



# The Aiki Dojo

道の為、世の為、人の為、合気道

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by Rev. Kensho Furuya

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春もややけしきととのう月と梅

**Haru mo yaya keshiki totonou - tsuki to ume**

The spring too, very soon - the moon and plumb blossoms.

## Farewell Winter!



## **There is No I in Budo** by David Ito Aikido Chief Instructor

“I” does not exist at the highest level of *budo*. In *budo* we are trying to learn selflessness. Selflessness enables us to have the mindset to move ourselves forward into harm’s way without thinking about ourselves and without at thought of loss or gain. Moving without thought is not a reckless act of mindlessness, but rather the ultimate level of mindfulness.

The road to developing this mindset begins with learning to put others before ourselves. Typically, this training occurs at a higher level when one assists their teacher and spends more time with them.

When I was a student, I would sometimes have to accompany Furuya Sensei as his *otomo* (お供) or “attendant” when he had to meet with some visitor or guest. The term for accompanying a guest and taking care of them is *sewa* (世話). Acting as someone’s *otomo* is not only an honor but also a tremendous opportunity to learn and test one’s skills and abilities.

Long ago, I had to take Sensei to meet Masatake Fujita Sensei who had a layover at the airport. We took Fujita Sensei to eat in the airport food court just outside of the gates. This was one of the first times I had accompanied Sensei alone and as his primary *otomo*. Sensei did most of the hosting and also all of the food ordering. They were old friends from Sensei’s time at Hombu Dojo and so I just sat there while they talked in Japanese. My job was to be observant and attend to their needs, but to most of all not to become complacent or “fall asleep.” Sensei

ordered a number of different small dishes from a few different airport restaurants. As they talked and ate, my job was to serve them and attend to their needs. I took notice of what Fujita Sensei ate and what he pushed aside as well as how much he was drinking. When his drink got low, I filled it but before it fully ran out. When the food or drinks got low, I quietly excused myself from the table and ordered more. When Fujita Sensei got up to use the restroom, I escorted him to the restroom which I had located and scouted out before he arrived. After we saw Fujita Sensei off, Sensei complimented me on my etiquette and attention to detail.

Later that day, we met a Japanese sword teacher for dim-sum lunch in Chinatown. I felt really good about myself so I tried to keep up the same level of attention and etiquette throughout the meal. However, Chinatown restaurants are notorious for having a difficult level of service and so I used the etiquette that my mother taught me when we went out for Chinese food which is slightly more overt. The waiter was literally ten feet from the table and I had to raise my voice to get more water or food. When I asked for the check, I heard Sensei, under his breath, say something to our guest that I had “no hazukashi” which meant that I was too overt in my actions and manners. Flustered, I also paid the check at the table which is a breach of etiquette. Afterwards, Sensei scolded me in the car for “falling asleep” in my duties.

*Continued on page 3...*



**There is No I in Budo** *continued from page 2...*

Sensei once wrote, “The only proof that we have mastered Aikido or, at least, have begun to understand its principles, is the degree to which we have incorporated it into our lives. This has nothing to do with rank or strength or prestige.” True mastery is then in the application of these principles and teachings that we are learning on the mat in our daily lives. This assertion might seem ridiculous since we are learning a martial art and not how to serve tea or how to order Chinese food, but what we are really learning is how to put others before ourselves. The techniques in Aikido are executed in such a way that it necessitates that we put other people’s wellbeing first while we stave off the temptation to be selfish or egotistical.

In the dojo there is an old saying, “Everything is your responsibility.” When we take class, we are responsible for taking care of our partners when we throw or pin them. We are also responsible for our training space and its upkeep. Senior students are responsible for those who are their juniors and thus they are in charge of overseeing not only their training but their wellbeing as well.

When we accompany the teacher or guest, everything is also our responsibility. At this level we are not only trying to demonstrate our technical ability but we are also learning things which are not apparent or for the most part are invisible to the untrained eye. Taking care of a guest we learn how to be prepared, how to anticipate or “read the air” (*kuuki wo yomeru*) and how to create a mental connection or “be of one mind” (*ishin denshin*) to name just a few. So, it is easy to see that caring for the teacher or guest is not only at test of our ability. We need to stay vigilant despite it being boring, uncomfortable or tiring, but it is This type of training is also a high level lesson in *budo* training and that is why only high ranking students qualify for this duty.

What we do on the mat pales in comparison to what we do and how we act off the mat. Sensei once wrote:

In one’s Aikido training, there will be nothing harder or more difficult in practice than learning how to master the proper etiquette in dealing with each and every person you encounter, on and off the mat for your entire life. Mastery is nothing more than knowing the proper amount in each and every situation and whether to err, less or more.

It is said that the best student is one who knows what the right thing to do is and does it at the right time. When called to duty, if our first thought is “I” then we have already lost because the desire for our own preservation will cause us to miss the proper timing. Thinking of “I” first is said to be “the mind of the merchant” or *akinai konjo* who is always calculating loss versus gain. In the spirit of *budo* we must learn to invest our hearts into something regardless of the return. Doing the right thing requires training and it is only something that can be learned when we spend time assisting the teacher.

*Budo* and warfare are about deception as the combatants are trying to conceal their motives and movements in order to gain the upper hand and be successful. In order to be successful, one needs to transcend beyond the physical and learn to be mindful and “see” what is intangible or being concealed. At this level of training, it is a lot of hard work and it is easy to see from the previous stories, which happened on the same day, how easy it is to “fall asleep.” The ultimate level of *budo* is to be mindful of not only one’s self but also of others as well. *Budo* is then nothing more than learning how to do things correctly and at the right time which means being mindful and applying the proper etiquette while still maintaining one’s fluidity as well. •



Single minded concentration! Isn't that one of the hallmarks of a well-trained martial artist? We see martial arts experts breaking boards, while others are able to withstand kicks to their abdomens while emerging unharmed. Incredible!

These are all fantastic acts – true crowd pleasers. However, focus means more than just putting on a show. In practice, focusing correctly is almost as important, if not more, than the physical movement. This is the mental aspect of the technique. Without this focus, even though the physical technique might be correct, if that internal component is wrong or missing, then everything falls apart. Technique without focus is just empty movement.

In Aikido, we keep hearing about the *one-point*. The *one-point* is the area one inch or so below our umbilicus, and we are often told to concentrate on it. In Japanese, that part of our body is called the *tanden* (丹田) or otherwise known as our “center.”

As Aikidoists, we are instructed to focus on our *one-point* or center, but what does that mean? In martial arts, we hear about single-minded concentration: focus. To some it might be akin to bending spoons with our minds while others it means trying to make the head of someone they hate burst into flames. Unfortunately, it is not like that. Our center or *one-point* is, from a physiological standpoint, the area below our navel that becomes our center of gravity when we are relaxed and our weight is distributed evenly but more inwardly it is also the junction between our mind and body where *ki* energy is stored and emanates from when we are calm.

In the beginning of our training we are focusing on many different things, like trying to step in the right direction or move our hands correctly, all while trying to deal with our partner grabbing or striking us. Focusing on our *one-point* doesn't mean only focusing on this one little spot while the arms and legs do whatever they please. Thus, it can be very overwhelming.

Everything is connected so we still can't do just one thing. Our torso, arms and legs support our center and in turn, our center supports our body. It's similar to how a keystone in a stone archway supports all the other bricks yet all the other bricks keep the keystone in its place. Our bodies are a synergy and so everything works together and is connected.

Our *one-point* is connected to, and supported by our legs, which get stability and power from the ground through our feet. Our arms also don't really move freely because they need to be lined

up with the centerline of our body.

Our *one-point* also isn't just a single point independent of our neck, arms or feet. Again, everything is connected. All the separate “parts” of our body are all anchored to each other and create the whole. If our foot moves forward one inch, then our center, our body and our head move forward one inch in unison and coordinated. What this means is that our whole body becomes our “*one-point*.”

This is not the only way to focus when practicing. For example, we practice the *tenkan* movement exercise every day. At first

and even after years of training, practicing *tenkan* seems so abstract and doesn't seem to be the best use of our time.

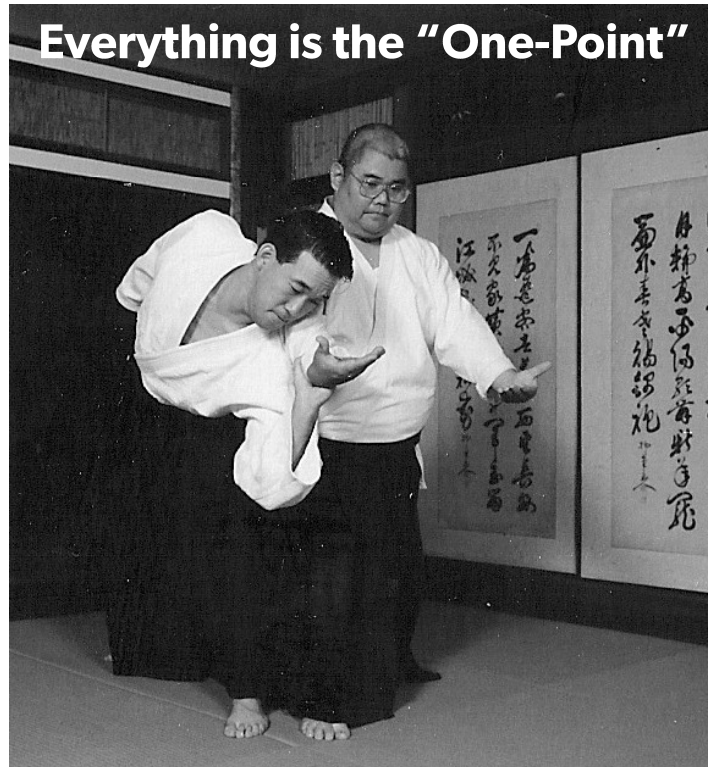
When practicing *tenkan*, at the end position, our hand is flat, palms facing up, fingers facing forward, but it's not just a pose. In the movement itself there are many major points of focus: forward with the eyes and fingertips down, with the shoulder, elbow, and back of our hands. The hand that's not being grabbed must also have as much energy and focus as the hand our partner is grabbing. Also, our back leg reaches back into the ground while our front leg braces our posture from the front too.

It might look like we are just standing there when we assume the end posture of *tenkan*, but there is a lot going on in this simple exercise. There is actually a lot of internal “movement” going on and it is full of mindfulness too.

With this mindfulness our *one-point* becomes our entire

body. In fact, Furuya Sensei said that the way a student practices the *tenkan* exercise reveals almost everything about their level of training, both physically and mentally.

However, Aikido isn't just static self-defense like a fort or a castle. When we are in motion, blending with our opponent's attack and moving into position to throw or pin, we also keep this same multifaceted focus. We don't concentrate one-dimensionally. For example, in doing a *kokyunage* throw, when we cut down to throw our partner forward, we say, “make a big cut,” but simply cutting forward isn't enough. If we only cut our hand forward, our partner who is holding onto our wrist will simply just step forward. The proper cut requires focusing on cutting forward and outward as well as focusing on making the hand heavy. In the verbal instruction we say, “Your hand blade ends at knee level when cutting down.” This physical posture provides the seeds for developing that focus.



by Ken Watanabe Iaido Chief Instructor

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# Furuya Sensei Memorial Seminar

## March 6-8, 2020



### Schedule of Classes

#### March 6th (Friday)

- 6:30 – 7:30 PM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan  
8:00 PM: No Host Dinner

#### March 7th (Saturday)

- 8:00 – 9:00 AM: Maria Murakawa, Aikido 4th Dan  
9:15 – 10:00 AM: Ken Watanabe, Aikido 6th Dan  
10:15 – 11:00 AM: Santiago Almaraz, Aikido 5th Dan  
11:15 AM – 12:00 PM: Furuya Sensei memorial service  
12:30 – 1:30 PM: Gravesite visit  
6:30 PM: Seminar Social

#### March 8th (Sunday)

- 7:45 – 8:55 AM: Santiago Almaraz, Aikido 5th Dan  
9:00 – 10:00 AM: Ken Watanabe, Aikido 6th Dan  
10:15 – 11:00 AM: Mike Van Ruth, Aikido 4th Dan  
11:15 AM – 12:00 PM: James Doi, Aikido 6th Dan  
12:15 – 1:15 PM: David Ito, Aikido 5th Dan

*Schedule Subject To Change Without Notice.*

\$100.00 per person

**Everything is The “One-Point”** *continued from page 4...*

It might seem like useless posing, but without this physical framework, the mental aspect of the training which is a very important part of the martial aspect of the technique, will be lost. The finish of the technique is not just posing because the general “shape” of the technique is there to encourage the proper focus or *zanshin*.

Even when we bring our arms up in various techniques, we still keep the focus down, keeping our hands, elbows, and shoulder heavy, as we practice moving fluidly and freely.

Another example of this *one-point* mindful movement is when we practice a *tenshin* movement by moving backward. As we move our stance backward out of harm’s way, we are also focusing forward and towards our opponent. As we focus forward, we also focus down, as well as focusing on stretching our leg backwards as we complete the *tenshin* movement.

If we think about focusing on each body part separately, on our posture, arms and legs, it can be a lot of mental multitasking. It is in our best interest to stop thinking of our body as a bunch of unrelated moving parts and try to see how our bodies move as one unit.

Our concentration must be single-minded, but that single-mindedness must always be multifaceted and multidirectional.

As we cut forward, we also make our hand heavy and cut down, as we take a big step backwards, we also concentrate forward and as we raise our hands up, we keep our arms heavy instead of allowing them to float upwards. There are many more examples of this seemingly contradictory way of focusing like being heavy while light, being fast, while moving slow and being weak, while being strong just to name a few.

We must focus on a single point while also focusing on everywhere else. Our stances may be stable and static, yet our energy and our focus still fill every part of our posture. Our movements might be light and quick, but they are completely stable and grounded. After years of training, static and dynamic become the same. We can fill our heads with these ideas, but if these ideas stay in our heads then they sometimes can become not very tangible. The only way to understand these ideas is by soaking them into our bodies and the only way this can happen is to regularly practice with the correct mindset. That is why actual practice is so important.

The truth about training is that the mental aspect of the technique is much harder to develop than the physical aspects. This is why we need to train our bodies to keep going until, one day, we understand this idea of single-minded concentration of the *one-point*. Please keep this in mind as you practice. Remember, your physical practice reveals not only what you outwardly know, but also what you inwardly know as well. •



## Thoughtful Actions

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai

温古知新 – Onkochishin

“To understand the present, learn from the future.”

Japanese traditional arts and traditional dojos are not living things. They only come to life when the people who participate in them uphold their traditions and put in the energy to bring them to life.

In Japanese, there are many different words for training. A common word for training is *renshu* (練習) which usually translates as “to practice” and refers to regular or habitual training that one primarily focuses on physical improvement. Sports like soccer, basketball, or gymnastics fall into this category. For most modern Japanese people, *renshu* comes to mind when they talk about sports or the more physical parts of a discipline.

Another way to refer to one’s training is *okeiko* (お稽古) which means “to remember the past” and this is the closest definition to our practice in the dojo and the most common word we use in the practice of Aikido.

For more deeper or philosophical types of physical training Japanese people use *shugyo* (修行) which is a lesser known word to people outside of Japan. *Shugyo* serves to define a more serious, deeper type of spiritual training and often used in the training that monks undergo in temples, for example.

In Japanese traditional martial arts or *budo*, training is usually about forging one’s self. Miyamoto Musashi once said, “It takes 1,000 days to forge one’s spirit and 10,000 days to polish it.” We can see then that *okeiko* and *shugyo* are more apropos when it comes to discussing *budo* training. Thus, using the words *okeiko* and *shugyo* brings more of a transformation feeling to one’s training and therefore the process by which a person undergoes change is referred to as forging. Twice a year, our students get a special opportunity to test their fortitude by undergoing training in tough conditions.

In the summer months many *budo* practitioners participate in

*Shochu Geiko* (暑中稽古) or “summer training.” The heat and humidity of hottest part of summer serves as a test to gauge one’s mental and physical determination. Sometimes this practice is done outdoors, but it is usually done inside the dojo. In the winter, practitioners participate in *Kan Geiko* (寒稽古) or “winter training.” *Kan Geiko* is defined as rigorous training done in the coldest period of the year.

Every year in the winter, our dojo members take our practice of Aikido outside the four walls of the dojo and go into the mountains to practice among the snow and cold to test our *budo* spirit. The ritual begins with a 2-hour hike to the summit where, from a privileged place for our senses, we practice Aikido and do *buki* or weapons training. After this harsh training, we return to the base of the mountain where we all eat together and enjoy each other’s company before returning home.

*Budo* training is supposed to be a growth experience and these special trainings enable us to be outside our comfort zone of daily practice. The whole experience of training outside the dojo in nature, being cold, barefooted and taking our bodies to an experience that goes far beyond our everyday understanding brings us to a higher place. At the elevation of the mountain and with an elevation of our senses, we find a different type of strength that some might not have even known was inside of themselves. This type of “traditional” practice in the old way is an experience which in my opinion, renews, purifies and makes us reflect on the important and true aspects of our lives.

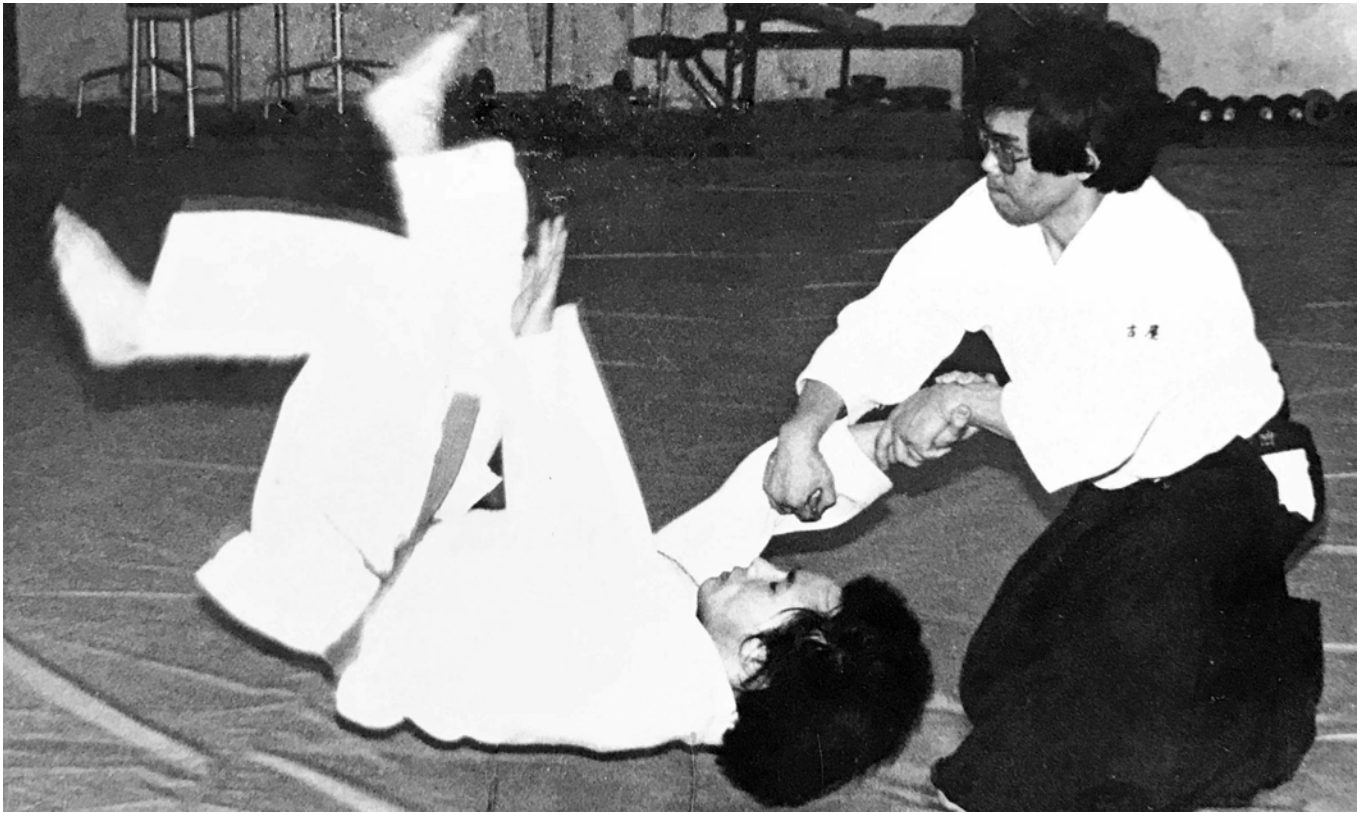
At first glance to people who don’t train, this type of training may seem excessive or even a bit masochistic, but this experience is about testing ourselves and forging our bodies and minds. This training enables us to embody the principles of *shugyo* and become *shugyosha* where we take ourselves to our limits in order to overcome them.

From my experience, practicing the technique is what gives us the basis of the martial art – the essential technical knowledge needed to practice the art. However, in order to truly “know” the art, the internal, mental and spiritual, we need to regularly push ourselves out of our comfort zones. This work can be difficult and sometimes it can be a complicated part of dedicating ourselves to our training. However, it is my opinion that pushing ourselves in these special training experiences is a large part of the training. It is important to keep our traditions alive and these special practices are just as important as cleaning at the end of class or having memorial services to remember our teachers who have passed away.

It is easy to just talk our way around training, but traditional arts and dojos only truly come to life and grow by our “thoughtful actions.” We have to make an effort to keep those traditions and values alive in order to keep the arts and the dojo alive. We have a responsibility to uphold and maintain the traditions of our teachers and our teacher’s teachers. Anything else is just talk.

Our daily training where we put in the work is what forges us, but these special trainings are where we find our true selves and what really polishes us. Trainings like *Kan Geiko* enable each of us to reach a level that we might have thought unreachable.

To truly learn something like Aikido, we must live it and experience it. For Aikido to grow inside of us we must remember the past while we forge ourselves in the present. *Onkochishin.*•



## A Keen Edge

by Rev. Kensho Furuya

Today, smaller movements and techniques are popular because they “feel” more effective. In the beginning of training, it is best that one start with big, circular movements. Big movements allow us to become aware of and use our bodies more effectively and also big movements teach us how to generate power. When a beginner concentrates exclusively on small movements, they do not learn how to use their body fully and many times they must rely on their muscle strength or arm power. It is definitely more effective in the long run to use big movements and less physical strength.

When I was studying calligraphy or *Shodo*, we had to write with a big brush and make big characters, much bigger than we would normally use in writing. This teaches us how to put strength into each stroke and understand the basic structure of each character. When I was studying Noh, it was the same with *utai* (謡) or “chanting.” We practically had to scream out each word. Using the bigger voice trained us to develop the power of the voice by using our *hara* (腹) or “center.” Later when we chanted in a normal voice, I immediately noticed that it had much more power. I feel it is the same way in Aikido practice.

Sometimes it is so hard for me to balance the old with the new and maybe I am getting too old to change. The latest martial arts magazine arrived today and talked about how we need to immediately determine what the student is looking for in order to sign them up quickly. We learn what the prospective student wants in martial arts and then assure them that they will get it. They will always sign up and at the very least we can increase our membership and the dojo income. I thought to myself, “How unfair!” There are no assurances in practice and no matter what

people are looking for in the dojo; I have to teach them Aikido from the beginning – from A to Z. There is only one thing I can offer students and that is the best I can do as far as Aikido is concerned. This is all that the dojo can offer them. Just now, as I am writing this, a prospective student has come to watch practice and perhaps, if I go down and greet him, shake his hand, put my arm around his neck and promise him whatever he wants, he might join and I can take his money. Somehow, I just can’t do it and remain at my seat here continuing to write this message, hiding as I normally do.

To join or not to join is the decision that each prospective student has to make on their own. This is the first step in any type of traditional training – the student has to want to. My job starts once they enter the dojo and become a student. In the new methods today, I guess, we start with the “customer” before they join, but once they join and sign up and we get their money, I suppose the job is done. Why does everything seem so backwards to me nowadays? I guess I’m more of the mindset of “samurai” Aikido.

Today we are looking for a more “user-friendly” Aikido. Aikido must be convenient, easy, comfortable, enjoyable, reasonable and with the mindset of “treat me like I want to be treated!” I suppose this is what everyone wants but we must realize in this case that we are taking the “art” out of Aikido and dulling its keen edge as a martial art. On the contrary, strive, commit, persevere, endure, overcome, patient, honest, open, humble, seek and achieve your greatness. This is what makes Aikido the great art that it is and this is also what puts the final polish on all of us as human beings.

**Editor’s note:** *Furuya Sensei published this in a slightly different form to his Daily Message blog on January 23, 2002.*



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 行事

<b>February 17 (Monday)</b> Dojo Closed: President's Day	<b>April 25 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar
<b>February 29 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar	<b>April 26 (Sunday)</b> O'Sensei Memorial Service
<b>February 17 (Monday)</b> Dojo Closed: President's Day	<b>May 30 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar
<b>March 2-9</b> Visitors from Spain	<b>June 27 (Saturday)</b> Intensive Seminar
<b>March 6-8</b> Furuya Sensei Memorial Seminar	<b>July 4 (Saturday)</b> Dojo Closed: Independence Day

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

### 合気道 時間割

<b>Saturdays</b>		<b>Wednesdays</b>	
6:30-8:00 AM*	Intensive	6:30-7:30 AM	Morning Practice
9:30-10:30 AM	Advanced Class	5:15-6:15 PM	Fundamentals
10:45-11:45 AM	Regular Class	6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
<b>Sundays</b>		<b>Thursdays</b>	
9:00-10:00 AM	Children's Class	6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class
10:15-11:15 AM	Regular Class	7:45-8:45 PM	Open Practice
11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Fundamentals		
12:45-1:45 PM	Open Practice		
<b>Mondays</b>		<b>Fridays</b>	
6:30-7:30 AM	Morning Practice	6:30-7:30 AM	Morning Practice
6:30-7:30 PM	Regular Class	6:30-7:30 PM	Fundamentals
<b>Tuesdays</b>			
6:30-7:30 PM	Advanced Class		

*NOTE: Visitors are welcome to observe our Morning, Fundamentals, or Regular Classes.*

*\*Last Saturday of the month is Intensive Seminar by Invitation only.*

## Iaido Training Schedule

### 居合道 時間割

<b>Saturdays</b>		<b>Sundays</b>	
8:00-9:00 AM	Regular Class	7:45-8:45 AM	Regular Class



# The Aiki Dojo

is the Official publication of the

**Aikido Center of Los Angeles**

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**The Aikido Center of Los Angeles**

has been awarded Official *Konin* recognition by the Aikikai Foundation, Aikido World Headquarters.

Our dojos are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Nidai Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, the present Doshu, Moriteru Ueshiba and Hombu Dojo-cho, Mitsuteru Ueshiba.

**Affiliated Dojos of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles**



Aikido La Gomera Aikikai  
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido  
Salamanca Aikikai  
Kodokai Dojo



Aikido Valladolid Aikikai  
Kodokai Dojo



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We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

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