



# AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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September 1, 1991

## Nisei Week Festival Demonstration

On August 11, 1991, we held a very successful demonstration at the Japanese Village Plaza for the 51st Annual Nisei Week Festival in Little Tokyo. About five to six hundred people attended and the reception was great. Members of the ACLA and a group of eight swordsmen from Japan lead by Hataya Mitsuo Sensei made a spectacular demo which was enjoyed by everyone.

Members of the dojo included Victor Rodriguez, Mitsuko Yoshimoto, Yasushi Matsuki, Ken Watanabe, James Doi, Richard Eloriagga, Mark Moore and Manuel Almaguer.

Members from the Los Angeles Branch of the Batodo group included Gary Myers, Steve Lehocky, Jeff Wheeler, Richard Eloriagga, Brian Kanegawa, and Ken Watanabe.

Special thanks to Ann Enomoto, Monika Alvarez, David Ito and Abel Perez for helping out and passing out the flyers.

The dojo apologizes to the many people who called the dojo expecting the demonstration to be held at the Japan America Theatre as we did last year. Last year, we demonstrated to a full house with about five hundred guests turned away. This was considered one of the most successful events of last year's Nisei Week Festival. Unfortunately, due to lack of manpower we were unable to manage it this year. However, next year, we plan another big demonstration at the Japan America Theatre with many top guest masters from Japan demonstrating. Thank you very much for your understanding.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions to the ACLA Newsletter are \$25.00 a year. It is free to active, current members of the dojo.

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## PROMOTIONS

### Congratulations to our New Black Belts!

Congratulations are in order for the following students who successfully completed the requirements for Black Belt on July 27, 1991.

Curtis Westfall  
Brigido Anaya  
Shawn Pak

Ismael Araujo (August 3, 1991)

### Promotions as of August 1, 1991

#### 6th Kyu

Akikazu Bunasawa  
Sally Bunasawa  
Jose Mendoza  
Chad Sakamoto  
Raymond Gonzales  
Reginald Payton  
Michael Marx

#### 5th Kyu

Paul Williams  
Frank Mattox

#### 4th Kyu

Leo Mora

#### 3rd Kyu

Kenneth Furuya

#### 1st Kyu

Norm Lew

Again, congratulations, and please continue to support the dojo and practice hard.

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## BATTODO SWORSMANSHIP Los Angeles Branch

Two years ago, our Iaido Swordsmanship Group was accepted as the Los Angeles Branch of the All Japan Battodo (Swordsmanship) Federation in Tokyo, Japan. This is the first officially recognized branch dojo outside of Japan in this country and the world. Last year, we held a very successful demonstration at the Japan America Theatre during last year's Nisei Week Festival with twenty members from the Machida Dojo under the direction of Hataya Mitsuo Sensei and members representing Okayama and Gunma Prefectures. This year, we held another successful demonstration at the Japanese Village Plaza with eight members representing the Machida Dojo in Tokyo and members from Gunma and Yamagata Prefectures. This is the second visit from Mr. Satsumi Sensei from Gunma Prefecture.

During this visit, we also held the first "joint practice" between dojos in Japan and this country and we held the first Black Belt Examination held outside of Japan by the All Japan Battodo Federation. This is truly a very special occasion and the teachers from Japan were very impressed with the very high level of skill in our dojo in such a very short time. I think everyone should be proud that their hard work and training in some ways has paid off.

Congratulations to the first black belts to be examined and pass the All Japan Battodo Federation Test. The new first degree Black Belts are: Steve Lehocky, Richard Eloriagga, Jeffrey Wheeler, Brian Kanegawa, and Ken Watanabe. Special congratulations to Gary Myers who successfully passed the examination for 3rd degree Black Belt. I would also like to personally thank the members of the Los Angeles Shibu for all their help in reorganizing our group into a really first class branch dojo, arranging monthly meetings for the membership and also for taking so much time and every day to transport our guests around Los Angeles. Our welcome party was held at Mi Piacce Italian Restaurant in Pasadena and our Success Party was held at Lawry's Prime Rib Restaurant in Beverly Hills. Everyone had a great time.

### Battodo Promotions

#### Promotions as of August 11, 1991

3rd Degree Black Belt

Gary Myers

1st Degree Black Belt

Steve Lehocky  
Jeffrey Wheeler  
Ken Watanabe  
Richard Eloriagga  
Brian Kanegawa

#### Black Belt Committee as of August 1, 1991

Ben Suyenobu (Retired)  
Tony Gonzales (Florida)  
Stephen Stephanides (Boston)  
Blake Ashley  
Victor Rodriguez  
Yasushi Matsuki  
Mitsuko Yoshimoto  
James Doi  
Sukkoo Lee  
Richard Eloriagga  
Ken Watanabe  
Thomas McIntyre  
Manuel Almaguer  
William Gillespie  
Curtis Westfall  
Shawn Pak  
Brigido Anaya  
Ismael Araujo

The above names are the current list of members of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles Black Belt Committee. Any person not listed above may not teach or conduct classes or use the name of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles or that of the Reverend Kensho Furuya.

For problems, financial or personal, regarding the dojo may be discussed with Sensei or the above members. The Black Belt Committee holds meetings the first Tuesday of every month. All Black Belts should attend.

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### We Need Everyone's Help

This dojo is managed as much as possible as a true dojo. My teacher taught me how to teach Aikido but I never learned anything about finances or how to pay the rent. Indeed, this is where I must rely on the understanding and cooperation of the students. Because the students appreciate the opportunity to practice and learn, each student presents a "token of appreciation" to the teacher. The teacher uses this "token of respect" as his only means of livelihood. Today, however, we have a big dojo with many expenses and we are not under the patronage of some feudal warlord. Please cooperate by paying your dues on time on the first of the month and helping to develop our membership. Members, for one reason or the other, are always leaving so it is important to see that we always have new members coming in.

This is the very first time I have ever made such a study but the following figures reflect the numbers of students who do not pay each month. It is not fair to you or me or the dojo.

January - 39.4%  
February - 37.8%  
March - 55%  
April - 57%  
May - 62%  
June - 61%  
July - 60%

Please help and support our dojo. Also, I would like to hear from members of the dojo who have financial or office management skills who might be willing to donate a few hours a week or month to help with the dojo bookkeeping. We also need someone who can keep track of delinquent paying students and recently enrolled students who have stopped training. Please see Sensei.

For rent:

Two bedroom, one bath house for rent in Altadena. Furnished, quiet neighborhood. Looking for non-smoker, very neat person or couple. Requirements: please watch house and take care of the garden. Also, boat for sale. See Sensei.

### NEWS ITEMS

July 14th, the dojo presented a demonstration of Aikido and swordsmanship at the Zenshuji Obon Carnival. This is one of annual events.

July 21st, the Battodo Iaido Group LA Branch presented a demonstration of swordsmanship at the Pasadena Buddhist Church during their Obon Festival.

Sensei gave three talks at the Jr. Young Buddhists Association Confederation Conference on August 3rd.

As part of the the dojo's Japan Cultural Lecture Series, Sensei presented Program II, a lecture on the "Life of Miyamoto Musashi: Fact and Fiction" on August 4th at the dojo. About twenty guests attended.

The Black Belt Committee held their monthly black belt meeting on August 6th. Teaching schedule and handling delinquent students was discussed.

Sensei hosted Hataya Mitsuo Sensei and nine guests from Japan from August 8th through the 15th. Six other guests also arrived from Japan from August 14th through the 17th.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

August 27th, Black Belt Meeting.

September 2nd, Labor Day. The dojo is closed. Special morning class from 10:00am to 11:30am.

### Morning Classes

We are planning morning classes during the weekdays from 7:00am to 8:00am. Please see Sensei if you are interested. We need to begin with a small group. We also need to determine how many days a week.

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### *Correspondence:*

August 4, 1991

Reverend Furuya:

Before I begin, I would tell you that I write to you in complete sincerity, and I sincerely hope that you will help me. I felt compelled to write to you after reading your article, "What Does A Black Belt Really Mean?" in the July issue of Martial Arts Training. The trailer on the article stated that you invited inquiries.

I would like to introduce myself as best as possible through a letter. My name is Thomas E. Randall, Jr. I'm known as 'Tom'. I have been a serious student of the martial arts for 4 years. I am 35 years old and currently hold a first degree black belt under the auspices of the United States Taekwondo and International Taekwondo Federations. I am a career senior noncommissioned officer in the USAF and currently serve in Germany. I have been in this country since 1984. I am divorced but live with my two children. My children and the study of the martial arts were all that kept me in control during my divorce, and now that I seem to be back to normal, I wish to elevate my study of the 'way' by beginning my spiritual training. I am searching for a way to find inner harmony through the study of the 'way.'

Within my abilities, I train hard. I also study the academic references available to me for my art and have supplemented them with 'Bushido', 'The Art of War' and 'The Book of Five Rings' as well as lesser works. While I continue to discipline my body through training, I feel incomplete as I have no discipline for my spirit. Thus, I do not live in harmony with myself. No matter how hard I train, no matter how scrupulously I follow the Tenets of my own art, I am incomplete. I have never misused my abilities no matter how much I felt provoked. I have been able to exercise self control physically, but internally, my emotions and intellect are constantly in turmoil.

I have tried other spiritual disciplines to no avail. Christianity, Agnosticism, and Aetheism have

done nothing for me. I had hoped that I may try the study of Iaido in the Zen manner and conquer my spirit. Please offer me counsel on this matter.

Thank you very much.

Thomas E. Randall, Jr, I Dan ITF/USTF  
A-1-4856

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Dear Mr. Randall:

Thank you for your letter. To read my article and open your heart up to me so honestly, I am greatly honored.

When Bodhidharma was meditating in a cave, Hui-k'o came to him for instruction. He stood out in the snow for days, but Bodhidharma would not receive him for an interview. Finally, in desperation, he cut off his left arm and presented it to the Master as a token of sincerity. Bodhidharma asked, "What are you searching for?"

"I am searching for peace of mind. My mind is in constant turmoil." begged Hui-k'o.

"Bring me the 'mind in turmoil' and let me see it." demanded the Zen Master.

"When I look, I can't find it right now."

"There, your mind has been set at peace."

This is a very famous dialogue. Hui-k'o later became Bodhidharma's successor and the 2nd patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China.

I hope you will think about what this story means. You are like the person who climbs the tree in search of the forest. In the midst of this understanding, you are searching mistakenly for "understanding" on your own terms. To recognize that the "mind is in turmoil" is correct. It is always in turmoil. This is the unfortunate reality of our lives; however, within this turmoil, we seek and find true peace of mind through our training. Aikido and martial arts training must always be this dynamic process. It is said that "waves are the activity of water; unsettledness of the mind is the work of the mind." We often mistake this activity as turmoil. It is not to stop or control or

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or suppress this activity but to go with it. This is true peace of mind. But, in order to achieve this, our minds must be disciplined yet free. Understanding and refining this process is the meaning of "training."

In Aikido, there is a saying, "Calmness in action, action in calmness." This is what the martial artist tries to understand in his training. As long as you are alive and moving about, your mind will always be in turmoil. It is because of this turmoil, you train hard and come to perceive calmness. So indeed, we should be thankful for 'turmoil' because it is the essence of our practice. When you accept that turmoil is an essential part of your calmness and stop judging yourself, perhaps, you will become "calm." In any case, keep training. If "turmoil in your mind" is your only opponent, this formidable opponent can only make you stronger. I recall a "rock song" which says: *Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, it's all a game. Sometimes you don't and sometimes you do, it's all insane.* Stop all games, all winning, all losing, all doing and all not doing because it is all "insane." Good luck always.

I know your letter is very personal but I have reprinted it in this Newsletter with my answer because I believe that it will help many people who ask the same questions you have. Thank you very much.

Kensho Furuya

*Message from Sensei:*

## a few words of appreciation

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words of "thanks" to all my students who helped out during the very busy month of August. The dojo entertained 17 guests in three separate groups, all coming into Los Angeles at about the same time. It was quite a feat but somehow everything went very well. Several students mentioned to me: "Sensei, now I know and appreciate how busy you are!"

I think students should try to appreciate our dojo more. Our reputation is international and we are very well known in Japan. This is why so many guests want to come to our dojo and this is why I feel obligated to host them. All these people support and appreciate the work we do in our dojo.

Recently, several black belts left our dojo to start their own school. According to them, my Aikido is "too strict, too hard and too demanding," so they started something which is more "sociable" and more "friendly." Unfortunately, I feel my job is 100% as a teacher of Aikido and, indeed, I make a lousy "social director." My teacher never taught me how to entertain you and drink beer with you. For social entertainment or enjoyment, one can go to a bar or dating service as far as I am concerned; it is not the purpose of our dojo. Aikido is a profound art and it does take a little discipline, a little self-sacrifice and indeed, a sense of a spiritual quest, a desire to spiritual enlightenment. This can be hard work. It is hard work. ut, it is valuable work towards the fulfillment of our lives. I was surprised to see these people at our Nisei Week Demonstration taking videos! Indeed, students have told me that some of them are loitering around the dojo late at night. Somehow, they still have an interest in my Aikido and in our dojo. This is very strange, indeed! Not very polite but very strange. In martial arts, it is said, "The saddest thing in the world is to be without your teacher." Every morning and night I bow to my teacher to show him my respect and appreciation although he is thousands of miles away in Japan. Because of my teacher, I am the teacher I am today. For this I am always thankful. I really appreciate the efforts of my students in my behalf as their teacher and their support of the dojo. This only encourages me to study harder.

The dojo will always have obstacles and difficulties to overcome. Cars need gasoline to run, our bodies need nourishment to keep going. It is important to pay our dues each month but this dojo doesn't run on dollars and cents like most organizations. This dojo runs on the spirit and devotion of its students. For this, I am always thankful. And, it is for this, I believe this dojo can overcome all difficulties.

I heard this often before but one very well known teacher from Japan recently said, "I wish all my students were just like yours." No wonder everyone tries to lure my students away from the dojo!

Again, thank you.