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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles LLC

The Aiki Dojo

Affiliation: The Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Rev. Kensho Furuya Foundation
Los Angeles Sword & Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
Nanka Yamanashi Kenjin Kai Southern California Yamanashi Prefectural Association
Los Angeles Police Department Martial Artist Advisory Panel

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Donation

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Autumn Leaves, Harvest Moon



Ken Watanabe demonstrating knife defense, Tsuki-kote-gaeshi at our Nisei Week Demonstration. Mark Ty taking ukemi.

The other day, a friend recommended a certain brand of corn chowder to me and so I went to market to pick some up and try it. I was quite surprised when I poured out the corn chowder into the pan and found many, many tiny little bits of red chilis all about. I smiled and chuckled at this. These peppers are in the corn chowder not for the taste but for color. I guess the simple yellowish color of corn is too boring and so it has to be dressed up with "bam!" - bits of red chili! This is so different from Japanese taste which would try to emphasize the natural color and taste of the corn itself. Many years ago, I had "corn" tofu. So delicious and the most beautiful color of pale yellow corn and the sweet taste of the corn itself - so wonderful! No chilis needed here. I am considered a good cook in Japanese cuisine but I remember one veteran cook corrected me. When I cook bamboo shoots - I use too much soy sauce and make the color of the bamboo shoots too dark. A good cook will enhance the natural flavor of the vegetable but never alter its natural color. Yes, now I think we should enjoy the natural "taste" of Aikido, No need to dress it up with chilis or any other fancy stuff. Let's enjoy natural, simple Aikido!

Flowing With the Flow:

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about how to further develop our Dojo. Not like I normally do-thinking about teaching my students, but thinking very seriously how to develop our membership. The summer was very slow for us and students do not seem to be coming back as they normally do in the Fall. We are a very traditional Dojo and maybe it is too hard for people to comprehend or appreciate these days. Perhaps we need to up-date our methods and become more like what other dojos are doing across the country. Maybe it is better to stick it out. Changing the routine of the Dojo is not a matter of making a few more dollars - as much as we need them - but changing my beliefs, how I think and what I have been trying to teach you in Aikido all of these years up to now. For me, there are so many difficult decisions to make - to maintain what I believe in and have learned or to go with the present day flow and make the many compromises.



Tom Williams teaching class in Mexico this summer.

Sensei's Message: Shoe-horn

I noticed the Dojo shoehorn is broken so I went to buy another one today. My senior assistant is Japanese and Japanese commonly use the shoehorn when putting on their shoes but I didn't know most people today really use them. I see most people shoving on their shoes as they leave the Dojo - not good for the shoe or foot, I always think. . . and certainly doesn't look nice from where I am sitting, haha! I think this is the third or four shoehorn over the many years here.

Many years when I was on a trip in Japan, I saw a very nice, very long shoehorn made out of some kind of hard wood and nicely polished and I thought it would be nice for my teacher and bought it for him. It wasn't a great thing or very expensive.

Although my Zen master was in his late eighties, every morning, he would wake up, put on a nice suit and tie and drive himself to the temple to work. As time went by, it became my custom to drive to his house and pick him up each morning and bring him into the city although he lived far away and I was only a block away from the temple. Although most others refused such a nuisance job, these were very pleasant times for me because he would always chat with me and tell me stories from the back seat of the car where he was sitting. I treasured even today these times I could spend with him when it was just the two of us in the car.

As he would leave his house each morning, he would always have to bend over to put on his leather shoes and I could always hear a small moan of pain, as he was managing the shoe horn. When the Ms was alive, she was always there at the front door to hand him the shoehorn and say, "goodbye," and after she was gone and I came to pick him up each morning, it became my duty to be ready to hand him the shoehorn when he put on his shoes. Perhaps this is hard for you to understand but it is a very Japanese thing maybe - but we always try to do these small things for our teachers. I think that these tiny customs are dying away in Japanese society today.

Anyways, getting back to my story. When I brought back the present to my teacher, all of the other priests began to laugh and scold me when they saw that I had brought our illustrious teacher a mere shoehorn. They laughed and chided me mercilessly and I was really embarrassed and ashamed.

However, the very next day, I noticed that the Bishop was using my silly shoehorn and because of its length, he no longer had to bend over to put on his shoes. Every morning, I would hear from him, "Aaaaah, what a nice shoehorn, so easy to use!"

Then he said, once to me, "Only Furuya would ever think to give me such a wonderful treasure!" This is something I will always keep with me in my memories with my teacher.

100 To One

Sometimes, better than practicing one hundred different techniques, it is good to practice one basic technique in a hundred different ways. I don't mean to change or alter the technique but to change the conditions and circumstances of the technique. You will find, like I do, that this can be a great way to study and get to really know the technique.

For example, let us take Katate-tori Ikkyo Gyakuhanmi. This is very basic, fundamental technique and is always much harder than it

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles 30th Anniversary Celebration

Date: April 28, 2004. From 6:00pm

Place: Hotel New Otani. 120 S. Los Angeles St., Los Angeles, CA.

All are cordially invited to attend our 30th Anniversary Celebration of our Dojo and Furuya Sensei's 45th Anniversary in Aikido. Please email in your reservation at aclafuruya@earthlink.com.

All branch dojo and friends, old students and new, are all invited to join our celebration.

Membership Drive

Please help our Dojo to develop our membership. Introduce Aikido to a friend or family member and encourage them to join our practice. We should always be thinking our building up the student body. Many thanks for your cooperation and help.

*Aikido Center of Los Angeles
Rev. Kensho Furuya*

Important Dates:

October 4. Yamanashi Kenjinkai Memorial Service at Zenshujii. 11:30am. Luncheon at Miyako Inn.

October 7. Self Defense Seminar for members of the newly formed Los Angeles Downtown Neighborhood Watch group. Everyone is invited to help out.

October 11. Monthly laido Intensive. 6:30-8:00am. All members are invited to attend.

October 13. Columbus Day. Regular Practice Schedule.

October 25. Monthly Aikido Intensive. 6:30-8:00am.

November 8. Monthly laido Intensive. 6:30-8:00am.

November 22. Monthly Aikido Intensive. 6:30-8:00am. Because of the Holiday, we will conduct our practice one week early.

November 27. Thanksgiving Holiday. Dojo is closed.

Continued: appears. Without changing it's form, one can practice this same technique from a static position and from a fast, moving position. Of course, this is obvious to everyone.

I think one knows how to make the technique more powerful, but try to practice it using the least amount of physical power as possible, only relying on your timing and body position.

Try the technique only emphasizing or carefully watching your balance.

Try again, making careful study of your ma-ai and body position.

Try yet again, studying the correct flow and rythme of the technique.

Try with many different people and observe how the technique varies with each person. . . .

I think we all do this unconsciously in our normal practice but try to be more aware of these different methods and conditions. . . .

In Class:

Watch the words, do not hear them. When you listen, it is important to see what is going on at the same time. . . . otherwise you will get confused by your own interpretation in your head or some other technique.

For example, when an instructor might say, "behind," you must see if you are moving "behind" your opponent, or stepping behind yourself - these are two completely opposite movements so you must not get easily confused.

Sometimes, when I say, "lead foot" or "front foot," I often see students moving the opposite or back foot. This does not make sense to me. I think they must hear only the word, "foot." This always drives me crazy because simple things like this should be already understood by the student after only several months. . . .

When someone says to move the hand upwards, you must see if your moving towards your opponent or just to yourself, again these are two completely separate movements but described with the same word. So, I must say, "See the words, not just hear them!" This is true in all training with any teacher. . . .

Inquiry: "Talent"

08-26-03:Hi, I happen to write the other day and forgot one thing. For any teacher there is no talent in teaching a talented student (anybody could do that). The real talent is teaching the student who can't do anything. Have a good day, Ian

Sensei's Reply: In my own experience, I feel this is not right or fair to say. It takes equal amounts of talent and skill to teach a so-called "talented student" as it does to teach someone "who can't do anything."

We rely on the wisdom of the form and spirit of the practice, but we do need very special care to teach those so-called talented students. I have often seen talent in a student destroyed by incorrect guidance by

the instructor. And I have often seen talented students destroy themselves by becoming too self-confident or arrogant.

In my own Dojo here, all students are given the same special care. We work hard on beginning students with no knowledge or so-called talent at all - often these students are "easier" to teach because they are more receptive to the instruction. Many times, it is only the case of time and devoted practice on their part. Of course, I can discuss for days and days on how to teach and guide students here. . . .

Talented students may expect "more" treatment but they are treated the same as everyone else whether they like it or not. Everyone starts at the beginning. . . . there is no exception to this rule.

Finally, each student has their own timing. Some students may pick up quickly at the beginning and appear talented but often slow down and get lazy. These people are often subject to whimsy and their interest jumps here and there too quickly. Students who come in with no special talents might appear slow at first, but if they stick to it, often speed up once they begin to catch on and gain considerable momentum. How can you fairly judge if a student has talent or not - only the student can know for himself by asking himself how much he is willing to commit himself to his learning.

The most important quality I look for in a student in "aspiration." The greater the aspiration to learn, the greater the chances he will do well in training. It makes no difference if he is young or old, strong or weak, skilled or unskilled, or whatever. . . .

Finally, I must say that "talent" is a very bad word to use in any case in teaching. . . . It is much too bias a term and destroys the proper outlook of the teacher in doing his job.

Teach Deeply:

The reality of this world is that some people appear stronger than others. Some people appear more skilled than others. A student may seem strong because he is young, another student may appear weak because he is much older. . . . Some students appear slow because they have never done anything like Aikido before. Some students seem to catch on quickly or seem to have a knack for the technique. However, in the Dojo, we cannot judge people by such superficial standards.

I discuss my students with my assistant instructors at dinner after every practice. Most students do not even realize how much time I spend thinking about them and how to teach them - this is why I am so tired all of the time! Some students need to be pushed, some don't. Some students need a lot of attention, some need to be ignored. The learning problems of most students have nothing to do with Aikido itself, but with their attitude or state of mind and physical condition which they bring into the Dojo. . . . this is what makes teaching Aikido very tough. A teacher may see the symptoms of a problem on the mats in practice, but must always realize that the source of the problem itself may exist outside of the Dojo and outside of practice. Because of this, one needs to think very deeply about how to teach each student properly. Aikido will touch each student's life, teaching is a great responsibility. If a teacher merely divides students be talent, he cannot teach each student properly. This is not theory, this is the reality of teaching. . . .

Happines is always your own choice.

Aikido Friendship Foundation, Orange County:

Dear Sensei, We would like to thank you in advance for your kindness. Our dojo was founded in a little strange situation, the story is a little bit long so I hope you could bear with my English. We are a group of 3 aikidoka, we came from Vietnam, I started to learn Aikido when I was 10 years old in 1981 under my sensei back in my country under the communist regime, as you know we were not allowed to communicate or have any contacts with the outside world under the communist control, it is funny and sad to tell you that we were not allowed to put O' sensei portrait in our dojo and pay respect to him whenever we came to practice, instead we have to put the portrait of one communist dictator at the kamiza, it is lucky for us that our sensei was promoted to Sandan before 1975 (in former Republic government) so he received the certificate directly from Hombu dojo through late Nakazono sensei, after that and under the above situation I received my shodan from him in 1985. We were absolutely disconnected with Hombu dojo after 1975.

We came to US in 1992, and my sensei is old now, 70 years old, and we keep practicing aikido in his garage because we don't have enough finance to open up a dojo. We keep aikido in our hearts and in our tiny dojo but we are very happy since we can have a decent O'Sensei portrait to bow when the classes begin or end, we have a few kids in neighborhood came to practice. Until 2001, after my brother and I have a pretty stable job, our sensei and 2 of us leased a 1400 sq feet suite to open a dojo in Garden Grove city. For 2 years with all difficulties, my brother and I put all of our savings to keep the dojo open so the kids can have a place to practice, to have a chance to know about Budo, the only reward for us is to see them grow in Aikido, to see them practice Kokyu nage, Osaewaza, Suwariwaza, etc... instead of staying home spending meaningless hours in front of TV, Video games without a goal or purpose.

Thank you for your patience with my story. I wish you and your students good health so you all can continue to bring to the world good fruits. Best regards, Nhan Ly

Editor's Note:

This group has been corresponding with Sensei for the last several years and they receive our Dojo Newsletter each month. We wish them good luck. They know that they can always rely on us, if they ever need our help or guidance.

08-26-03: Dear Sensei, I will keep your advice in my heart, please accept our appreciation and admire and if we ever approached you in any way that was not appropriate because of the language barrier please also accept our apologies as well. It is such an honor to us to appear on your Newsletter, my story and our picture is just a little sand on the dessert or a small drop in the large ocean here....I feel we are not worthy to receive this honor from you, Sensei. However, obedience is more valuable than the tribute as someone once said, I will sort out the best picture of our little dojo to send to your attention soon. Many thanks and best regards, Nhan Ly

Introduce A New Member:

Introduce a new member to the Dojo and help us to develop our membership. Many thanks for your support.



Lotus Festival: Maria Murakawa, Steve Shawn, Mark Ty, Kenny Furuya, Gary Myers, Ken Watanabe, Michael Vance, James Doi & James Takata.

1st Impressions & Making Judgements:

When I first went to Hombu Dojo and met Arikawa Sensei, his practice was almost terrifying. He had a reputation for being very tough and his kote-gaeshi and shiho-nage were particularly devastating. Up until that time, I didn't know someone could be thrown that hard into the mat, or that far across the room! It was almost scary. . . . Even the way he looked (I shouldn't say!) was kind of scary to me.

One day, he suddenly came into my room and really surprised me and I jumped up. He said, "While you are here studying Aikido, you need to study Japanese culture as well, and sat me down and pulled out a book of Japanese poetry and began to explain it in great detail. . . . I was so impressed at how well educated he was. This ancient poetry collection, the Kokinshu, was very famous but very difficult to understand. Most people cannot understand it at all today. As a side note, to participate in the annual poetry contest held by the Imperial Family in Japan, you must master this collection of poems by heart or it is impossible to write traditional poetry. In ancient times, everyone was familiar with this famous collection of the most beautiful poems.

I was so surprised. He often came to visit me, bringing various books on Japanese culture to explain and introduce me to. One day, he even brought the Manyoshu - an ancient poetry collection, over one thousand years old, in which you need a very specialized Manyoshu dictionary just to read it! No one in Japan even speaks this ancient language today! I was so amazed again and again by Arikawa Sensei's great knowledge.

One day, he noticed that I was hungry because my stomach was making a slight growling noise (how embarrassing!) as he was talking to me - practice was so hard that sometimes we didn't even have time to eat. The very next day, he came and brought me a couple of oranges. Several days later, he brought me some Japanese cookies and another book. He did this many times that I can't even remember.

I never mentioned this to anyone during my stay - on the outside in practice, he appeared so tough and hard and rarely spoke openly to us.

Continued:

Etiquette For Testing:

08-13-03: Dear Sensei, I have been traveling quite a bit lately, and so I am constantly playing catch-up with your daily message. I just finished July! Anyway, most every message raises some question or other for me, but here are a couple that I would like to ask:

1. In my dojo I have been pushing for stricter protocol during testing, and I want to make certain that my vision of the way it is supposed to work is correct. Under my understanding, the strictest protocol would be:

* When the testee's name is called, he steps out of line in shikko, walks in close to the line in shikko to the center of the mat, in front of the shomen, then turns and walks directly towards the shomen to the proper distance.

* He then bows to the shomen, bows to the judge or testing board and bows to uke (he is closer to the judge than uke).

* After testing the process is reversed, and the shikko away from the shomen is a backwards shikko in order to avoid turning his back to O'Sensei.

* Is this correct? Does uke do the same?

2. I am still sitting, and have been sitting every day. However, my practice has waxed and waned in duration, and I see that the quality of my focus has really deteriorated. I feel as though I have lost my joriki completely, and have retreated from shikan-taza to breath-counting. Still I find myself being carried away and influenced by my thoughts. I have rededicated myself to sitting with the goal of 30 minutes in the morning and 60 at night, but am still having a very difficult time. I have had moments, sometimes for several minutes at a time, of clarity, but not for some time. It is frustrating, and any suggestions would be welcome. Thank you for your help and guidance. Warmest regards, -NDC

Sensei's Reply:

It is always nice to hear from you. Strict protocol is very important in the Dojo and especially during the testing, special occasions and receiving promotional certificates, etc. In Japanese tradition, it is always important to keep in mind that this protocol is not simply observing an empty formality nor is it the preservation of out-dated feudalism or hierarchies. Protocol is a part of our spiritual training. The observance of protocol means that one is constantly mindful of his place and others - this means continuous, serious moment by moment consideration for others. Observance of the rules is also a sign of an appreciation (gratitude) for the discipline and form of the art and practice. Finally, we believe that one's beautiful and dignified observance of all of the protocol is an eye into the character of the person and his level of achievement in practice. In other words, one who is sloppy with his manners is also considered careless and uncaring. One who does not observe the proper behavior and manners indicates that he has not trained properly or does not hold high regard for the instruction. It also indicates that one is selfishly upset or angry or has a bad attitude when he refuses to act properly in the dojo. This is not unique to Japanese etiquette, it is the same all over the world in all cultures. One who does not observe proper etiquette, lacks proper consideration for others and does not deserve to be tested in Aikido.

In testing, whether one stands up and moves to the testing area on the mat or moves there in shikko (knee walking) is up to the instructor and the dojo. I think it depends on the layout of the dojo itself and I think the teacher should determine which is more appropriate in his own situation. In whichever case, it should be uniform in practice. In shikko, you may have to make exception on occasion with people with bad knees, etc.

Customarily, the candidates are all lined up. First of all, the name of the testee is called and the student must answer, "Hai!" in a loud clear voice without hesitation. The energy of the "hai" and the timing of the response is very important for the teacher to judge the student's spirit. There should be no break between the teacher's calling of the name of the testee and the testee's reply. This means that the teacher-judge and the student is in spiritual harmony.

The student says "hai," and bows where he is seated (to acknowledge the call). He then proceeds to the testing area (center of the mat) and sits in the proper position and waits for his partner or uke. Both should sit facing each other at the proper distance. Sitting at the proper distance at the designated place is very important in judging the student's awareness again. Sitting in the wrong place, sitting too close together without proper ma-ai are all points down.

Together, at the same time, they turn respectfully to O'Sensei's photo in the shomen and bow respectfully, this is always a sitting bow (zareai), not standing bow (tachirei). They then should turn towards the teacher and judges and make the 2nd bow. They then turn and face each other again, straighten themselves for a split second and make the 3rd bow to each other. At this point, they wait for the instructor's signal to stand up and begin the test.

At any time, during the test, if the student is spoken to by the teacher, he should always answer with "hai!"

If the testee needs to say something, he shouldn't merely speak out during the test but go to his seat and sit down and wait for the teacher to acknowledge him. When the uke realizes that the testee is returning to his seat, he should immediately know something needs attention and return to his seat as well and wait. At this time, the testee can ask a question, when the teacher acknowledges him or to receive an ok to adjust his uniform or take a break, etc. This formality is up to the teacher however - this is difficult to do for the nervous students who don't show proper composure during the test and very time consuming and the teacher may forego this etiquette, but this is the most formal and correct way of behavior in testing for your information. Sometimes, instead of sitting, the two students may return to the designated starting place and wait in a standing position. It is considered rude to speak out to the teacher at any time during the test without the teacher's permission first of all. It is also incorrect for the testee to make comments or verbal instructions to the uke. All instructions come from the teacher or judge himself. The spirit of this idea should be maintained during the testing however, one decides to make the procedures.

The general rule of thumb is that if the testing is stopped for any reason, it is always re-started at the original starting place. The students should always know and have this habit.

I notice that much testing today is quite informal. I personally do not approve of this. Please remember that you are testing in front of

Etiquette continued:

O'Sensei. One must also remember that, as a judge or teacher, you are the visible representative of O'Sensei during testing and all this requires the proper and most appropriate attitude and decorum.

At the end of testing, the testee and uke return to their original seats. It is points down if they switch seats or break their ma-ai with each other, sitting too far apart or close together.

This time, they compose themselves, slightly adjust their uniform (lapel), straighten their posture slightly, and, at the same time, turn to O'Sensei's picture and bow respectfully. This is always a sitting bow. They then turn to the teacher and judges and bow a 2nd time. Finally, they turn to each other and bow. They wait there in the sitting position until the teacher dismisses them and they then can stand up return to their seats.

This is the most proper and formal way I know for testing. Nowadays many people make all kinds of changes or adaptations. I think this is ok as long as the spirit, meaning and form of the etiquette is never lost. I hope this helps you.

In regards to your second question, Just sit! - This is shikantaza, don't worry about long or short, wax or wane, good or bad - just sit and make it natural as possible. Creating values and comparisons is not sitting.

Jo Long Staff

Muso Gonnosuke vs Musashi:

08-25-03: Furuya Sensei, I hope this email finds you well and in good spirits. A question for you (again!) regarding some martial culture. Your website has motivated me to research some of the topics you discuss. Musashi has just gripped me with his legend and your knowledge of him has further tickled my taste to his history. Is their any truth to the story that Muso Gonnosuke defeated Musashi with the Jo? I have read the Go Rin No Sho and Yoshikawa Eiji's novel. These have been my single resource until your website. Thank you for your time Sensei. Always, Michael C.

Sensei's Reply:

This is a famous legend and considered the source of how the Muso Ryu of staff came into existence and often related by members of the Muso Ryu.

It is hard to say how authentic this story is because it is unconfirmed by any other reliable sources and Muso Gonnosuke is never mentioned by Musashi.

According to one account, Muso Gonnosuke tied with Musashi in a duel and later developed the staff to defeat him in a 2nd encounter.

One other account says that he was defeated the first time around and then beat Musashi with a long staff in a 2nd encounter.

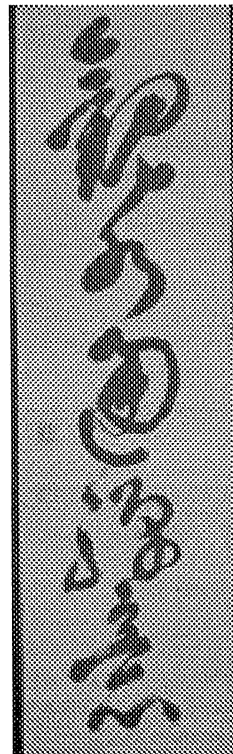
Another account says that he was defeated the 1st time and tied with Musashi in a 2nd try.

One well known historical novelist, writing in the same genre as Yoshikawa Eiji, depicts Muso as a Momma's boy who used the help

of his mother to defeat Musashi. Or, in yet another version, Muso's mother came to his aid when she saw that her son was about to be defeated by Musashi.

Please take your pick of which ever version of this legend appeals to you most!

**Kansui Tachimachi Zen no Kokoro.
Viewing The Flowing Waters,
Suddenly, The Heart of Zen**



We talked about these words several days ago but this still lingers in my mind and I am still thinking about these beautiful words. It says: Kansui Tachimachi Zen no Kokoro Or, "Viewing the water, suddenly we see the essence of Zen."

In other words, as we view the flowing waters of the stream, we can see the essence or heart of Zen and how it works.

Water is pliable and yields to any shape of container, it never collides with the obstructing stones in the river but naturally glides over, around and past them Today, we like to call this "going with the flow."

However, many mis-interpret this meaning. The physical nature of water is flowing, but its essence never changes. In other words, however water moves or changes shape, it is always water and never anything else.

When we interpret this, we, on the other hand, make are bodies inert and inflexible and allow our minds to go every which way. In our practice, we should make our bodies flexible and pliable and able to move any way we wish like water flowing in the stream yet, our minds should remain focussed on who we are and what we are doing. our inner spirit must always be true to itself.

Being true to one's self - is the hardest point of our training to understand.

"Going with the flow" does not mean the "easy way out," it means to be natural and spontaneous and above all, like the waters of the mountain spring - pure and untainted.

1st Impressions continued:

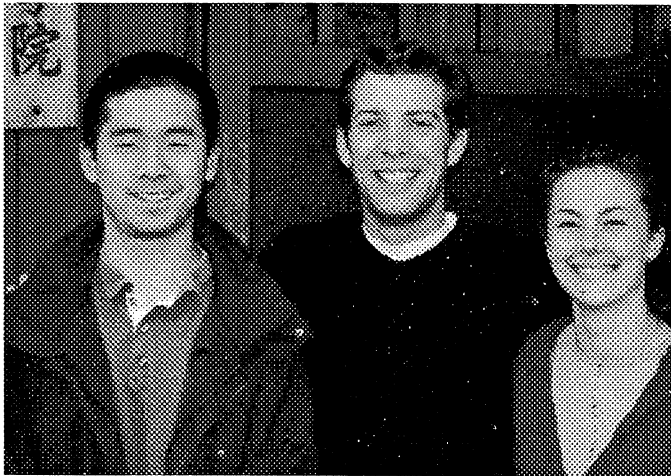
At the same time, I found him to be such a well-educated and scholarly gentlemen, so very refined and educated. And indeed, so compassionate and generous to bring some snacks to one lowly student like me.

This is how teachers were in those days - there was no way to figure them out. We could never judge them so easily, we could only respect them and continually be surprised and impressed at their greatness.

Kodokai Branch, Salamanca, Spain:

08-15-03: Sensei, I supposed that you are working now, aaahh, never stop Sensei, I hope that you take care of you, a little bit more, please, but I know too, that if you don't do the things (articles, class, etc, etc,) no body will do for you or even they do, they didn't do it as you way. sure. This is the problem.

I will like be as you are, working all time, that is the way because you give me a inspiration to work everyday and don't fall when the things going bad. I know that sometime the people didn't appreciate the work behind the aikido, Iaido class, the articles the demos..... but I know exactly how many hours working night and day, you spend thinking the best way to, (no the easy way) to do everything, is because I appreciate so much. I know that you need to rest, but I know that that you need to work too. Anyway, I hope see you soon and practice and talk with you Sensei Your student,
Santiago



Santiago and Susanna, with Mark Ty, at the Dojo. They are expecting a new child (boy) very soon! Congratulations!

Furuya's Law:

**Study Aikido like you would study the wind,
which can only be seen when it is moving.**

Studying Aikido from a static position is like asking the little birdie to stop flapping its wings in flight so you can take its picture. . . . This sounds a little silly but, more often than not, it is true in our normal training. I think we always have to keep this in mind. . . .

It is easy to get distracted from the real purpose of our training. It is important always to maintain a Singular Purpose of minds and spirits and only stick to the fundamental principles. Eventually the true meaning will appear before you.

Puerto Vallarto Branch:

Tom Williams' Visit

08-21-03: Dear Sensei, I hope all is well with You. I apologize for not communicating lately. This last month I have had some health issues to deal with. I am feeling better and hope to recover completely soon. I am glad that Mr. Williams enjoyed his visit with Blackaller Sensei in Guadalajara. I hope he can visit us in Puerto Vallarta in the near future. Thank You very much for sending me the ACLA newsletter. I am grateful. My heartfelt wishes to You and to everyone at ACLA for health and happiness. With gratitude always,
Raffi Badalian

Paris Branch:

08-25-03: Hello Sensei, It is a real pleasure of reading you and to have your news. For a few months I had been indeed absent for reason professional. I espere that now will be calmed. Concerning our courses of Aikido, they occurs well, and we have the new ones students who came to learn the Art of Peace. Sorry, if i don't write you, but you now, here the work is very speedy !! I very often think has you, I visualize your technique during the courses, which enables me to advance and transmit the Art of Peace at my student Best Regards, Cyril Danan

Aikikan, Israel

08-28-03: Dear Sensei, How are you? I was surprised to read that your newsletter was all your creation. Amazing. I am sorry it took me such a long time to reply. I had problems connecting to the internet. Really sorry, I hope you are not disappointed.

I will send you photos by air-mail. I hope they will help. Thank you for always thinking and caring about our small dojo here in Israel.

I wish I could attend your lectures during nisei week. As someone wrote to you - I wish there was a recording or a video. But I understand that you don't have any. Maybe some day you will give these lectures here in Israel. How great this would be. Take care, Yours,
Ze'ev. Israel.

09-17-03: Dear Sensei, thank you so much for your quick reply. I attended several classes conducted by Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu. In the middle of class he came to me and showed me how to do more correctly the Yokomen Uchi. Then he told me that he thinks that he saw me before. I told him about Koyama sensei and Kyoto Aikikai.

I wish to ask you if you think that you might have an answer regarding your visit in Israel. I am sorry if my e-mail was not very clear. If you wish, I can write about it more clearly. My students and I are sure that your visit here will be an unforgettable experience. We are also sure that although people think it is dangerous here, you will feel safe and will have a great time. Israel Aikidoka like most Aikidoka everywhere in the world do all they can do to promote peace and peaceful solutions. We hope that your visit here will contribute to peace in the region.

December 2004 is very good for us here as there is no other seminar planned here during that time. You are going to have your Aikido video set on DVD. I wanted to buy it for my dojo. As soon as it will be for available I will order it for the dojo. For me and my students to learn and develop. Take care, Yours, Ze'ev Erlich, Israel.

The Two Original Origins of Teaching:

I often discuss the teaching and learning process in Aikido here but I think that for most people, it is still very mysterious and difficult to grasp.

As you know, the two great philosophical traditions in Japanese thought and culture is Confucianism & Buddhism. These two ideologies are so ingrained within the culture and psychology of the Japanese people that even they themselves do not recognize that much in the way that they think and view life originate from these two schools of thought. If you were to speak to a modern Japanese person today and tell him that his thinking and outlook are very much Confucian and Buddhist - he may deny it strongly saying that he has never studied or had an interest in either of these two philosophies!

There methods of teaching have been handed down in Japanese culture since the beginning of their civilized history. In Confucianism, teaching follows Confucius' famous statement: "If I show the student three corners, I expect him to come up with the fourth." In Confucianist teachings, there is the idea of the model - gentleman-scholar in society and the idea that the society can reach a state of order and justice if we follow the way of the ancients when the idea of honor, respect, duty, courage, and filial piety were held in high regard. Even today, we see this idea of high respect for seniority and age. Yet, the "third corner" leaves room for the student's own creativity energy and tests his critical thought process to develop ideas on his own.

In Zen Buddhism, there is another all-pervading concept of learning and instruction which became the basis for Zeami's treatise - the *Kadensho* and *Fushi Kaden*, dealing with the idea of learning and grasping an art, written at a time when many of the traditional fine arts, as we know them today, were forming in Japan in the 14th century. This has been the basis of all learning in Japan and even in today's modern society, we still see evidence of this.

This idea come from the Zen saying, "Beyond words and written scriptures, pointing directly into one's heart." What is sought in traditional Japanese arts is the conveying (transmission) of the art from "heart to heart" without words.

This is a reference to the Buddha's final sermon, when after finishing his sermon, he silently held up a flower. Mahakashyapa, his most senior student, understood the meaning instantly and the Buddha looked at him and smiled.

This arises persistently in all of the traditional Japanese art which idealize the highest form of instruction as this very same "heart to heart" communication and understanding.

To us, we have the idea that if must be stated repeatedly in clear, loud terms, or we have no idea what they are talking about. . . . As I mentioned yesterday, with the Yagyu tsuba, the "absence" of the significant "conch shell horn" in the design is the "implied" meaning of "spirituality" along with martial training (battle baton) gives impact and energy to the message. Again, like the Japanese ink painting, see what is there in your training and see what is not there as well.

Yagyu Sword Guard. Mid Edo Period, 1730ad. Design: War Baton.



Invisible Message & Rusu Moyo, Unseen Design:

If we are familiar with Japanese swords guards and their designs, we can see that this is the design of a battle baton and this is a design often used by the Yagyu swordsmen. This is a particularly rare masterpiece, the design is well carved, the composition is excellent and lively making good use of the space. The shape and quality of the iron is typical of the 1730's period.

However, this design has a secret meaning and this design is especially unique by what is not represented here. This is referred to as "rusu moyo" or "missing design." If we study the Yagyu sword guards deeply, we understand that the war baton - signifying battle or warfare is always paired with the hora or conch shell - large conch shells were made into horns used by mountain priests and those who practice ascetics. Paired together, the design refers to the deep connection of military arts and spiritual discipline. In this piece the conch shell is missing - but if we are initiated into the Yagyu teachings, we understand that this is supposed to be there - only "hidden" or implied. An un-initiated person would only see the design alluding to warfare - the Yagyu student would understand that this is deeply connected to spiritual training (represented by the conch shell horn) which is not represented.

Much of Aikido teaching is the same. You must see what is there in the art and you must see what is NOT there as well. Both sides are meaningful. In Japanese arts, the emphasis is on what is not represented, much like an ink painting which shows so much "blank" space. This so-called blank space is so meaningful and purposeful. This is very evident in Japanese poetry as well.

In Western poetry too, words often conjure up an image which is not actually represented but only implied. So it is with Aikido as well. Do not see Aikido as a sport or exercise - see Aikido as an art like poetry or painting and see what is presented and also what is NOT represented .

Letters & Questions:

08-15-03: Dear Sensei, I wanted to thank you again for your reply to my questions, particularly on the shikan-taza.

Also, I hope that I can sometime here your lecture on Musashi. Although I cannot be there to train with you regularly, I get quite a lot from reading your writings, corresponding with you, and remembering your teachings from previous visits.

Last night I went to a dojo in a small city in Wisconsin that I am visiting on business. I am a little senior to the instructor, and he is from a different organization, so I did not know how he would react to me.

His dojo is very small, and most of the students are beginners, or very old, so the practice is quite sedate. But after taking his class, he was so pleased to train with me. We practice jiyu waza for about 30 minutes. Everyone stopped what they were doing to watch. They had never seen two yudansha practice together. Afterwards, he asked me to show him some of my teacher's kumitachi series. He was so grateful to have someone at his own level to practice with.

I felt happy, that, never having met each other, we could have such a nice exchange. I felt sad for him, because here he is, isolated, without a real teacher, feeling as though his own technique is just rusting away. I felt fortunate, to be able to train in a big dojo with lots of people to grind my character and technique. I thought you might like to hear this story. Warmest regards, -NDC

Discovery Program Interview:

08-22-03: Thank you so much for helping us with this program. I'm glad you are being interviewed! Don't worry about getting back to me yesterday--if everybody had, I'd still be on the phone.

The preparations for the trip to Japan are going well. We are still having trouble locating a swordsmith with a working foundry. I know there must be several, but many seem to stop working during the hot summer months. Can we blame them?! I suppose I would do the same. This is one of the most important elements to our program. Any suggestions that you may have would be welcome. Talk soon, James J., James Joyce, Associate Producer

From Aikido Friendship Foundation, About Colored Belts

Dear Sensei, How are you doing? I hope this letter will find you well I always wish you and your students the bestwe cannot express how grateful we are every time we have a chance to repeat or relate your teachings to our little students in our dojo . We also pray for you and your work every time we sit seiza and ready to bow to begin the class .

Last night , one of my student had a question for me regarding to the color of the belt we go with . Aikido or any other Japanese martial arts start with White belt and up to Black belt , and Chinese or Vietnamese martial arts usually start with Black and go up to White ...opposite ! I have to ask for your help since we really admire your knowledge and research more than anyone else . I really apologize if my question is really a dumb one! Best regards, Nhan Ly

Sensei' Reply:

The belt system was first developed by Jigoro Kano, the founder of

Judo, in his efforts to systematize his art. The white and black belt system caught on so everyone in Japan began to use it.

I think the choice is basically arbitrary but the "white" belt represents "no" kyu or a beginning level. Black is a color Japanese typically use for formal occasions so it may have been a natural choice to use black for the higher "dan" grades.

The varied color belts of yellow, blue, green, purple, brown, etc., for the lower kyu grades is a much later development. and varies with the school, teacher or organization and martial art. This is also arbitrary.

In Aikido, or Hombu Aikido, we use the white belt for kyu grades and black for dan grades only. In the case of children, we use the blue colored belt for 4th and 3rd kyu and brown for the 2nd and 1st kyu. (At least this is how it was several decades ago at Hombu, I don't know about today.)

Other martial arts use many different colors to designate each rank - this is purely arbitrary and their own choice. I think the main point is to be consistent once you decide which color represents which rank.

You should also keep in mind that in Judo, the highest belt color is not black but alternating bands of white and red. White & red or "kohaku" are the colors of celebration and used for very senior or high ranking masters. They also rarely use a solid "red" belt which is also an auspicious color for a very senior master. In Japan, in this context, the red color is a lucky symbol of great age.

O'Sensei always wore a "white" belt. In this case - white is a symbol of "going beyond" or the Eastern ideal of "nothingness" as the ultimate state. This is, I think, a symbol of this ideal in O'Sensei's case who also used to say, "I am only a baby in Aikido. . . ."

Many black belts in my day wore the white belt as a sign of modesty. I still only wear a white belt as a sign of modesty to this day but this custom has died out in Aikido or is no longer popular, I think.

In Chinese Kung fu, I have discussed this matter with many sifu over the years who have tried to create a "belt" system for their own arts, something based on or similar to the Judo or Japanese style belt system. This has always seemed to work well as a sign of rank in most all martial arts today.

Instead of the hard, thick belt of Judo and Aikido, Kung Fu sifu usually used a more Chinese style sash of silk-like rayon or silk.

I have seen Chinese martial artists use black and/or red - red always being an auspicious and lucky color in Chinese custom. Black is always a kind of subdued, neutral color which matches most uniforms. . . .

I have never heard of Chinese sifu using the "white" color because "white" is a symbol of mourning in Chinese tradition & society and not a color of good luck. . . . I do not know about how Viet Nameese martial artists interpret or understand this. White is also the color of those who "leave the world" such as spiritual practitioners, religious people and priests.

In traditional Japan, some colors like yellow purple and red were colors that represented rank or class and not used popularly. I think there

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Colored Belts continued:

is a similar thinking in ancient Chinese thinking. In feudal times, yellow was the color of the dynastic Emperor in China. In Japan, purple represented "exalted rank." White has always been the color of mourning and not used commonly. As in China, white is always worn as the color of mourning or Japanese often wear black as a sign of a very formal occasion (as in funeral or mourning).

I think many Chinese have a greater sensibility to the use of various colors - which are good "feng-shui" and which are not. In Taoism, color has an important meaning of the basic elements and directions. As an example, I think green (?) represents "north" and north is always the direction of evil and considered inauspicious. . . . In Asia, there are many, many such considerations and beliefs and must influence, in some way, how a sifu might choose the colors in their belt systems.

In Japan, I should add, early samurai had an aesthetic of colors based on those colors chosen by Sen No Rikyu, the founder of tea, as aesthetically pleasing or appropriate for the tea ceremony. These particular colors were known as Rikyu-konomi and this standard is still used today.

I am starting to rattle on and on but I hope this much information helps you and answers your question. . . . Many thanks and please keep in touch!

Kansui Tachimachi Zen-I:

08-22-03: Dear Reverend, I do not read Japanese and depend on the translation of others to understand the meaning of Japanese calligraphy. I see it purely in terms of its visual qualities. "Viewing the water" is like watching the thoughts of others. When rippled, the minds inherently mirror like surface can not accurately reflect the world around. Seeing and understanding are not the same thing, although we often mistake one for the other. In our attempt to give meaning to what we see, we blow across the surface of our mind, blurring the truth.

The calligraphy presents a paradox. To see it as a visual work of art is as "viewing water". To read it, therefore to give it meaning, prevents us from seeing its visual form. Thank you for your translation and interpretation, Wesley

Sensei's Reply:

In Japanese and Chinese calligraphy, the meaning of the words go hand in hand very closely with the writing itself so we cannot interpret too widely. . . . It is important to catch the meaning of the author.

08-27-03: Dear Reverend, Thank you. As you've expounded, understanding (doing) Aikido is somewhat like reading Japanese calligraphy. That the intended meaning of the art go hand in hand with the waza when executed in the precise manner of the founder's kata. Sincerely, Wesley

Help:

08-24-03: Hello, At least I hope to. My name is Ian Belli, I am from Royal Oak Michigan and happen to see you on the Discovery Channels Top Ten Martial Arts. I also recently asked for your book as a gift. There is a ton of wisdom in it. I even had a dream about the Aikido dojo sometime ago before I even saw the program. You are definitely enlightened. There is no doubt about that.

Here are my ways to help you: The phrase "There mother loves me so shall they" Learning other peoples enlightenment is like learning your own. Relax, don't be so hard on yourself. Ultimately the best practice is throwing one fist. Everybody has feelings for a reason, use them. (Life would get boring if we were robots) (my God even says that all good and bad is for his pleasure)

Spirituality: There is a magick called (I call) constant spirituality. I found this out by doing Reiki and needing to get a drink of water. Everytime I would get the glass and drink I would get the thought, "Are you still doing Reiki?"

My life and mind are pretty tough. Life denies certain aspects and my mind denies rest so I hope that some of the wisdom helps. Enjoy and have some fun, Ian

Sensei's Reply:

Hmmmmmm?

From Ambrose Merrell, United Kingdom

08-28-03: Dear Sensei I trust you are well? I have ordered Kago Tsurube: The Wicker Well Bucket but I noted that the shipping probably did not cover sending it all the way to England. If someone would like to let me know the additional cost for shipping to the UK I will pay this through PayPal. Well if only I had read the instructions first. On review I now see it quite clearly states that I should email first regarding international orders and not use the PayPal links. Please accept my apologies - a little more care and attention to detail on my part is called for.

On another note I found it interesting to read the following passage in the Tao Te Ching: "The one who was skilled at practicing the Way in antiquity, Was subtle and profound, mysterious and penetratingly wise. His depth cannot be known."

and From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment:

"If great teachers in the past were able to make a plain soup from greens for only a pittance, we must try to make a fine soup for the same amount. This is very difficult to do. Among other things, there are great differences between ages past and today, so even hoping to stand alongside the teachers of former times is no simple matter."

Is it always the case that we look at those teachers before us and then the students of today and believe that we are seeing a decline? Maybe this is so. That said I fear that the decline you see is real. The world we live in today has changed so massively and so quickly that there has never been a time to even remotely compare. But then is it not then encouraging that despite the change, the constant bombardment on the senses and the huge pressure on people to achieve success in a society that purely measures success in material terms, that students still find their way to Aikido and still hold Aikido as a fundamental part of their lives?

Maybe the harshness and austerity of the past made it clearer what the value of life was, how precious and uncertain it was and instilled a sense of urgency into the people of those times. Perhaps society today lulls us into a sense of permanence, of eternity and masks the true values of life behind a veneer of consumerism and instant experiences. Perhaps most of all it celebrates selfishness.

Continued:

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I'm sorry Sensei I am not really making a point of reaching a conclusion. I am sharing with you my thoughts on perhaps why you look at the world around you and the students who come and go, and are left with feeling that we are blind to what Aikido holds for us.

For myself I struggle everyday to 'ground' myself and to reject the temptations of a better car, a bigger TV, a more exotic holiday, a fancier phone and instead to work at making my life simpler. As ever, thank you for your daily message - few things 'ground' me better! All the very best, Ambrose Merrell, UK.

Aikido Friendship Foundation:

08-26-03: Dear Sensei, It is so nice to receive your Newsletter every month, we are called "Aikido Friendship Foundation" in Garden Grove, we thank God and everybody that the dojo can survive through difficulties in the last 2 years, it is pretty sad that people seem to worship and look up to Kobe Bryant or Shake O'Neil than old and true values of the Eastern arts. We are glad that we can keep the dojo with a small group of 35 practitioners that are practicing hard and joyfully. As you know, other instructors and myself still have to work in day time and we only have the night classes so we are kind of limited on the class schedule too. I will look for a picture of our dojo with almost everybody in there and mail to you soon. I think our mailing address already in your system under "AIKIDO FRIENDSHIP FOUNDATION" that is why we receive your Newsletter every month. A few words cannot express all, but we always thank you and best wishes as always. Best regards, Nhan Ly

Sageo:

09-05-03: Sensei, Hello Sensei, It has been a while since I have written you and I hope you are well. I was hoping you could lend your perspective on the proper use and etiquette of the sageo. I was recently watching one of my vintage samurai movies, which as so many are, is concentrated on the ronin. I was noticing that the sageo on the hero's sword was wrapped around the saya. I know I have read that the samurai would tie the sageo to the obi so that the saya could not be removed by an enemy. So I was wondering why these ronin all seemed to walk around with it wrapped around the saya. Was this similar to the decorative knots used when displaying a sword. It is very difficult to see with the old black and white movies. Lastly, how should a modern day practitioner handle the sageo? should it be on or off during practice, and after practice is it proper to decoratively tie it on to the saya after use? Thank you in advance as always. Your daily messages are a continued source of inspiration in both my training and my everyday life. Respectfully, Jason (Please see reply in Daily Messages.)

From Malaysia

09-05-03: Dear Sensei Furuya, I have read your book "Kodo" and have found it to be enlightening and inspirational. I am a practitioner and part-time instructor of TaiChiChuan and has on many occasions referred to your writings for motivation. I hope this will not be your first and last book. Thank you. Alfred Ong

"Have And Have Not"

09-07-03: Furuya Sensei, I hope this letter finds you well on this beautiful day. Reading your post for September 7, 2003 was encouraging. It is sad to hear that you feel this way. I say it was encouraging because my study group students are very similar with regards to poetry. You have devoted 45 years of life to this art. No doubt you are more than dedicated to your lifestyle and perhaps your students there

hope to be as well. Perhaps, it is just that they feel that they have Rev. Furuya there with them in person when they wish? Perhaps they have forgotten the days of not having you around? Like a child enjoying a candybar, it is wonderful, sweet, wholesome and satisfying, until the last of it is gobbled down. Gone is that treat, lost are those memories of the flavor. Maybe your students just don't fully appreciate you for your efforts? Perhaps they are unwilling to penetrate the depths of your knowledge? For me, poetry is life, life is poetry. For my study group, poetry is a required course in their study. They have an interest, but are unwilling to experience the full serene language of writers from long ago. Perhaps the same way your students fail to do their homework on the samurai from days gone by? Just some of my rambling thoughts Sensei! Do take care! Always, Mike C.

Discovery In Turkey:

09-07-03: hi, this is Cem Akgun from Turkey. last year i saw your dojo and your classes on discovery channel. i'm interested in your aikido classes .do you have classes for foreigners? i mean is there period for the students like me which wants to come from abroad ? or do you have any schedule ... regards.

Breathing Exercises In Class:

09-09-03: Sensei, A few weeks ago, you concluded one class with some breathing exercises. I thought they might become a part of the regular class, but we haven't done them since (and I had never done them before). I asked Ken Watanabe about them, and what he told me is, "they're supposed to be really good for you." I was breathing very hard when we started the exercises, and it was difficult to slow down to perform the exercises to follow you. By the time we finished, however, I felt very calm and alert, and was no longer breathing heavily. I was wondering why these exercises are not performed more often? Should we learn these and do them on our own? --Best Regards,--Bill Allen

From Jun Akiyama, AikiWeb:

... .For what it's worth, I think you've brought a lot of good things to the site -- far, far greater than any sort of negative commotion! I really appreciate your participation and your input into matters.

I also appreciate your posting in the Voices of Experience forum. Although there are people like Peter Goldsbury, Dennis Hooker, Dan Linden, Chuck Clark, and others, there has been little activity there, perhaps owing to the small number of people with over 20 active years of experience in aikido. Lastly, I just wanted to let you know that my parents live about twenty minutes away from Little Tokyo. Although I visit only infrequently from where I currently live and train (Boulder, Colorado), I hope to be able to drop by your dojo some day and have the opportunity of meeting you. In any case, thank you again for sharing your experience on the AikiWeb Forums. Regards, Jun

Sensei's Reply:

Many, many thanks for your kind words! You are always more than welcome to our Dojo.

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09-09-03: Dear Reverend, Sensei Gozo Shioda in his book, "Aikido Shugyo" offered this perspective as to the process of studying martial arts over the course of his life. During his training at Ueshiba's side, there were no organized lessons. The students would either observe the founder executing techniques, or be the object of a lesson after which they would practice with each other. Verbally instruction was generally limited to encouragement. Today, as an accommodation to nurturing Aikido, teaching is a organized, structured event. In place of cultivating the appetite for learning in those who endeavor, test for conformity to lesson plans are substituted as criteria for advancement.

Shioda Sensei also believed that the acquisition of knowledge happens in its own time. Accordingly there is no substitute for persistence in the right environment. If as previously suggested, that no one follows precisely in another's path, then after acquiring the basic form (that which is teachable), we simply work to gain insight (unteachable) to its principles by practice. Shugyo is a way to achieve higher levels of awareness. Do you have Uchideshi? Why or why not? Sincerely, Wesley

09-09-03: Dear Rev. Furuya, First, let me say that I am a fan of your book: ?Kodo: Ancient Ways? and have had the pleasure of giving copies of that book to many friends who have become fans of said book. . . . Sincerely, Emmanuelle Padilla, Miami, Florida

Thanks From Argentina.

09-10-03: Sensei: It has been a while since I have written you and I hope you are well. I would like to share some thoughts with you. I've discovered a new dimension in Aikido practice . A more human dimension. I've rediscovered my Sensei .

As I have mentioned before; I took in charge a class after I've received my shodan, almost a year ago. So I started to watch more carefully to my Sensei and now I understand him more deeply. I begin to understand all sacrifices he did. I begin to understand their love for all of us . I begin to understand the hours after class thinking about the next class . I begin to understand the sorrow and frustration when some student become proud and arrogant. I begin to understand finally all their goals and mistakes .Andso I've began to understand you ,when you say that you feel so lonely teaching Aikido.

When I started to practice Aikido I saw my Sensei like a kind of Superman. Now I understand that he's only human and that makes him a real hero . A man who struggle again all kind of circumstances. A man who never lost his spirit. I feel so great in classes when my Sensei are conducting them !!

Now , I realize that I have a big debt to my Sensei and I wonder how to pay back all sacrifices he did . I feel ashamed to confess this to anybody here ... I just trust in you ,so far in distance and so close in words to make this little confession. Thank you again for your time and consideration With warm regards, Christian Leyes, Rosario, Argentina

Kurikata & Sageo

09-12-03: Dear Sensei, I have two questions regarding sword fittings. Please pardon the fact that I do not know the names of most parts, but will have to describe them. I have an iaito which I have had for a number of years. The bracket on the saya that is used to hold the rope had two gold-colored metal fittings that fit into the hole, one on the top, the other on the bottom.

Once I started practicing drawing regularly, they began to come out, and hung on the rope. I took the rope off and removed the two metal fittings. The rope was tied in an unusual, but very efficient manner, and I was, unfortunately, unable to duplicate it. I am wondering how to attach the fittings so that they will stay on. One person suggested super-glue, but that seemed extremely untraditional . . . In addition, I was wondering if you can tell me the names for the bracket and rope, and how to retie the rope, or give me a good reference for any of this.

Also, I recently received a very modest late-19th century katana. The saya came without rope. Can you suggest where I might purchase some? Thank you very much for your help in these matters. Warmest regards, -NDC

Sensei's Reply:

The "bracket" on the saya is called a "kurikata" and this came into usage on Japanese swords in the early 1400's. It has three functions: it holds the sageo, it prevents the saya from being pulled out from behind and it helps you to feel which way the saya is in your obi when drawing and returning the blade to the scabbard. The kurikata always faces the outside when wearing the sword in the belt.

The rope is called a "sageo." The gold fittings in the kurikata are called, "shitodome." In practice, it is easier without these shitodome which are purely decorative in function.

The knot in the sageo close to the kurikata is usually a simple slip-knot.

Because it slides too much in the kurikata when you practice means that you are probably not using it correctly. There are many ways to tie this knot according to the school and style of Iaido.

09-12-03: Dear Reverend Furuya, It has been far too long since my last correspondence with you. I hope this finds you well and deep into teaching, training, studying, and learning.

As usually is the case with the passage of time, many things have come and gone in my world. Ruth and I had tried for some time in vain to get the necessary funding to make our documentary, and we finally went our separate ways. The project did, however, lead me to a new and excellent friend who has produced documentaries as well as movies and who has a great passion for the martial arts and feels the same way I do about the effects of pop culture on their true value in the eyes of the public.

Monthly Iaido Intensive

The Iaido Intensive from 6:30-8:00am on the 2nd Saturday of each month is now open to all Iaido students. Everyone is encouraged to attend. Our breakfast-meeting follows. Continued:

Thursday Class Schedule Change:

6:30pm- 7:30pm. Open Beginning Class.

7:45pm-8:45pm. Weapons Class, 4th Kyu & Up.

Children's Class: Every Sunday morning, 9:00-10:00am sharp. All youths 7 yrs to 16yrs are welcome to join us! Parents welcome too.

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Our friendship has led to a collaboration on a martial arts screenplay where, in reference to the old Chinese and Japanese cinema, we have created a mythic world where the martial arts were deeply imbued with spiritual insights and men of uncommon character. We describe the world as 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon' in the realm of 'Lord of the Rings'. We're on the fifth draft and will be ready to take it out to the studios in late October. Early industry readings have been very positive, which is encouraging. Of course, we will encounter the same resistance you have with your teaching, "Where's the violence, and the sex?" But we have an angle, and if we can find the right talent and minds, we stand a miniscule but real chance.

Well, that's more than you probably wanted to know. Please tell me how you and the school are doing. I plan on bringing by some of my training partners to see what a real dojo looks like. All my best, Brian Shiers, Power Center, Toluca Lake, California

Zazen Practice.

09-14-03: Dear Sensei, In practicing zazen, I sit in good posture with my eyes slightly open staring at nothing. As I sit, I count my breaths. I might count for a while then something from my daily life might pop into my head and for a moment disrupt my counting. I accept it and move on to counting again. My question revolves around the notion of "no mind". In my jujutsu practice I try not to fix my mind on anything, so my mind is free to move through technique without it stopping. In zazen we count our breaths. Is this fixing our minds? Do we not want to do this? I am concentrating on breathing zazen, but when I practice jujutsu I am looking not to fix my mind. I am confused. Please let me know your thoughts. Regards, Matt Ubertini

Sensei's Reply:

Sensei's Reply: It is important to follow the instructions of your Zazen teacher. Where do you practice and what school of Zazen or what sect of Buddhism do you practice?

In my own experience in Zazen, we never count our breaths or anything. It is important to keep your mind free and empty. If thoughts enter, let them leave just as naturally and freely. It is not to fix your mind on anything - not on counting, not even the notion of "not-fixing" your mind. Best luck!

I should like to add here that some methods or zazen focus on breaths, or counting, or a word, or a sound, or a light, or a location on the body, or an image and on and on. In Soto Zen, there is no focus on anything - it is simply to be in the pose of the Buddha at the moment of his great enlightenment. Focusing on something, according to Soto Zen, is another form of fixation.

O'Sensei.

09-18-03: Furuya Sensei, I hope this email finds you well and in good spirits. I have been shopping around for a book on O'Sensei. A book that focuses on his life and times and eventual creation of Aikido. How do you separate all the myths surrounding him from fact? I realize many martial art figures share that shroud and delving into the mystery of their life is part of the chore, or fun! One story that amazes me is of him teaching his uchideshi and he had them surround him with their bokken in hand. It is said he whisked himself away from the attack and appeared suddenly on a stairway above the dojo floor. He was said to have told his students such techniques took seven years off your life. Do you have any knowledge of this event? Much thanks! Domo Arigato, Michael C.

"Food For Thought"

09-19-03: Hello Sensei, I hope you are well. Two thoughts regarding aikido, kindred martial arts, and life, as meals:

(1) John Cassavettes was a film director who was known for showing dinner scenes that seemed to go on forever. When asked why he didn't cut them in the conventional way, he replied that the most interesting things in life happen well beyond the point at which you think they shouldn't.

Most insights and abilities in and out of the martial arts seem to take time, indeed, more time than we think, to become fully manifested and appreciated.

The meal isn't about the food or the courses, but about who we become in the process of dining together.

(2) Which brings me to our proposed luncheon. I apologize that it has taken me more than the promised two weeks to communicate with you about meeting for lunch. I didn't forget, and I'd like to schedule it at your convenience.

In the meantime, thank you for your daily writings. They are food for the soul. All best, Dr. Gary S. Goodman

09-21-03: Hello Sensei, I hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits. I have no question today, actually I have plenty but do not wish to burden you with one. Instead, I will burden you with a thought. Can you believe how dependent we are on machines? I read an article today that talked about a computer company that plans to manufacture robot warriors to fight in place of humans. Sounds like a bad sci fi movie to me! We are almost at that point are we not? My girlfriend even pointed out to me that we rely so heavily on machines, even spellcheck! How much time would it take to look up a word we cannot spell! Here I am, dependent on a machine to reach you and dialogue with you at a distance! I suppose if we really wanted to reach someone we would make the journey on foot, letter in hand. This is one of many reasons I admire your approach to your teaching and training. I have read your comments several times about an old fashioned dojo you and your students maintain. The fact that you sleep on the floor and ask that your students understand the more profound yet simple elements of what it is you are teaching. The world is an amazing place! The life we live is certainly interesting is not? Do take care Sensei. Always, Micheal C

The Easier Path:

Once a guy was walking by his friend's place and saw his friend standing on a small stool by the side of his house. "What are you doing?" called out this guy.

"I am climbing to the roof of the house to repair," was the reply. "The stool is much too short and you will never make it, why don't you use the ladder right there leaning against the wall?" "The stool is much easier to climb!"

This is a silly story, of course, but I see this all of the time in Aikido. Instead of climbing the tall ladder to reach Aikido (roof) with a little effort, we take an easier path (the stool) only because it is easier. . . .

Student Birthdays: Special Congratulations

To James Doi and Dr. Cheryl Lew, two of our most senior members of the Dojo on their birthdays in November. Best wishes to wishes to Mark Ty on his b-day in October. Best wishes and many happy returns to all our birthday people.

October

Mark Ty October 3
Shane Valentine October 6
Maria Ferrari October 12
Kaoru Tamura October 13
Rome Viharo October 14
Remy Savard October 16
David Lalicker October 20
Zhiqiang Lin October 24
Ramon Almeyda October 26
Fausto Guzman October 29
Coco Carpenter October 29
Blair Thmoas October 30
Fernando Acuna October 31

November

Justin Naito November 4
Cheryl Lew November 9
James Doi November 14
Judimae Angcaco November 14
Jake LaBotz November 23
Cyril Plouviez November 24
Harrison Boatwright November 29

09-22-03: Hello Sensei, As always I do hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits. I was just reading your message today and noticed that you responded to my humble rambling of yesterday! I do appreciate your shared dialogue very much. I have a passion for old books. They are something of a treasure to me. The books are aged and well thumbed and traveled. The age of the book and its use gives it personality. Yet, when I pick these books up and read their text, I notice that even if I have read a poem a thousand times, the fact that it graces such worn yellow pages somehow makes it new for me. Almost as if I can absorb the energy of all those fingers that held that book, all the eyes that have devoured its pages. Your comment on the new martial arts of today got me to thinking of my old books. No doubt some of these arts feature techniques from more classical systems that have been filtered into more eclectic methods. No doubt when you teach the classics of technique you must get that same intoxicating feeling of newness when you peer over a tsuba or an intricate piece of art? Pardon my speculation Sensei! I often get irritated with some of the so called new poetry. Anyone now can throw some words together and it has meaning. I guess I am a purist at heart. Poetry needs substance and imagination, not a transfusion of a new method that is unsavory! Ahhh! I am writing too much and gobbling your time! Have a wonderful day Sensei and I do hope your week is fruitful. Always, Michael C.

09-22-03: Dear Sensei, Your message today makes me think of our most recent trip to Brazil. My wife is from Brazil and every so often

we go there for vacation. Having grown up in the United States and especially from a "wealthy" city here in Southern California, I am always amazed to see how happy people in Brazil can be, considering the poverty and misery that they have to deal with. Here in the U.S. we have plenty of food, great medical services, inexpensive clothing, and we can manage to have a pretty decent life with not too much effort. In comparison, people in Brazil earn .60 an hour (that's if you can get a job), my sister-in-law has been unemployed for over a year and she has a bachelors degree in business. Some people think that the cost of living is cheaper in Brazil and in some aspects it is, but for example; the cost of a Mc Donald's meal is about \$6.00 US dollars there. People there wait for buses, wait for trains, and day to day existence is a battle.

My wife and I noticed that the people there had so much life or energy. There may be trash filled streets, dirty dogs, and beggars, but people actually interact with strangers and are genuinely interested in conversing. In comparison to L.A. where so many are in their cars, windows up, talking on their cellphones, oblivious to others. There are so many people here in Los Angeles, but I can't tell you how many people tell me that they feel so alone. My kids ages 5 and 10 had a great time on our one month trip. No television, no computers, just plain old fun like flying kites. They gained so much from the experience and I can't wait for our next trip back. I think that they returned with a lot of the values that really make a difference in one's lifetime. Sincerely, Stephen Cooper
Altadena, CA ...and sometimes Brazil

P.S. I've enclosed a pic. of my mother-in-law in the pink on the left, my father-in-law with the cowboy hat, my wife in black to our right, and my son in the front with the blue t-shirt. He had such a great time throwing rocks in the cow poop. You should have seen the enthusiasm and happiness that he had just by playing with rocks and cow poop! That's what I call enjoying the simpler things in life.
Stephen Cooper, Certified Personal Trainer

From Montreal, Canada.

09-23-03: Dear Reverend Furuya, Greetings from Montreal. I'm sorry I have not written sooner. I trust that you and your friends and associates are all doing well.

I have resumed my regular training in Kyokushin Karate, and I try to stay out of the politics as much as possible. I continue to try to take classes in other martial arts as often as I can, to complete my overall view of things. It is not easy, with work and family obligations, but I try. I've done some Sambo, Katori Shinto Kobudo and freestyle grappling. I prefer Karate. Somehow, at 52, I find grappling is not as "charming" as it appears on TV.

I was supposed to go to Belgium in November for a seminar and competition, but I was given a 19 day trial starting the day I was supposed to leave. So everything is on hold, and I will see if the trial is postponed, I will go, otherwise, oh well...

I'm a grandfather for the second time since August and everyone is doing fine. New life is amazing, and I cannot but feel some higher power at work when we get to hold a newborn in our arms. I held my grandson he was 3 hours old. Quite amazing. Give my best regards to everyone, and I wish you all the best. Respectfully, Ron Auclair

Sensei's Reply: So nice to hear you are doing well!

Yagyū Tsuba continued:

In this, only the deep connection between the painter and the viewer or the poet and the reader can render its deeper meaning. So it is with Aikido practice as well - only between the teacher and student can the true art be materialized.

Daily Messages:

For more interesting stories and lessons, please visit our Website at www.aikidocenterla.com and see Sensei's Daily Messages which are posted each day. Input and comments are always welcome. Many thanks for your support.

All Black Belt Candidates & Senior Students Recommendations:

- 1. Please attend all intermediate & advanced classes. Maintain regular, consistent training schedule. Attendance is most important.*
- 2. Please attend monthly early Morning Intensive. 6:30-8:00am. Early morning training is to honor O'Sensei's Memory and is required for all Black Belts..*
- 3. Please attend and assist Sunday morning Children's Class. This is the best training to become a good Aikido instructor.*
- 4. Please help with the opening and closing chores and keeping the dojo immaculately clean, neat and in good order.*
- 5. Please be a good role model for junior students. Be helpful and friendly but modest and humble. Demonstrate by your actions, not words and idle chit-chat. Be a good example both on and off the mat.*
- 6. You must develop good, strong, correct technique. Concentrate and master the fundamentals inside and out.*
- 7. Please always keep in mind that Aikido is not competition in any form, in strength, rank, power, prestige, position, or social status. Practice correctness over strength.*

The Furuya Foundation:

Mr. Ken Watanabe - President
Mr. Gary Myers - Secretary
Mr. Mark Ty - Treasurer
Dr. Cheryl Lew - Senior Counsel
Mr. Jonathan Altman - Legal Counsel

The Furuya Foundation is dedicated to preserving the Dojo and its continued operation maintaining the highest standards of practice and the work of Furuya Sensei in research and education in Aikido, the traditional Japanese sword and related arts and their history, culture and traditions. Your support, donations & contributions are welcome.

Affiliated Branch Dojos

Aikido Kodokai

Salamanca, Spain
Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Hacienda La Puente Aikikai

La Puente, California
Tom Williams

Wyoming Aikikai

Sheridan, Wyoming
Tom McIntrye

Bahamas Aikikai

Grand Freeport, Bahamas
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Eric Jaracho

Aikido of Guadalajara

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Raul Blackaller

Aikido of Puerto Vallarta

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Felix Ares

Veracruz Aikido Dojo

Vera Cruz, Mexico
Dr. Roberto Magallanes
Dr. Alvaro R. Hernández Meza

Marco Giuseppe Marangoni

Monza, Italy



**NEW:
Aikido Tanto-
Dori Video:
Knife
Defense
Techniques**

By Kenneth Furuya and Santiago G. Almaraz. Salamanca, Spain. Extensive coverage of basic Aikido knife techniques and self defense strategies. 60 minutes. \$50.00 each.

**The Art of Aikido Video Series
Now in DVD**

Unique Publications has just announced the Sensei's The Art of Aikido video series is one of the first to be converted into their new DVD series. The new DVD's will be ready and available sometime in November. The new format will keep the original format in nine dvd's. They can be ordered through the Dojo.

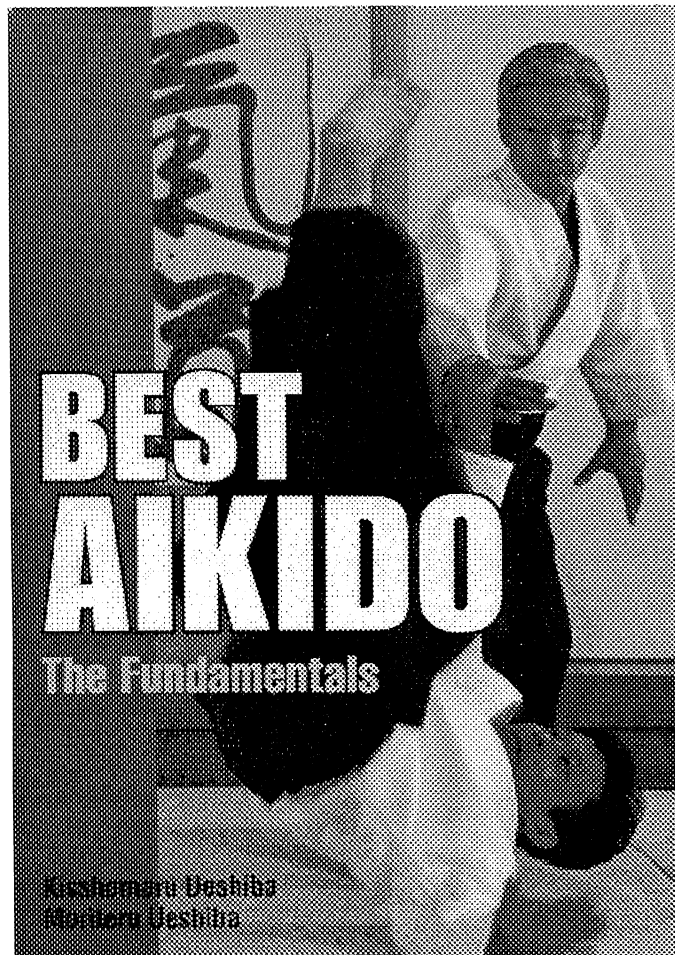
Help Build Up Our Dojo Membership

Students should make an sincere and concerted effort to help build up our membership. This is always an ongoing, very necessary and often neglected duty of all of the membership. Students come and go so there is always a natural attrition rate of the student body. Expenses, as you know, are always increasing year by year. It is not necessary to hard sell or drag them in by force but an enthusiastic awareness and good spirit in each student is important in talking with friends and family members to encourage them to begin Aikido practice. An encouraging energy to always help and build up our Dojo is important and part of our practice and being a good member of the Dojo. Please increase your efforts to support the fine practice here. Thank you.

Our Dojo's Mission:

We are not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo struggling to preserve the honored, old values and traditions of the art. We are always dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of the art in a Dojo which, itself is considered a work of art. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you will dedicate yourself to your training and do your best to support the work of the Dojo in every way you can. This is greatly, very greatly appreciated, Always, Aikido Center of Los Angeles, Rev. Kensho Furuya

3rd Doshu's Aikido



Highly recommended reading by Sensei as today's best reference on Hombu Aikido. Available online or at your local bookstore. Please try Barnes & Noble, Kinokuniya and Amazon on line. The 2nd Volume is on available. Please use this as a reference for your training.

**International Aikido Kodo-Kai.
Affiliations Welcome.**

We do accept all Branch Dojo affiliations with any dojo who practices and follows the Aiki Kai Hombu Dojo training, rules and standards. This also includes commitment to 3rd Doshu and the Ueshiba Family as the founding family and originator of our art.

You are welcome to make inquires by email or letter. Our purpose in this is to help and aid others in the correct practice of Hombu Aikido and to spread the correct interpretation of O'Sensei's teachings to the best of our abilities.

Requirements for Affiliation:

1. Practice correct Hombu Aikido with good spirit and energy.
2. Do not dabble in politics or intrigues and get along with each other in the dojo and other dojos in a friendly way.
3. Follow O'Sensei's and Successors Aikido with honesty and commitment, pursuing your training with a Beginner's Mind.
4. No competition. No unsuitable commercialism.
5. No drugs. No abuse. No inappropriate behavior.

Welcome To The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



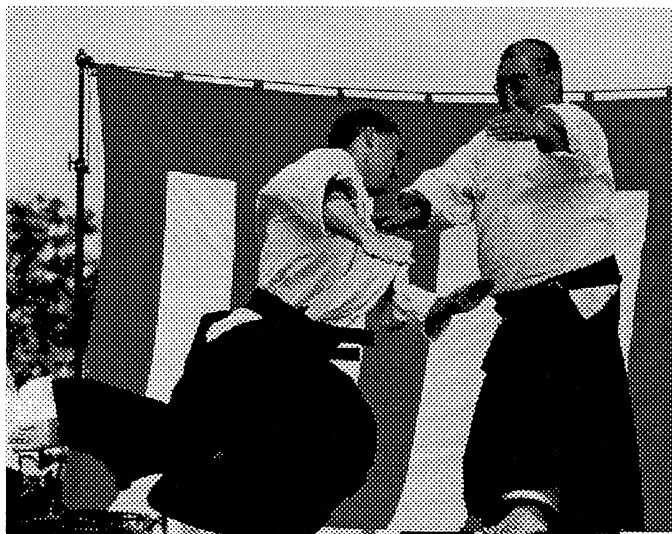
Aikido Center of Los Angeles

Our Dojo's 28th Year, 1974-2002.

Our dojo is dedicated to the practice of traditional Aikido as taught by the Founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors, the late 2nd Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present 3rd Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

You are very welcome to visit our beautiful, hand-crafted, traditional Japanese Dojo during posted training hours. All practicing Aikidoists are welcome to train with us or observe our training.

Please Visit Our Website:
www.aikidocenterla.com.



Reverend Kensho Furuya, 6th Dan

Dojo Supplies

Official Dojo Jackets

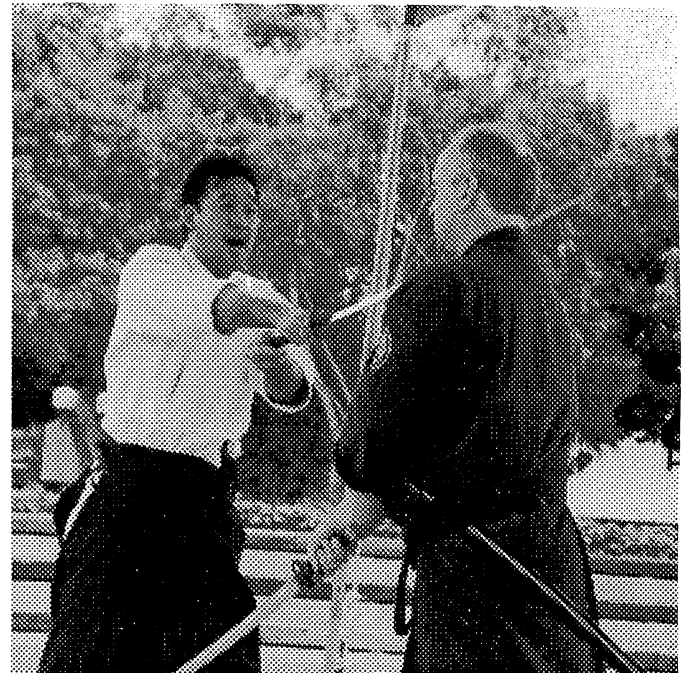
Now available on a custom order basis. Designed by Land's End, nylon in bright yellow with the embroidered Dojo logo. They are very comfortable and great to wear for demonstrations. \$55.00 each.

Official Dojo T-Shirts, ACLA Patches & Dojo Mugs

Japanese Swords: Purchase, Appraisal & Restoration

Expert appraisal on Japanese swords. Complete services for restoration of Japanese art swords and custom-ordered Iaito training sword. Services include polish, handle wrapping, scabbard lacquer work, special orders. By appointment only.

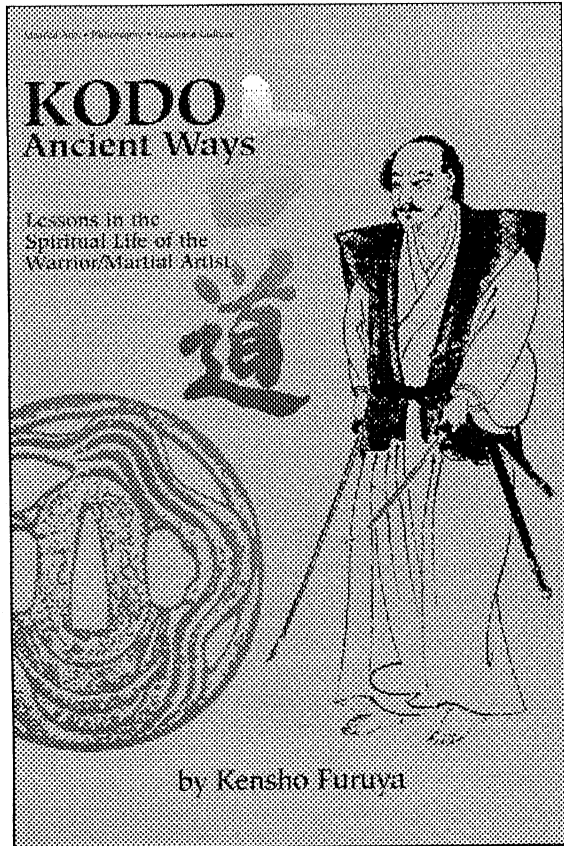
*JAPANESE SWORDS & BOUGHT & SOLD
By appointment only.*



Japanese Swordsmanship: Musō Shinden Ryu Iaido & Toyama Ryu Batto Iaido

We offer instruction in the traditional art of Iaido, the art of the Sword. Serious students are always welcome. Iaido demands a strong commitment of time, honor, perseverance and integrity. It is a spiritual art with a history and tradition of over one thousand years. It is an art which is rapidly disappearing in our modern world today. We welcome all interested students to join our training.

KODO Ancient Ways: Lessons In The Spiritual Life of the Warrior-Martial Artist



KODO

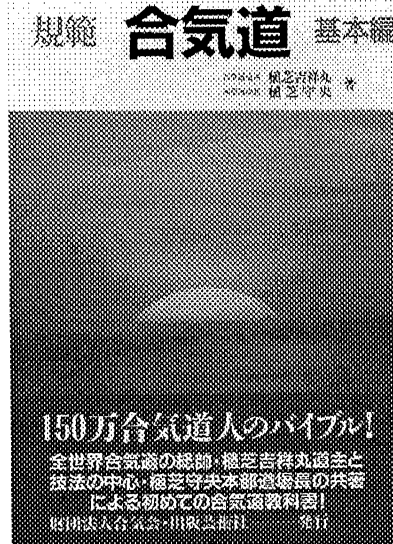
Ancient Ways:
Lessons in the Spiritual Life
of the Warrior-Martial Artist

Rev. Kensho Furuya

Please place your orders through:
Aikido Center of Los Angeles,
940 E. 2nd St., #7, LA, CA 90012

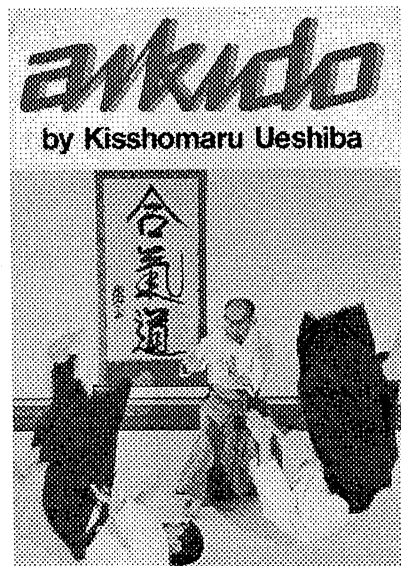
\$16.95 + \$3.00 S&H
Payable to Aikido Center of Los Angeles
Foreign postage: \$5.00 S&H

Recommended Readings:



KIHAN AIKIDO Fundamental of Aikido

By Doshu & Dojocho Moriteru Ueshiba
The latest reference book on Hombu Aikido by 2nd & 3rd Doshu with excellent photos on all of the basic techniques. Referred to as the "Aikido Bible."



Highly Recommended:

AIKIDO

By Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Other Readings Recommended For Students By Sensei:

Zen & Japanese Culture. D. T. Suzuki.

Anatomy of Dependence. Takeru Doi.

Anatomy of the Self. Takeru Doi.

Mind & The Sword. Hiroaki Sato.

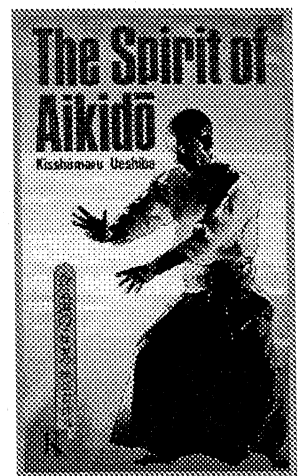
The Book of Five Rings. Musashi Miyamoto.

Records of Things Heard. Dogen Zenji.

Tenzo Kyokun-Lessons of a Cook. Dogen Zenji. Trans. Kosho Uchiyama.

The Unfettered Mind. Takuan.

A Flower Does Not Speak. Zenkei Shibayama.



THE SPIRIT OF AIKIDO By Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

An important book on the philosophy and historical background of Aikido's development. Translated from the Japanese - *Aikido no Kokoro.*

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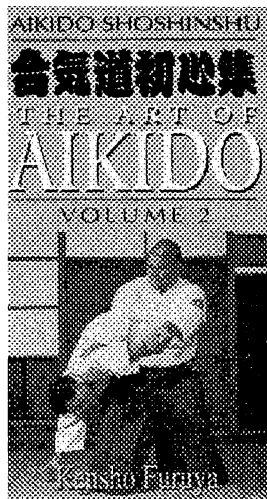
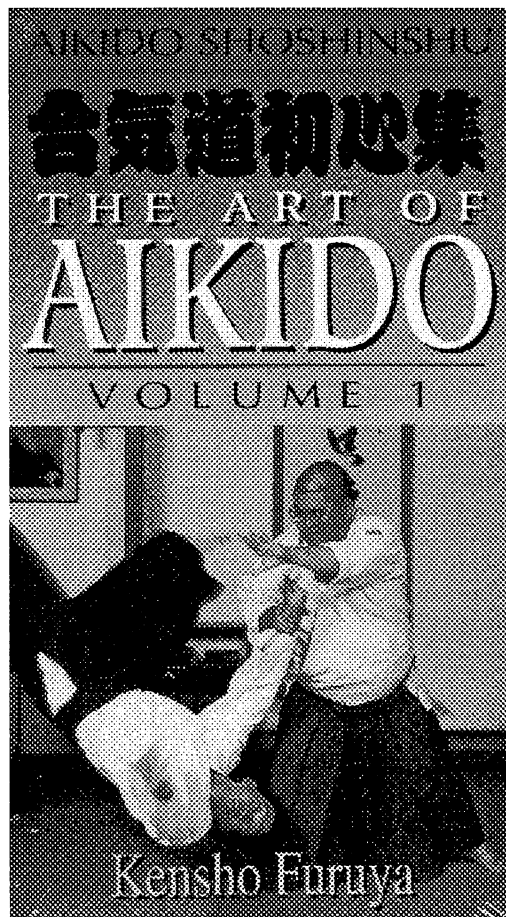
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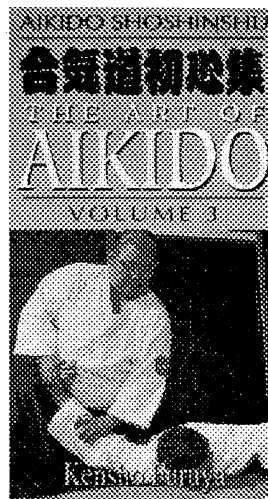
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Aikido Instructional Video Series in Nine Volumes

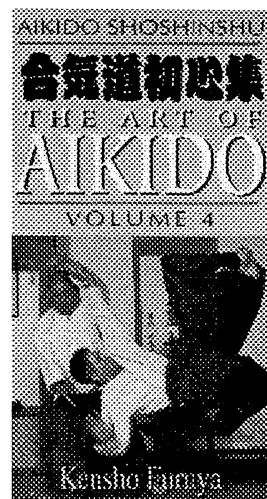
"Top Rated" - Karate Illustrated, *"Impressive Scope"* - Aikido Today, *"Exhaustive"* - Aikido Journal *"One of the Best"*



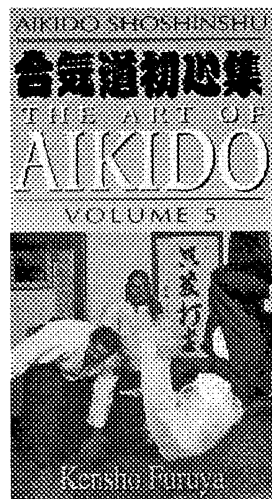
Basic Techniques
Throwing & Joint Techniques
Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo & Gokyo



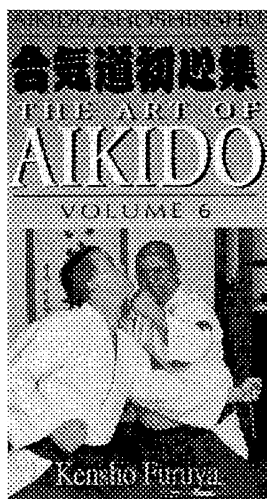
Ukemi-Breakfalling
Basics Continued
Free Style Techniques
Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



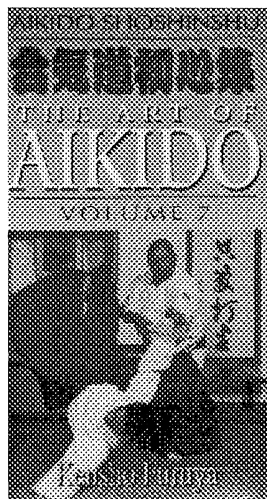
Katatetori Ryotemochi:
Ryotetori: 2-hand.
Reigi-saho: Etiquette.
Koshinage-Hip throws.



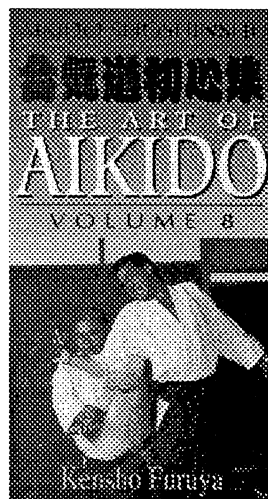
Suwari-waza. Gokyo.
Hanmi-handachi. Kokyu-dosa.
Katatori: Shoulder.
Multiple attackers.
Five-man Freestyle.



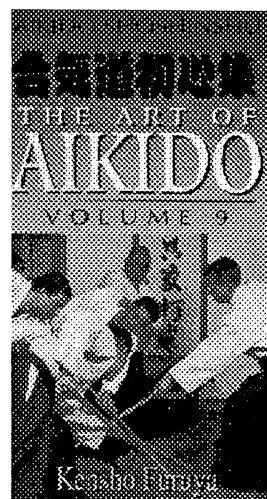
Tsuki: Strikes & Punches
Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side
of the head & neck.



Shomenuchi: Direct strikes.
Ushiro Katatetori Kubishime:
Chokes from behind.
Ushiro Ryotetori, Ryohijitori,
Ryokatatori.



Atemi-waza: Striking
Defense against kicks.
Tanto-tori: Knife defense.
Aiki-ken: Sword Training
Fundamentals.



Jo: Basic long staff
Fundamentals.
Complete 1st Degree
Black Belt Examination

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

AIKIDO for ADULTS

Sundays: Children's Class: 9:00-10:00am
Open Beginning: 10:15-11:15am

Mondays: Open Beginning: 5:15-6:15pm &
6:30-7:30pm

Tuesdays: Open Beginning: 5:15-6:15pm
Intermediate 4th & Up: 6:30-7:30pm

Wednesdays: Open Beginning: 5:15 6:15pm
& 6:30-7:30pm.

Thursdays: Open Beginning: 6:30-7:30pm
Beginning Weapons, Bring Bokken & Jo:
7:45-8:45pm

Fridays: Open Beginning: 6:30-7:30pm

Saturdays: Open Beginning: 9:30-10:30am.
Open Beginning: 10:30-11:30pm.
Every 4th Saturday: Open Intensive Aikido:
6:30-8:00am

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

7- 16 yrs old

Sunday Mornings 9:00 -10:00am

Affiliation

AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Aikido So-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 Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu.

Aikido Center of Los Angeles

940 E. 2nd St. #7, Little Tokyo,
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: (213) 687-3673

Email: aclafuruya@earthlink.net

www.aikidocenterla.com

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Sunday Mornings: 7:45am-8:45am

Thursdays: 7:45-8:45pm

Saturday Mornings: 8:00am-9:00am

No Classes on the last weekend of the month.

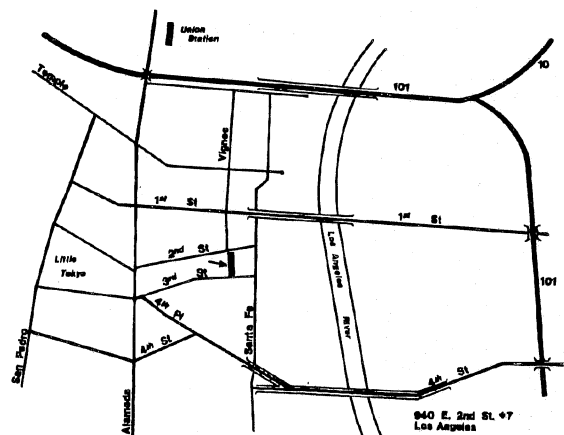
Intensive Iaido

Every 2nd Saturday of the month.
6:30am-8:00am

Private Classes Available.

Finding Our Dojo:

We are endeavoring to maintain the highest standards of training while preserving the True Spirit of Aikido. We hope you will appreciate our efforts and undertake your training with devoted and committed energy. Your efforts, we believe, will be greatly rewarded. We welcome you to an ancient and profound art. We welcome you to our Dojo. Everyone, beginners and active Aikido students alike, are cordially welcome to join our training. Thank you.



We are convenient to most major freeways. Enter private lane at Vignes and 2nd Streets. We are one block west of Santa Fe Ave. and several blocks east of Alameda in Little Tokyo. The **Easiest Way:** From Alameda go east on 1st St and make right turn at Vignes. Do not turn on 2nd St. but go straight into the private lane. Look for the garden.