu, agitated by what he saw, turned to Munenori, who was also a spectator at the event rather than a participant, and told him to give it a try. Munenori mounted his horse and with *bokken* in hand trotted up to Bunkuro's horse, and immediately smacked it in the nose. As the horse reared up Munenori proceeded to strike Bunkuro off his horse.

Munenori, then up in age, was enjoying his garden one late spring day when he sensed a threat from behind. But when he turned there was only his usual page standing there, holding his sword. This was the usual responsibility for the page so there was nothing out of the ordinary. This troubled Munenori terribly; how could he be so wrong about what he had sensed? He decided to retire to his room. When one of his other servants noticed his rather disconcerted condition, he inquired if there was anything that was troubling Munenori. Munenori related what had occurred in the garden to the servant. The page, overhearing this, spoke up and guiltily admitted that he wondered if the great sword master was susceptible to attack even in the peaceful confines of his garden. The thought of the page was perceived as a threat to Munenori. When he heard this, Munenori's mood improved immensely and he praised the page for his honesty.

## Conclusion

It is fair to say that no other master swordsman achieved what Yagyū Munenori achieved. He went beyond just the technical the mastery of the sword and presented the sword as a means to give life not only to others but also the wielder of the sword, as well. Munenori applied his genius to every endeavor, be it sword instructor, political adviser, or intelligence gatherer. Munenori's life was everything Miyamoto Musashi wanted in his but was incapable of achieving. It is obvious that Musashi used Munenori as the model. Munenori was driven by the need to save his clan; failure was not an option for him, only survival. Munenori had his human foibles like we all have, but his legacy to martial arts is still felt to this day.



Yagyū Tajimi no kami's gravesite at Hotokuji temple in Nara



### Practice Hint: Morning Dew

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

It might help us, when we practice Aikido, to try to “think” like Aikido, and not look at Aikido too much from our own personal ideas. Sometimes, we just have to put ourselves into the “Aikido mindset” in order to understand what is going on. This is particularly important in the beginning stages of our training. As we develop more skill and experience in Aikido, our own ideas will begin to emerge naturally and we can further question these (or answer them) in our training.

The perfect training mind is a free and open mind. In Aikido this means an “empty” mind – an empty vessel to receive all things. Yet we must please take care as we think about this – some people interpret this as “garbage pail” to receive anything and all things, even trash. It is like our own personal drinking glass: maybe we put in

purified water, or tea, or some soft drink, but we would never put in anything dirty or unhealthy. Like our mind too, it is open and free, but still it is not the place for garbage, trash and unhealthy things. . . . This seems like a pretty simple concept to understand, I think – but how many people aren’t aware of this!

In Japanese, there is a saying, *Aka to majiwareba, akaku naru*, or, “If you play with red, you will eventually turn red.” Confucius described this as walking through a garden in the early morning – our sleeves will naturally touch the leaves and pick up the morning dew. We cannot help but make our sleeves moist with this. Just as we make acquaintance with good people, we will be influenced by them. Just as we practice good Aikido, we will eventually become good Aikido.



Kisaburo Osawa

The wonderful Aikido master, the late Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei always said, “Let’s practice good Aikido.” Such an easy idea but so very, very hard to do!

Sometimes we may think that Aikido is very difficult and too hard to understand; it is not. It is open and makes perfect sense. There are no contradictions or weak points in Aikido. Everything we need is there on the mats for us to discover. What stands as the sole difficult aspect of mastering Aikido is our own mind and spirit. As O Sensei said, “It is a matter of purification. . . .”

Aikido is not a “technique” like learning how to peel a potato, or making a martini, or building a table. Aikido is an art and therefore a life-time study. There may be a limit to the study of a technique, but there is no end to the study of one’s self. Even Confucius was thinking

about his studies and practice while walking in the garden so early in the morning and seeing the morning dew upon the leaves. How much more do we need to practice ourselves?

And please remember: just as Confucius’ long flowing sleeves will naturally pick up the dew on contact, there is no strain here or anything forced here – just as our own Aikido practice should be.



Confucius

**Editor’s Note:** Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on September 15, 2003.

***“Just as we practice good Aikido, we will eventually become good Aikido.”***

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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 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.*

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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

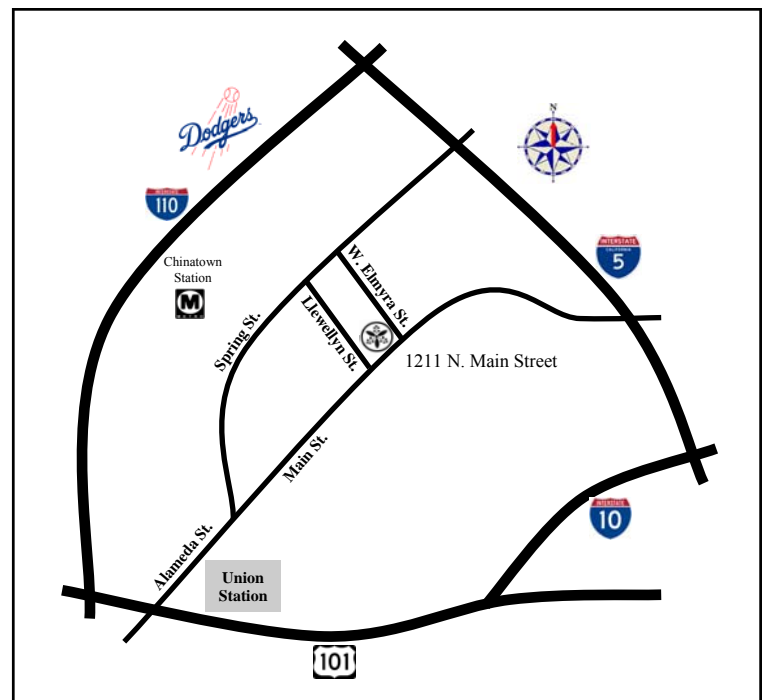
## Sundays

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.*