

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Upcoming Events

- July 4th:**
Dojo closed: Fourth of July
- July 8-9th:**
Zenshuji Obon
- July 29th:**
Intensive seminar
- August 2-4th:**
Karita Sensei visit
- August 26th:**
Intensive seminar
- August 26th:**
Black belt test
- September 4th:**
Dojo closed: Labor Day
- September 30:**
Intensive seminar

Message From the Teacher by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The things which matter the most are not the things money can buy directly. The things that matter the most are the relationships we cultivate day in and day out.

Aikido is one of those things which transcends time, age and money. Many people talk about the lasting relationships they make in Aikido with the people they meet and eventually throw down on the mat.

Last month our friend Hiro Tateno visited from Japan. Hiro and I met almost accidentally in 2011 while attending a seminar memorializing O'Sensei's first visit to Hawaii 50 years ago.

I started sending the *Aiki Dojo* newsletter to him and after a few issues he saw a picture of Hideo Yonemochi Sensei and Sensei eating lunch. He

realized that we had a connection because we both had the same teacher.

Yonemochi Sensei and Furuya Sensei had been friends since the 1970s when they both were working in banking in Los Angeles.

Since that time Hiro has become great friends with all the students at our dojo and we always visit him when we go to Tokyo.

We took him sightseeing in Yosemite and all around Los Angeles and of course we hosted him for Aikido class too.

Everyone had a great time and it reminded me how much I missed Sensei and Yonemochi Sensei. But, their memory lives on in their students who, to this day, are still enjoying the great relationship they built some 40 years ago. Truly, the things that matter most are really the things that money can't buy.

Hide Yourself in Plain Sight

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Today in *budo*, it is a difficult balance between running a dojo and running a business. In terms of martial arts techniques, in the past they used to say, "Conceal your technique!" in order to hide one's ability from their opponents. Today, they say, "To get noticed is to get students!" So now, we put on public demonstrations or upload videos on the internet so that people will come and learn Aikido from us. The martial arts teacher of today has to be adept at balancing the need to make money to stay open while maintaining the structure of a traditional martial arts school. In this day and age, more so than ever, the true warrior must work harder and hide themselves in plain sight.

Prior to the Meiji-era (1868-1912) formal public demonstrations of *budo* techniques were never held. This was because one's fighting style and skills were considered a secret and only taught to family members, clan members or the exceptionally dedicated and thoroughly vetted apprentices. This secrecy was necessary because up until 1600 the country was embroiled in civil war and so clans needed to keep their strengths and abilities private in order to maintain any possible edge over their potential rivals.

In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu fought and won the battle of Sekigahara and quickly dissolved many of his foe's clans as he became *Shogun*. In order to channel these once former opponents and quell any resentment, Tokogawa instituted or re-enforced the *iemoto* system for traditional arts. *Iemoto* is a hereditary hierarchal structure in which control of the organization is passed down within a family usually father to son. Many daimyos were patrons or lay practitioners of traditional arts like pottery, tea-ceremony, painting, or the martial arts. These out-of-work lords then became government certified "masters" of these traditional arts which enabled them to take on students and make a living. In 1868, after the *Five Charter Oath* had ended the samurai class, many samurai families, who didn't become bureaucrats, became masters in different traditional arts and adopted the *iemoto* system. Many of those downtrodden samurai became *budo* teachers and needed to showcase their skills in order to acquire students and thus the public demonstration came to be.

An interesting practice came about during the mid Edo period (1603-1868) where people who were selling their wares would do demonstrations of swordsmanship in order to attract on lookers who would hopefully become customers. Prior to this time, only samurai were allowed to carry long swords and samurais who were employed by a clan were not allowed to fight in public. So commoners only occasionally saw someone of talent with a sword but mostly they saw people of little *budo* skill fight or a person with limited sword experience since anyone with talent was scooped up by warring clans. So people displaying any sword or *budo* skills were a huge draw. A

person engaged in any demonstration of martial arts, usually swordsmanship, in order to gather a crowd for selling is called *iai-nuki* (居合い抜き). Today, *iai-nuki* means to draw a sword but in the past the word comes from the *kabuki* theatre where the actor pulls out a sword in an overly theatrical fashion in order to create a dramatic moment.

A true martial arts teacher wants to spread and proliferate all the beauty and benefits of their art. A martial arts businessperson sees the art as a product and just wants to make money. One usually falls into one or the other category. Today, both are right and pertinent on different levels. I suppose then the teacher of today has to keep an eye on both perspectives and maintain a balance between the two.

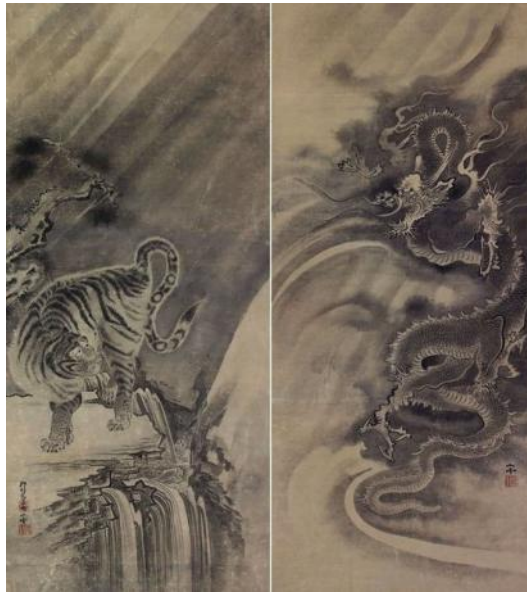
Balance is a subjective thing. The samurai's perspective on aesthetics or *iki* provides us with an example of this dichromatic balance. To have *iki* (粋) something must be stylish and chic but also have polished manners (*akanuke* 垢抜け), co-

quetry (*bitai* 媚態) and character (*hari*). The dichotomy of the samurai is that as a group they are supposed to be above *iki* or aesthetics but yet as an individual they are completely imbued with its principles and philosophy. We see this contrast in swordsman who wear the color of their clan or, today, a more uniform color of their school, but have something of individual character seemingly hidden in plain sight on their bodies like their *obi* or belt, *sageo* or scabbard cord or the design on the sword itself.

If we spend too much time doing *iai-nuki* then we become too much like a business and likewise if we focus too much on being a dojo then we might go out of business. A dojo cannot survive as a business and a business cannot make any money as a dojo.

Today, we must still be cautious and maintain the practice of concealing our techniques so that one's opponent, whose presence or motive is often hidden, cannot use what they see against us. The fact of the matter is that we have to pay our bills, but that doesn't mean we have to reveal all of our secrets. A true martial artist has to be more like the old Chinese adage, "Crouching tiger, hidden dragon" which represents the balance of *yin* and *yang* where true power of the dragon is hidden behind the seemingly overt action of the tiger.

On a certain level we have to be better than the warriors and teachers who came before us. They weren't buffeted by the same concerns that we have today. We must become adept at revealing ourselves only while hiding our true selves at the same time. True *Budo* is not about showmanship and outward reward or ability. True *budo* is about the journey one takes to become a better more refined person. The balance of today is to keep Aikido and our dojo going while we hide ourselves in plain sight.



In The Community...



Senshin Buddhist Temple

July 1, 5:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Oxnard Buddhist Temple

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

Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

July 8-9, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Choshu Tsuba

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Signed: Choshu Hagi Ju Tomoyuki Saku.
1750's. Design of waves

Water is always a popular motif in *tsuba* and fittings. *Choshu tsuba* are usually open work carving in iron with gold overlay as we can see in this example. The gold around the border is known as *karakusa* or a kind of vine or flower design. In the bottom corner is a bamboo wicker basket used for catching crabs. The bamboo is illustrated with gold work.

This is a traditional design. Almost all designs in Japanese art follow strict rules regarding the motif. If you become familiar with these design motifs, you can understand most Japanese art.

As a side note: Long, cylindrical wicker baskets made of bamboo are sunk into the water. Crabs love this type of environment for safety and to hide and usually will crawl into them at night. In the morning the fisherman will haul up the baskets filled with sleeping crabs. For the crab, these baskets resemble the safety of hiding in the foliage and other water plants.



Zenshuji Soto Mission

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

Orange County Buddhist Church

July 15-16, Saturday, 2:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm; Sunday, 2:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 7:00 pm

Venice Buddhist Temple

July 15-16, Saturday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 1:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Pasadena Buddhist Temple

July 22-23, Saturday, 4:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 4:00 - 8:30 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

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

West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple

July 29-30, Saturday, 4:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:30 pm

Gardena Buddhist Church

August 12-13, Saturday, 3:00 - 10:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm; Sunday, 3:00 - 9:00 pm, Bonodori at 6:00 pm

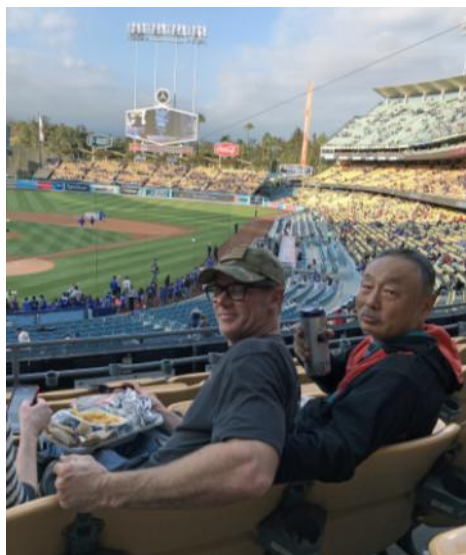
Also, to catch an octopus, one needs a large jar with a small opening is lowered into the water. Octopus like dark enclosed places for safety so they will crawl into the jar very gladly. In the morning, the fisherman will haul up the jars filled with octopus.

There is another type of crab that comes onto the beach with the tide and quickly burrows into the sand. Japanese love to eat these crabs but they are hard to find in the sand and it is a lot of work to dig them up because they are very small and very quick. The way they catch them is to take a pencil and start poking the sand. The poking effect seems to resemble the effect of the tide rushing onto the beach so the crabs will poke their head up out of the sand so the water will carry them back into the sea. When the crabs pole their heads up, they are grabbed by the hungry fisherman.

Anyways, we can be caught very easily – when the opponent understands how we act.

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his *Daily Message* on November 17, 2004.

Hiro Tateno's Visit and Our Trip to Yosemite



Our Yosemite Trip

by William D'Angelo III, Aikido 3rd Dan

For close to a year, our good friend Hiro Tateno has expressed a desire to see Yosemite National Park. When Ito Sensei, Mike Van Ruth and I visited Japan last October, we all reminisced about how wonderful it would be to fulfill Hiro's long-time wish. We began planning as soon as we got back because we wanted him to have a great experience.

We left the morning of May 19th. The traffic was slower than we thought as there was a large tractor trailer accident that held us up for hours. But we still made it to our first destination on the trip, the Bass Pro Shop, with plenty of time. For those who haven't been to a Bass Pro Shop, it is an outdoorsman's mash up buying experience of Walmart and Northface with a Disneyland like atmosphere. We marveled at the huge store decorated with stuffed hunting game, huge tanks filled with fish and displays for everything from sleeping bags to guns. Hiro loved it and we all stocked up on neat gadgets and high-quality gear.

When we arrived at Yosemite in the early evening, it was already crowded but we had a nice wide-open campground that was centrally located. We made a fire, cooked dinner and went to sleep relatively early that night.

The next day, we got an early start – it was chilly in the mid 40's in the morning so a bit on the cold side. Hot breakfast was appreciated by everybody. Because of the huge snow levels this year in the Sierras, much of the Park at high altitude was closed. So we decided to drive up to Glacier Point early in the day to get a total view of the valley. We were lucky we started early because the traffic was crazy. After about an hour's drive, we reached Glacier Point and we were able to see almost the whole valley including El Capital and Half Dome along with many of the major waterfalls. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that we all felt in awe at the beauty and uniqueness of the valley which had been created over millions of years from receding glaciers (now all gone). If we had left just 30 minutes later, we would have been stuck in traffic for over an hour trying to just get into Glacier Point.

We relaxed most of the rest of the day after driving through parts of the Yosemite Valley park just soaking up the views especially of the waterfalls which are at historic strengths and fullness. Fortune

continued to favor us as the rangers noted that the falls were at their peak flows, highest levels in years, and so we saw them at about as dramatic and beautiful as it ever gets.

That night we had an early dinner and Hiro and I went to see a film by Yosemite climber Ron Kauk in the Yosemite's visitor center. Although Ron is not an Aikido practitioner, he several times mentioned the writings of Second Doshu in his understanding of harmony among people, with nature and in seeking peace in a

violent world. It was a nice surprise to see the concepts of Aikido appear where you least expect them.

On coming to Yosemite, Hiro told us that one of his dreams was to see the Giant Sequoia trees (otherwise known as the Giant Redwoods). Again because of the weather, two of the three Sequoia groves were closed, but we were able to visit the Tuolumne Grove of Sequoia's in the northwest end of the park. The drive out to the Grove was beautiful and outside the main park so it wasn't crowded at all. Very peaceful. Along the way, we had the opportunity to see a black bear (with brown fur) eating in a meadow peacefully off the side of the road. Hiro was very excited when we reached the Sequoia Grove. By California standards the Grove was modest with less than 100 living trees, but each tree was over 100 years old and could be as high as 300 feet. They are some of the oldest living species on Earth. But the trees are majestic and what they may lack in numbers they more than compensate for in sheer power, height and beauty.

The next day we wrapped up, broke camp and began the trip home along the coast (via Pismo Beach). I think we all had an amazing experience. There is a magical or if you will a mystical experience about the valley. I think President Teddy Roosevelt, who started the National Park system, said it best, "It was like lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man."



Mastery & Me

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

What is keeping us from mastery? It's easy to find someone or something to blame; the school is not good enough, there are no good students with which to practice, the class schedule isn't convenient, the dojo is too far away, the teacher won't recognize my ability, the training is not interesting enough, no one likes me, and so on.

The way to mastery is simple; find a good teacher and practice hard. Yet, this is not enough for some students. It seems to some students that simply practicing everyday is *not* good enough to make them good. Therefore, there must be a secret method; some kind of shortcut to getting good. Maybe there is some type of special training?

In Aikido training, many students join with an idea of "what" Aikido is after watching a demonstration or video on Youtube and are surprised by how hard the training really is. As easy and smooth as the Aikido techniques appear, the new students quickly discover how difficult even the most basic movements seem to be.

As a teacher, sometimes you observe a student with great potential yet their ego gets in the way. They get a little bit of skill and feel that they know everything; that their technique is somehow above reproach. They might get upset with their teacher, or the school, or even their fellow students for not recognizing their greatness and with their feelings hurt, they end up quitting.

Some students might stop practicing when, after six months of training, they're not throwing their opponents each and every which-away; or after six months of training, no one will recognize their skill; or after six months of sporadic training, they still haven't acclimatized themselves to the practice.

One might think that the biggest barrier to mastery is lack of athletic ability or talent, but I can tell you that athleticism has little impact at all. Many athletic, talented people begin training only to quit for one silly reason or another. Then there are the students who don't seem to show any promise at all. They are not athletic nor do they possess any talent; yet, they quietly come to class, train regularly, and don't make a big deal about it. These are the students who progress. These are the kind of students who not only develop their technique, but also develop their spirits too.

Nowadays everyone has something better to do. Everyone has some little but important excuse to not come to practice; if it's a little bit too hot, don't train; if it's a little too cold, don't train; if it's too nice outside to go to the dojo, don't train; if it's raining, don't train; if I'm a little sore, don't train. Little excuses are one of the major barriers to mastery and it's easy for the "spirit of the samurai" to succumb to their allure.



It sounds counter intuitive, but being too smart is also a barrier to mastery. "How long do I need to practice to get good?" is a reasonable question to ask your teacher, but asking this means that the student has already put a limit onto themselves and wants to see how much they can get away with while doing the minimum. This is the mindset of someone who is already starting out with an excuse. This kind of calculating mind which weighs the pros and cons of an art like Aikido is already starting out with the wrong spirit. They are already asking, "What is in it for me?" In a traditional martial art like Aikido, mastery will never happen while practicing with this kind of limited spirit.

It's almost better to be foolish and forge ahead tirelessly under a good teacher than to believe, "I'll never be able to do it," and logically reaffirm with plenty of sensible reasons why it's valid. Another case would be believing that one is too smart because we think we can progress on our own skill and "know-how" because "we know better". This is the difference between idiotically mastering the art and being "too smart" to master the art.

As a teacher, I'd rather have an untalented student who attends regularly than a strong talented student who only attends when they feel like it.

This is why it is so important to rid ourselves of ego in order to attain mastery. Ego decides whether we are "good", or whether we are "no good". Knowledge and experience allow us to say whether we are correct or not correct. Practice allows us to bring the knowledge and experience out of our heads and into reality with our physical movement and technique.

The simplest answer to the question, "How to get good?" is to find a good teacher, lose your ego before stepping onto the mat, and practice regularly. It's simple to say, but very difficult to do; not impossible, but impossible without sacrifice. How willing are you to get out of your own way and on to your path towards mastery? No one can answer that but you.



The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles (ACLA) admit students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The Furuya Foundation and the Aikido Center of Los Angeles do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.



A Great Thing to See

by Reverend Kensho Furuya



Muge or “no obstacle” by Nakayama Hakudo

One of my senior students is getting together all the old papers and records together at my house and he recently brought an old notebook to me which I hadn't seen for many years. I was rather surprised to see my paperwork from the mid 1960's and many involving the establishment of the Southern California Aikido Federation which has been defunct for decades. I am sure most Aikidoists in this area do not even remember it. I was doing a great deal of work then as Secretary and Technical Advisor/Instructor and my student had calculated the years backwards and was surprised to note that I was only 16 or 17 years old at the time. I think by 14 or 15, I was already a black belt and teaching at the time.

It is nice that all these records are still preserved for our dojo, but when I see them I only feel very old and tired! 35, going on 40 or so years, have passed since then and I am still at it!

Some old timer had remarked to me that when O'Sensei passed away in 1969, around 1,700 people had attended his funeral. When 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, passed away in 1999, 30 years later, there were over three times more people attending his funeral. His assertion was that Aikido had grown over three times more since O'Sensei's time to 2nd Doshu's time. Indeed, Aikido has really grown and changed so much over the years and it is really quite remarkable to have witnessed to it!

Change is good and change is inevitable, but we must not lose the essence of Aikido which should never change.

The other day I was looking at a very rare scroll by the Iaido master, Nakayama Hakudo. He had written out the *Hannya Shingyo* or Heart Sutra and this was most probably written at a time shortly before his own passing in 1962, I think. In the *Hannya Shingyo*, the character, *mu* (無) or “emptiness” appears many times. Each time Hakudo Sensei wrote this character he wrote it in a different style so there are no two *mu* characters that are exactly the same. This is a rule in formal calligraphy that the same character can never be written in the same fashion but, in this case, where the character is repeated so many times, this is extremely difficult.

What is interesting to note, is that is all the different variations on the character for *mu*, each is written with Hakudo's indelible style. In other words, although the outer form of each *mu* is varied, its inner essence is still the same and easily recognizable in each written character.

Although each person's Aikido may be slightly different, we should all be practicing O'Sensei's teachings without any change or alteration at all.

Where does this “path” take me, with only my teacher's teachings as the light? This warm light comforts me among all these cold dark shadows we call Life. . . .

This morning at around 6:00 am, I went to have coffee at *Phillippe's*, the oldest restaurant in Los Angeles, founded in 1908! Coffee there is still only 9 cents, can you believe this? A young Asian man sat down across from me at the community table and I only looked at him to see if he was Chinese or Japanese. He was very unusual though; he didn't touch his coffee or sweet roll at all, but got out his books and began to study. His posture is better than most people I see around here in Los Angeles so I thought he must come from another country or maybe he was former military? No! Martial artist? No. It was hard to determine anything other than he was some sort of student. Most people will taste their coffee first, or drink their coffee while they read. Few people simply put down their coffee and not touch it at all. This is very unusual human behavior, I thought to myself. Finally, after some minutes, he closed his books and put it away with his notebook and straightened the tray with the coffee in front of himself, bowed his head and began to pray to himself silently. He prayed for about one minute or longer. He is not a fanatic or crazy, I knew he was praying very sincerely and very devotedly. He had a very polite manner and was very refined. After his prayer, he began to politely stir his coffee and then began to drink it. Quickly, I straightened my own posture and stopped reading my newspaper. It is so refreshing to see someone who cares about his inner self and is devoted to his faith. There is a special refinement and nobility that faith brings to a person. I was glad to see a young person who is taking his life so seriously and intently.

It is easy to become so sloppy and take things for granted in a world of plenty as we have. To pray and give thanks for a nine cent cup of coffee is a great thing to see!

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his *Daily Message* on October 1, 2002.

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class

10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM Intensive Seminar* †

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Open

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

† Intensive seminar is offered the last Saturday of every month

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Open

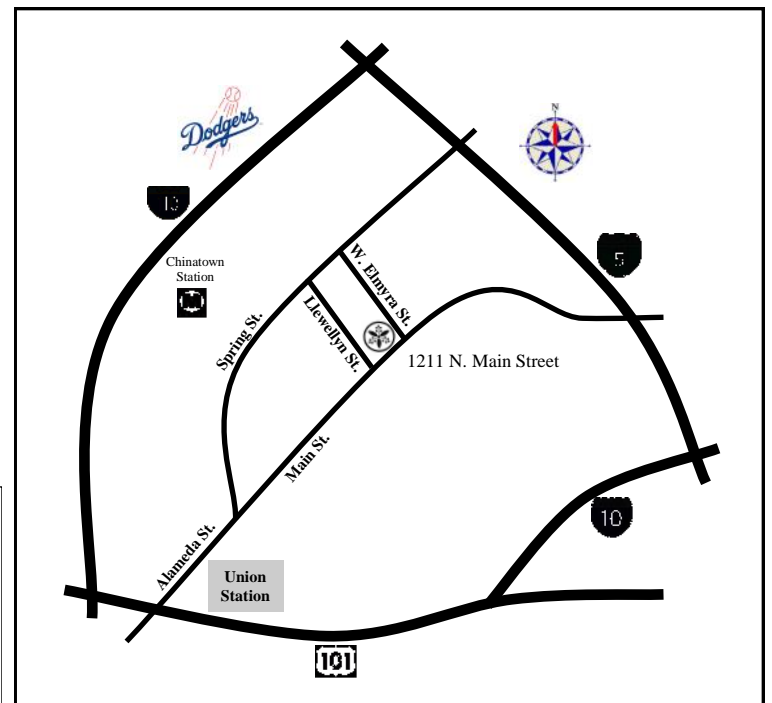
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Open

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded
Official Hombu Recognition by the
AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.



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The Aiki Dojo

Official publication of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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

Editor-in-Chief and Publisher: David Ito



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at

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Los Angeles, CA 90012

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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.