

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles, 940 2nd St. #7, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Tel: (213) 687-3673. Website: www.aikidocenterla.com.



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles LLC
忘れられた心を探す合気道 合気道場
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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Happy New Year 2005

New Year Greetings 2005



Hideo Yonemochi Sensei

8th Dan Shihan

Aikikai Jomu-Riji, Managing
Director of Aikikai
Head of Aikikai International
Dept.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
I hope everyone had a very healthy
Holiday Season.

I offer my congratulations again for
your 30th Anniversary of the founding
of your dojo and the 100th Anniversary
of the Yamanashi Kenjinkai which was
so successful and in which so many of
you participated. At that time, I have
fond memories of practicing with all of
you in two practices.

It is 30 years since Furuya Sensei first
founded the Aikido Center of Los
Angeles. I know that he suffered many
hardships. But overcoming all of these



January Schedule

Special Events:

January 1-2:
New Year's Holiday

January 3:
Hatsu-geiko. First Aikido
Practice of the New Year

January 5:
Memorial Service & Incense
Offering to 2nd Doshu Everyone
is requested to attend.

First General Meeting & Study
Class (Short mtg after service.)

January 8:
Iaido Hatsu-geiko. First Iaido
Practice of the New Year

January 29 Kagami Biraki Practice with Nakayama Sensei 5th Dan

James Nakayama Sensei, Chushinkan
Dojo, Buena Park, is our Special
Guest. On January 29. Everyone is
welcome to attend. 10:00-11:30am

Coming Soon: Los Angeles Loft Living

By Barbara Thornburg
Chronicle Press,
Features our Dojo among many sig-
nificant and well-designed lofts in
the Los Angeles. Out this year.



Yonemochi Hideo Sensei:

difficulties, he built up a dojo where you can learn solid Aikido. I would like to express here that he has developed many excellent students. This is solely due to his warm character, his excellent technique and pre-eminent teaching abilities.

At the same time, establishing many affiliated branch dojos, he has contributed to the expansion and development of Aikido and I show my heartfelt appreciation for this.

I pray that you will continue to progress step by step and for the health of Furuya Sensei and all of the members of the dojo

Aikikai Managing Director
Hideo Yonemochi (8th Dan, Shihan)



Yonemochi Sensei teaching during 30th Anniversary Practice

ご挨拶

米持英夫師範

メーリクリスマス、新年明けましておめでとうございます。

皆さん穏やかな新年を迎えられたことと思います。昨年4月28日合気道センタロスアンゼレス道場創立30周年記念並びに南加山梨県人会100周年記念のイベントがホテルニユーオタニで開催され大勢の皆さんが参加して盛会の裡に終えることが出来、誠にありがとうございました。

その折、ロスアンゼレス道場の皆さんと二回に亘り一緒に稽古をさせて頂いたつき大変楽しい思い出となりました。

古屋先生がロスアンゼレス道場を創立され30年、この間いろいろご苦労があったと思いますがその困難を乗り越えてロスアンゼレスにしっかり合気道が学べる道場を作り上げられ、又沢山の有能な人材を育て上げられたことに心から敬意を表するものであります。

これも僅に先生の温厚なお人柄と優れた技術又抜群の指導力によるものと思います。又同時に各地に沢山の姉妹道場も設立され合気道の普及発展に貢献されておられます。心から感謝を申し上げます。

今年も又一步一步着実に前進されますようお祈りしております。先生並びに会員の皆様のご健勝を心からお祈りいたします。

財団法人合気会
常務理事 米持英夫

明けましておめでとうございます。
新春の慶びと世界平和をお祈り
申し上げます。
古屋 頌正



Kensho Furuya: Happy New Year 2005! Happiness Thru Others

I suppose that it is natural that in our younger years we all seek our happiness and the fulfillment of our dreams. However, as we get older, there is a kind of sad saying of, "living our lives thru others," however, on a much more happier note, I would like to say enjoying

our happiness thru others. What I would like to say is that my happiness is to see the happiness and fulfillment of my students. I don't have the same youthful abandon and ambition of my younger days. I seek a quiet life, teaching a few students, writing and trying to get my books out. Nothing more than this - quite boring by most people's standards, I imagine, but, for me, a dream and luxury. However, teaching is still a challenge and enjoying the "quiet life" is still a dream - so hard to realize in our chaotic, conflicted world.

In the last couple of years, I have seen some of my students mature so much in Life and in their Aikido, it gives me no end of pleasure and satisfaction. As much as they follow me so closely, I don't think that they will pass on much of my Aikido. As I see them grow, I see the natural growth and development of their own Aikido - and this is perfectly fine for me. It is not the artificial and forced growth of Aikido encouraged by politics and people's quest for power and abundance. It is the natural Aikido which comes with the natural maturity of their art. This is, in my book, real growth and true understanding.

I hope my student to not follow superficial trends or fads in Aikido but stick firmly to the Path created by O'Sensei and his Successors, 2nd and 3rd 'Doshu. Please understand that the profound spiritual aspects of Aikido and the daily grind of practice is one and the same thing. The highest ideals of Aikido is nothing less than the normal daily activity of cooperation and friendship with those around you and that respect for one's self comes first from our respect for others and all of Nature's creation. In Aikido, the nobility of thought and action truly comes from a deep sense of modesty and humility in recognition that this Path is endless and beyond common understanding or perception. To cheapen Aikido by easy compromises and selfishness only cheapens one's self. Please, as in Life, seek only the very highest standards in Aikido for yourself. And never sell yourself short. The Path to Aikido is never easy, and we can only proceed at one tiny step at a time at best. But in each tiny step, the great beauty of the human spirit is revealed.

In the sword world, we are so concerned with genuine and fake. Something genuine is always treasured over that which is not so. In life and in your Aikido - always seek what is genuine and let it mature naturally within and it will blossom on its own - yet, as in infinite Nature, always at the very perfect time. Please continue to grow in joy and happiness. Happy New Year to all my students and friends in the dojo and all over the world! In Gassho, Kensho Furuya

Newly Built Aikikan Dojo in Israel



Ze'ev Erlich in his new dojo which is still in the process of being built. Many congratulations to Ze'ev and all the members and all our friends in Israel. Best Wishes & Happy New Year!

Recent Aikido Seminar in Latvia

Chief Instructor of the Latvia dojo during a recent seminar. Our new friends are in a country in Eastern Europe which borders on Russia.



Articles & photos in this issue and kindly submitted by Olga Mihailova.

LA Times Photo Shoot In Dojo.



Ken Watanabe demonstrating Iaido for Times Calendar Section article on martial arts in Southern California.

In Our Upcoming February Issue:

We will feature more family photos of our Halloween Party for the kids on October 31 and our last Christmas Party on December 5. Visit of the Brandeis University Women's Association on December 13.

Celebrities:

Jim MacDonald was featured recently on an episode of JAG and most recently, an ER segment, portraying a police officer involved in a robbery shooting. James Doi was recently interviewed on the Sci Fi Channel on the possibilities of paranormal activity.



Gary Myers

Iaido 5th Dan

New Year's Greetings: Tabula Rasa

First I want to wish Sensei a very happy and healthy New Year and thank him for his continued teaching and guidance last year. I also wish Ken, Mark, Cheryl, James Doi, Larry and everyone else in the Kenshinkai Iaido and aikido sections a happy, healthy, and

prosperous New Year. Last year was a busy one for the dojo and I imagine that 2005 won't be any different.

Tabula rasa is a Latin term which literally means smooth or erased tablet. When the Romans began writing they would erase what was previously on the tablet providing a smooth, clean, and blank surface to write. Its figurative meaning is the term for the state of mind in its primary blank or empty state before receiving outside impressions or teaching. As Sensei has stated in his discussions, the Japanese and Buddhist name for this state of mind is called mushin. It is a mind free of attachments, preconceived ideas, and unconscious of itself. It has also been compared to a child's non-discriminating or guileless mind. Although mushin has some deeper meanings, beyond tabula rasa, for the purposes of this discussion they are the same.

The New Year is a perfect time to wipe the slate clean, and begin fresh. Although Sensei dislikes sports analogies, I have to give one example that seems appropriate. Jack Nicklaus, the greatest golfer of all time, started each year with a fresh approach. He would start with his grip, then work on his stance and set up. He would make sure that he had sound fundamentals before he would attempt to practice more intricate shots. Here was the best player in the world and each year he would start as if he was a beginner. He knew that unless his fundamentals were correct there was no point in trying to practice the more complicated shots. Of course, there isn't a calendar season when it comes to our Iaido practice, but the New Year is the perfect opportunity for each of us to review our progress and to see if there is something in our technique that needs correction. Problems that heretofore we've not been able to correct through our own efforts should be learned with a clean slate. No matter who we are or what our rank we should take the new year as an opportunity for improvement.

Sensei has stated more than once that if you're having trouble correcting bad fundamentals you have to approach learning with an empty mind, a clean slate, tabula rasa. Begin as if you heard the instruction for the first time. You have to throw away your concept of the technique, it is not one that you've seen in a movie or gleaned from a video or instruction book. The process of learning in traditional Japanese arts is copying the form that is presented. It is to see it, grasp it and make it yours. When the mind is open to accept what is visually presented, the learning process happens more directly.

I was talking to an instructor (not Iaido or martial arts) the other day and he thought that people learned in one of three ways: seeing it and learning it; feeling it and learning it; and analyzing it and learning it. The last two ways are probably the least effective because they are subject to interpretation. Unfortunately it seems when we are left to our own logical mind, often we misinterpret. We may feel what we are doing is right, but if we are continuously corrected, then obviously it

is wrong. This is where the ego kicks in, because it is still telling you that it feels correct, so you continue to do the same thing again and again. Remember the old saying "practice makes perfect?" Wrong, "practice makes permanent"; if you are practicing incorrectly you are only ingraining bad habits, which are then even harder to correct. This is why correcting a problem has to be done as soon as possible with a certain sense of urgency. Only through correcting problems as soon as we are able, can we all progress to more advanced forms

Because Iaido is so precise, there are always going to be corrections that have to be made. As students, we want to get to the point when we know what our mistakes are, so that we can make the self-correction without having to be told to do it. The worst scenario is to do the same mistake over again being oblivious to it or to be cognizant of it but complacent in correcting it. Each time we do a technique it should be the best we can do it. So let's begin to correct those fundamentals that are giving us problems with a clean slate. Again I wish everyone the best for the New Year.



James Doi

Aikikai 5th Dan

Iaido 4th Dan

A History Of Our New Year's Holiday

New Year's Day has always been an important holiday because of its significance for celebration and reflection.

The early Romans used a ten month year (each month 30 or 31 days long) that started in Spring. The two month short fall was simply referred to as "winter" time. As the Roman Republic and later the Empire grew, the old Roman calendar was modified by adding two more months; January and February. Julius Caesar codified the calendar (which is known as the Julian Calendar) in 45 BC.

January was named for the Roman god, Janus who was the god of gates and doors. The Etruscan word for door was "jauna". The Romans had a strong sense that doors and portals represented beginnings and endings. Janus represented beginnings and was honored at the first of each month and at births and marriages. He is usually pictured as a double faced head, facing forward and backward. In some depictions, one of the faces is bearded and the other is younger and clean shaven. This represented old age and youth, the same way that an old year is represented as Father Time and the New Year is represented as a baby.

In naming the first month in their calendar year after Janus, the Romans showed a feeling that New Years (the first day of January) was both an ending and beginning. There is also the sense of "looking back" and at the same time "looking forward". All this is a very good way to look at New Year's Day.

In 1582, Pope Gregory took the Julian Calendar and "reset" it by dropping ten days. The purpose of this was to insure that March 21 was always the vernal equinox, which is important in setting the date that Easter will be celebrated. The reason why we celebrate New Years on January 1, is not because of natural astronomical reason, but because of the bureaucratic needs of first century Roman technocrats. Happy New Year to all the members and friends of the Dojo.



Ken Watanabe
Aikikai 5th Dan
Iaido 5th Dan
Every Which
Way Except the
Right Way

Whether it's playing the piano, typing, or plumbing, there is a right way and wrong way to do them. When done correctly, things turn out like they are supposed to: the piano makes a nice sound, you get to keep your secretary job, and your bathroom floor doesn't have an inch of water from changing that leaky faucet.

When we see the expert perform, they make it seem very, very easy. We think, "I can do the same thing?", and discover it's not as easy as it looks. Sure, maybe we can get the same result, but only after we've wasted too much time and effort on it. When we first see Aikido, the person attacking gets thrown this way and that way with little or no effort on the defender's part. We see someone's hand get twisted and they either go down or are thrown, flying through the air. When we read up on it, we hear all kinds of things about this mysterious martial art. We hear that you use your opponent's power against him to throw him, you can throw someone without even touching him, Aikido is a non-fighting martial art, and so on. Unfortunately, when we start practice, none of this happens.

When we start to train, even the simplest, most basic techniques seem hard to execute and understand. Even after training for several months or even a few years, the technique can still seem forced or difficult to do. Nothing feels right and nothing seems to really work. Instead of a totally effortless throw or pin, it's the complete opposite. We end up pushing and pulling to get our opponent down or get caught by his attack. All kinds of problems come into play in our practice. Instead of an effortless throw, we end up having to use a lot of force to bring him down. As we progress in our training, hopefully something clicks in our head and things become a little clearer to us. However, mastery of the basics and practicing the correct execution of the Aikido technique takes a lot of patience. Although the technique feels like it doesn't work, one must resist the urge to use too much muscle to push or pull your partner around to make the throw or pin work. You will get more benefit in the long run by practicing the correct form than just trying to force your way through the technique. When we are practicing the techniques, it's important to practice what is being taught as closely as possible. When you're instructed to enter deeply, you should try to enter deeply. When you have to make a big round movement, you actually need to make a big round movement. When the hand is supposed to go up, down, or to your opponent's face, concentrate on actually making that particular movement. When you aren't supposed to push or lean, don't push or lean. These and other basic Aikido skills should be mastered. Furthermore, your posture, the direction you set your concentration, the timing and many, many other points all come into play in your practice. Aikido is very sophisticated and only by practicing regularly and correctly, and following the directions can one come to some kind of understanding of the technique. By practicing regularly and mastering the various Con't.



*Matsu Kokin
 No Iro Nashi.*

"the evergreen
 pine is eternally
 evergreen."



Santiago G. Almaraz
Aikikai 3rd Dan, Iaido 2nd Dan
Kokodai Branch, Salamanca, Spain
A Very Good Year!
Meeting 3rd Doshu &
Yonemochi Sensei

Another year more.... how fast the time goes. Looks like yesterday when I was in Los Angeles for the 30 Anniversary of Furuya

Sensei's Dojo in Little Tokyo, in April, and now we say good-bye to another year. This year that we left, I was so lucky to live great experiences in my personal life and about Aikido

First of all, was the experience to be a father.. Last February, Susana and I had a baby, Juan Antonio, who in a couple of months more will be one year old. This makes you change many things about what is really important in your life and what is not.

Second thing is about Aikido. This year, I was so fortunate to stay in Los Angeles again to be at the 30th Anniversary of the ACLA, with my brother, Carlos, and student, Oscar. In this celebration we have the chance to meet and train under one of the most important Sensei at Aikikai Hombu Dojo., He is Hideo Yonemochi Sensei.

Carlos and Oscar had the honor to take a Shodan test under the examination of Yonemochi Sensei and Furuya Sensei. One thing that makes me think about Yonemochi Sensei, is how much vitality, health and energy to teach Aikido to all of us in his seminar. Even he is close to 80, and he is at Hombu working everyday.

During those days in Los Angeles, Furuya Sensei as usual, give me a extra classes of Iaido and Aikido and many good conversations and instruction during many lunches or dinners.

By the way, many thanks to all instructors to help us and teach us in those extra classes, especially Ken Watanabe, Mark Ty, and many thanks to Kenny Furuya and David Ito for their hospitality to let us stay at his house and everything.

When we got back to Spain, Doshu confirmed that he will be in Madrid to conduct a Seminar. This was in October and fifteen students of our Kodokai Dojo went to attend his practice.

This seminal was so important for me and my students, because we usually don't go other seminars very often because the teachers usually do many kind of strange techniques and they make me confused about what Aikido is.

But in this seminar, we felt that every technique that Doshu did, was exactly at the Furuya Dojo and every movement, attack and the same concept of what Aikido should be is the same as I saw at the Furuya Dojo. That is the way why it is so important, not for me because I already knew it, but my students can see how close that Sensei Furuya teachings are to Hombu Dojo .After this seminar, I understand perfectly why Yonemochi Sensei say to Furuya Sensei, "don't change anything," I hope next year could be as good as this and I could repeat everything exactly as this Ok, not exactly, I think that I could wait to have another baby maybe one year more. Many thanks and Happy New Year 2005!

Ken Watanabe continued:

aspects of the basic Aikido technique correctly, you will find that the techniques will be much more easier to do and also more effective with less effort on your part. Rather than concentrating only on the effectiveness of the technique, in the beginning it's much more helpful to concentrate on the correctness of the technique and try not to worry about how hard you can throw or pin your partner. Eventually, you'll find that instead of struggling this way and that way and trying all kinds of ways to do the technique, the technique will almost do the work for you after you try to catch onto the correct way.



Carol Tanita
Aikikai 1st Dan
Reflections of 2004

It is hard to believe that the year is fast coming to a close. With the celebration of our Dojo's 30th Anniversary, it seems like it was just yesterday we were at the New Otani Hotel, toasting with sake and champagne, and enjoying all the festivities surrounding this auspicious occasion

I was so impressed at how famous our dojo is and the visitors and guests we had from all over the world. I am very proud to be a member of this Dojo, and hope that our membership will continue to grow and prosper.

This first year as a Shodan was, and still is a big challenge for me. I had a difficult time trying to make practices consistently since my son Nicholas, who is a Fourth Kyu now has started high school. Because of my inconsistent attendance, I can feel the difference in the way I move, and the flow in my movements and the continuity is just not there. I am so out of practice, it isn't funny. My bones ache, and it takes me much longer to bounce back. I really miss coming to practice, but my first concern was to make sure that Nicholas is happy and successful in school. The transition from middle school to high school was a great challenge for him, but we are trying to make it work. As many of you know Nicholas has Autism, but with a lot of work and determination, he is successfully mainstreamed in the high school, participates on the swim team, and Boy Scouts. He may not show it a lot of times, but he enjoys coming to the Dojo, and practicing in the Children's Class, as well as Adult Class. The regimentation and routine is very good for him. Aikido gives him confidence he would not otherwise get in the outside world.

I guess the other reason I have not been is because I have had a lot of friends and relatives die this last year, and it was very difficult for me to get over this. Many of them were about my age, and this affected me deeply. As time passed, I found that coming to the Dojo has helped me to focus back on what is now, and what is important in my life. If I am not happy and healthy, how can I take care of my family and friends...

Now that Nicholas seems to have the high school routine down, I hope to be back in the Dojo regularly. I have gained so much from being a member here...Japanese culture, etiquette, history, and of course, Aikido. My fellow students have all been so supportive and understanding to Nicholas and I. Sensei has been kind in giving very helpful advice where Nicholas is concerned, and for that I am very grateful. Thank you from the very bottom of my heart to

Sensei, all the Black Belts, and my fellow students and friends for helping us this past year. "Rainen mo yoroshiku onegai shimasu!!" To all of you from Nicholas and I, we wish you a very healthy and Happy Holiday season, and a more challenging Aikido New Year!



Steven Shaw II
Aikido 2nd Dan, Iaido 3rd Dan
Littleton, Colorado
States Of Change

Life certainly changes quickly. Forces in motion have a way of moving everything. It has been said that the five most stressful good things a person can experience in life are a marriage, a birth of a child, a move, a new job, and a purchase of a house. Four out of five in three months was tough, but so is taking ukemi for two hours after intensive Iaido class. In the past four weeks, things have begun to settle down, and reflection begins.

I feel unquantifiable gratitude for all the training I received over the years at the Aikido Center of Los Angeles. The way Sensei, Ken, James, and Mark break down the techniques into consistent building blocks has enabled me to feel confident when applying these basics within more advanced techniques. I am also grateful for the letters of introduction that have guided me in training with strong, competent instructors, and for the warm welcome with which I have been received. This has been a blessing, but brings the great responsibility of representing the Aikido Center of Los Angeles and Sensei. It was much easier when I had Sensei pointing out my mistakes. Now I fear that all my faults are being placed on Sensei's teaching. It would be easier for me to lie and go in as a new student using that as an excuse for my inability to pick up the new techniques the first time, but where's the honor in that?

One early Saturday morning we all sat as Sensei explained the importance of learning a technique as it's taught. He spoke of training our eyes to observe a technique as it's presented, and then be able to replicate all its intricacies after just one viewing. Holding onto this standard is the only way for me to improve and grow, as it is the ultimate in knowledge acquisition. I usually fail to obtain the ideal, but I continue to strive. I just want to learn everything my teachers want to impart, not just what I think is useful. Why would they teach it if it weren't important?

As I train with people in Colorado, I struggle to learn the new techniques. I want to learn them because the instructor deems them important, but I also yearn to practice the timing and spacing of the techniques I already know. It seems to be a dilemma of learning. I remember when I first got my bokken. I would go to the park every day and do suburi until I couldn't do suburi anymore. I would practice, practice, practice, and what may have seemed boring and repetitive to an observer, or one with another mindset, was necessary. As I began to learn more, the less time I'd have for suburi. The more techniques I needed to practice, the less time I'd have for each technique. Instead of me getting stronger in any technique, I became weaker in all. From this, the value of repetition is derived. By being exposed to this enormous breadth of Aikido and seeing my own limits of knowledge, I actually come to feel the meaning of "quality, not quantity." Ultimately, I'd rather know very little very Con't.

Steven Shaw continued:

well than everything in pieces. In order to thoroughly confuse myself, there is merit in learning as much as we can. Earlier in my training I thought of Aikido as a mountain and that when one had climbed it, achievement would be felt.

Then around the time I became Shodan, I thought of Aikido as an iceberg and that I had only been on the surface above the water, ignorant of its greater mass below. Now, I feel as though I had been frozen in a glacier, melted as Shodan, trickled downstream, and now I have been released to the ocean. It can be a bit unnerving. In spite of all these lessons and realizations, perhaps the ocean in which I see myself is only a drop of water.



Maria Ferrari
Aikikai 1st Dan
Always Moving Ahead

Season's Greetings to Sensei, the members of our dojo, and our friends. I hope that everyone who has practiced so hard this year can start out the new year strong as well! I feel very lucky to study Aikido at our dojo because it has also taught me so

much about myself. Sometimes in Aikido the simplest thing is so hard, and it can be frustrating, because I am only trying to move the bokken in a straight line or my hand in a big circle. I think, what is wrong with me, when did I forget how to move my hand in a circle, and why can't I make my circle any bigger? And once you realize how hard this simple thing is, how you could try moving your hand in a circle for ten years and probably not do it just right, you have to hurry up and do it anyway, because practice is not going to wait for you to sit around and think about how hard it is.

This is how Aikido taught me to move forward even when I feel unsure. When I started Aikido, I wanted to ask a lot of questions during class, and if I didn't understand a correction I wanted to talk about it forever. But I learned to practice Aikido in a different way. You try it first, and then you go back and think about it later, after class. Sometimes your body can do things your brain cannot wrap itself around in the moment. Sometimes there's no time to wonder if you understand something, because it's time to begin. In life, I am always stuck in my head worrying, and sometimes it paralyzes me, but in Aikido that is just a good way to get hit in the face. So you learn not to be paralyzed. You move.

Every time I was promoted, I was surprised because no matter what level I am, practicing always feels the same to me. I'm just trying to make my circle bigger. I thought that I wanted to be a beginner forever, but you can never stand still in Aikido. And you yourself are not always in the best position to see how much you are growing. I recently received my black belt, and it was also a surprise. It made me realize that there are no excuses. At some point you have to stop exaggerating the difficulty of the task before you. There is just practice, just listening, just executing the move correctly. Not just trying to do the technique, but doing it. Not just hoping you will learn, but really learning. And Aikido has taught me how to move forward in life, too, where there is also no standing still. In my relationships, in my home life, and especially in my career, I cannot stay a beginner forever. So every day I try to meet the most difficult things head on,

without hesitation. I know I should be moving in before my attacker ever gets to me

I have always thought learning Aikido is like an asymptotic line approaching its axis you get closer and closer, infinitely close to the ideal if you only practice for long enough, but at the same time you can never get there exactly. I still think this is true, but I don't worry so much about it any more. I think that a lot of things in life are like that. What Aikido has taught me is that even if your goal seems far away, you have to move towards it as quickly as you can, as if you were going to get there that minute. And then, sometimes, I do.



Jim Basset
Aikido 1st Kyu
On Repetition

Being a practitioner for a short time there are many aspects of life in the dojo which seem still new and unique when compared with life before coming to the dojo. One aspect of the practice of Aikido in particular that is most noticeable is repetition. There are many

forms of repetition that occur in daily practice; the form of entering the dojo, the form of pre-class warm up, the form of class beginning, the techniques practiced each day at the beginning and ending of class, the end of class, the cleaning up of the dojo, and so on. These things never change. In the beginning, it would have been easy to characterize the repetitive nature of practice as restrictive, or rule driven. Soon however, I noticed my desire for those levels of rigor and discipline, a dimension of the repetition, arising in other aspects of my life. I see myself inclined towards a different level of order in many ways, like in the idea that everything has its place, and in the order of courtesy, or propriety in dealings with others.

These things that never change, the repetition, become the most concise reference against which so much else does change. On the surface, I feel that I know what to expect when I come to class, and yet, there is always something to learn. There are small changes of learning and seeing that have only occurred to me after three years, perhaps only against the repetitive has it come to awareness. In this there seems to be an aspect of the repetition that one must trust. That things change even when they cannot be seen to be changing. Repetition occurs in time.

Each day
Coming to me;
Bell singing at the gate,
Squeaky wooden floor,
Rattle of Sensei's door.
Familiar, today
Heard for the first time.

When I see all of the teachers in the dojo I imagine so many hours of practice, so many trips to the dojo as students and teachers. Repetition perhaps at a higher level is teaching and learning grounded in the constancy of commitment, and the practice is learning to understand what that means. In some form at least, it is the continuation of Aikido through teaching, through generosity towards those of less experience, guiding us.

Ze'ev Erlich

Aikikai 4th Dan

Aikikan, Rehovet, Israel

Happy New Year Greetings From Israel & Report On Shinsa In Kyoto

Once a year several people from my dojo here in Israel join me and we go together to study at our main dojo in Kyoto - Japan. Koyama Teruo Shihan - came to the dojo a few minuet after we arrived - last August. He greeted happily all of my students and shook their hands with his honest and warm hand.



Ze'ev and his students with Koyama Sensei in Kyoto.

Moments later we were all busy practicing Aikido with all the rest of Kyoto Aikikai members. It is always so nice to see how friendly and supportive they are. Koyama Sensei told my students what the required techniques for shodan are. He decided that in addition to all the ordinary shodan requirements they should also demonstrate five waza from Ushiro Eri Tori. This kept my students very busy for two weeks.

Shinsa (test) day arrived. Uri, Semion, Nati and Fabio were tested for shodan and they all got compliments and very helpful corrections. We stayed for a couple more weeks there training 8 classes per week and traveling to so many of Kyoto's beautiful gardens and temples. This contact with Japanese culture and our dojo in Japan gives to my students something that is very hard to describe in words.

They returned to the dojo slightly different. The happiest thing for me is to see that although they wear a hakama and a black belt now, they became even more modest and helpful than before. We took so many nice photos there, so here are a few of them which I like a lot.

When we were in Japan the book "Kodo" by Kensho Furuya Sensei was with us. One of my students brought it with him. It was read by them there with great pleasure and we several times had interesting talks about it.

We wish to greet you "Happy New Year 2005". May this year will be happy and full of learning. Yours, Ze'ev Erlich, Israel Aikikan Dojo, Rehovot - ISRAEL.

Best Wishes for the New Year & prayers for peace to all of our friends overseas.



Ze'ev with his son, Kazuki, at the Kyoto Aikikai in October, 2004.



Olga Mihaikova

1.5 Years, 4th Kyu

Riga, Latvia, Eastern Europe

If the year had the center it would be that day. The 29th day of July that occasionally was the ninth day of the Aikido summer camp. One of the few hot and sunny days of this year's cold and wet summer. A Day. But if the day had the center what would it be?

The morning was bright and cool, the sky was blue, the pines were green and the sea waves looked like true silver. Our white dogi were shining in all this light and our jo were warm and alive in our hands. And everyone was the center of his morning. Standing there, on the beach, feeling wet sand with your feet, breathing the bitter sea air, listening for the whispers and weak noises, screaming of gulls and clucks of the jo, surrounded by all this early, just awoken beauty – you were the center. The whole world was for you and you were for the world.

Yet, of course, the world is not what you think. When the practice was over and the breakfast was over we returned to the beach. And found there Elina who was very sad. Someone had stolen her sneakers that she left on the beach when training. She was very much sad about it for these were her favorite sneakers. We tried our best to calm her down. We talked and joked and embraced her and said that let the old life and the old problems go away with these old boots and said that the wonderful morning as this is the best way possible to start the new life. Elina felt much better but not too happy anyway. It is nasty when someone takes away your favorite thing. It can spoil even the greatest day.

And the day was turning really great. Not a single cloud covered the blue depth of the sky, the sun was shining in all its summer glory, the hot air was trembling slightly and the horizon was trembling too. We all, thirty Aikidoka of the camp, have gone a bit further along the beach looking for an empty silent place. We were so happy to have so wonderful day at last, to be able to lie in the sun, to play volleyball and the flying plate, to sleep a bit and to enjoy the sun with the every piece of the skin. How little you need for happiness. And no one wanted to go to the training and to spend few precious hours of such a day in the dojo. So we had a training on the beach! Con't.



Kay Sera

2nd Kyu

From France To Little Tokyo To Find Aikido

In September of 2000 I spent a week in a tiny village on the Brittany coast in France called Plouescat. My goal was to visit an American acupuncturist, who was trained in Japan and married to a French-

woman he had met in Tokyo--she was a dancer who had sought treatment at the famous Fukushima clinic where he was apprenticing. I was introduced to this acupuncturist by a close friend who had a severe case of lupus. She was dramatically helped by him. Besides other apparently miraculous healings performed by this man, my friend's pediatrician's husband was cured of a very lethal case of adrenal cancer. As a healer and Francophile, I wanted to meet this man and see if I could learn from him. His suggestion to me was to take treatments with him. The treatments consisted of lengthy consultations, very sensitive pulse readings and the administration of acupuncture in which the needle was not inserted into the skin but energy was projected from the needle into the patient's body. He made three recommendations to me at this time: 1) Stop seeing psychics as this would prevent me from accessing my own information, 2) change my eating habits by eating regularly in a relaxed way, not while working or while driving (my most common dining experience) and reducing sugar and alcohol intake (he couldn't be serious, are we not in France?!), and 3) practice Aikido.

That was the beginning of my journey. I looked in the phone book and found two dojos-- one close to home in Santa Monica and one close to work in Little Tokyo. I knew nothing about martial arts and was never particularly interested although I was interested in developing ki as it pertains to health and healing. I remember the night I first visited the dojo. I found the dimly lit sign on Second Street, entered the alley with trepidation and discovered the little wooden steps leading through the gates to a wonderful little Japanese garden. As I walked through the door I was amazed at the beauty of the space-- the beautiful objects, design and proportions. I was warned, this is a very traditional dojo? This was said to me more than once that evening by more than one senior student. Hmmmm ..I didn't really know what this meant but I figured I will find out. I didn't know if I would like Aikido but I was willing to try. I am happy to say that I found that I love Aikido. What is it about doing tenkan or shihonage that feels so good? This is what really intrigues me about the practice. After class I am exhausted, energized and, well, happy. Somehow the movements feel satisfying, they feel right, they feel good. The Founder was obviously a genius. And the quest to constantly improve oneself--get the timing right, get the spacing right, stand up straighter, take deeper steps, make bigger movements, try, try, try to do it right?satisfies a natural desire to do better. Somehow Aikido draws this urge out of you. Besides, the more correctly the technique is executed, the better it feels. The more you do it, the more you realize there's more to it. There is some subtlety and unfolding of the art that only comes to the surface with practice. There is an inexplicable mystery that cannot be conveyed in words. You just have to do it. I am sure that I am barely scratching the surface about the compelling power of Aikido. I wish to express my appreciation of Aikido and this wonderful dojo where I have the about the compelling power of Aikido. I wish to express my appreciation of Aikido and this wonderful dojo where I have the opportunity to practice this art, espe-

ially to Sensei, the senior student instructors and fellow students. Although I haven't been able to practice much lately I know that this is the only way I can learn the secrets of Aikido and benefit from its practice. I think Aikido has a lot to offer and gets deeper the more you practice. So although I don't follow the first two recommendations made by the acupuncturist in France, I am happy to say that I still practice Aikido and still love it.



Kenneth Furuya

Aikikai 3rd Dan

Iaido 4th Dan

Cooperation

The past few months we have been focusing on learning to take ukemi well, especially "breakfall" ukemi. One technique that we practice several variations is kotegaeshi. Kotegaeshi is probably the easiest

technique for most people to take a "breakfall" ukemi. The other day while practicing kotegaeshi I was getting frustrated with my practice partner.

I was throwing him about the length of one tatami and he was taking a low to medium-high "breakfall". At times I thought his ukemi was a little low and he was landing very loudly; however, I thought he was turning over well and landing on the correct parts of his body so I continued to throw him in the same manner. Also, I felt that he was experienced enough to take ukemi in that fashion since he has been practicing Aikido for over two years. During the time my practice partner was throwing me I was getting frustrated at the lack of opportunity to take a high "breakfall" and stand up quickly. Since, we were emphasizing not only taking a "breakfall," but, also standing up very quickly and attacking again I felt as if I was wasting my time practicing with this person because he was so uncooperative. It felt as if he would turn kotegaeshi half way, then try and hold me up in the air, and then release his grip long after I have already landed on the mat. Also, the nage when executing kotegaeshi to me felt very clingy and stiff. I'm thinking to myself, "OK, you can let go of me now!" Often when practicing kotegaeshi we will pin our opponent to the ground after the throw so obviously the nage should not release his grip when practicing this particular type of kotegaeshi. However, since we are focusing on studying ukemi, we are not emphasizing the pin. The kotegaeshi that is being demonstrated in practice is a large expansive throw where the uke is taking a high to very-high "breakfall" and he is standing up immediately. When demonstrating the technique, the nage is throwing the uke at least the length of one tatami mat (approximately six feet). Naturally, since we are emphasizing this in practice, this is the ukemi that I was trying to execute. So as I continued to practice with my partner I was getting more frustrated and I could tell that my partner was feeling pretty much the same. Finally, I couldn't take it any more and I blurted out, "Just throw me!" He immediately responded, "You're throwing me; but, you're not helping me." At first I thought this was an odd response. In my opinion it seemed that he was executing "breakfall" ukemi safely and did not really need my help. Still he looked very uncomfortable and actually I have never seen him look that way in practice before so I started to "help" him with his "breakfall". Instead of trying to throw him across the mat I started to hold him up and release my grip a little later. He was not getting much distance; but, he was able to take a much higher "breakfall" and he was landing a

softer. He in turn would “just throw me” and suddenly I was flying across the mat, catching more air, and getting up quickly. Although we did not say anything to each other the remainder of the practice I am sure we were both much happier. He wanted more help from me and I wanted less help from him with ukemi. By cooperating with each other after some initial frustration we were able to both practice well. I am sure we all experience this in practice and will continue to experience this not only in practice but in our lives as well. Coming into a situation with different expectations and not understanding what the other person wants or expects seems to always lead to a dispute. Through mutual effort in practice we can diffuse these confrontations. Now, if I or we could only apply this all the time that would really be something.



James Takata Aikikai 2nd Dan, Iaido 2nd Dan On Etiquette

In our dojo etiquette and manners are emphasized from the first day of practice. There are so many things to learn: “bow every time you come on or off the mat,” “place your shoes neatly at the door facing out or in the shoe rack,” “if your partner is bowing to you from the

floor you must also bow from the floor,” “go to the edge of the mat and turn away to fix your loose belt or uniform,” “don’t practice on O’Sensei’s mat,” the list goes on.

There are good reasons for the close attention to manner and etiquette. It shows respect to aikido, Sensei, the dojo, yourself, and your fellow students. By observing good etiquette, you show your sincerity and spirit and avoid misunderstanding? important when most of your time on the mat is spent simulating and negotiating a violent attack. Today in American society-at-large, there is very little attention to manners, let alone a standard of etiquette for everyone to follow. Just drive one day in LA to observe how people refuse to let others merge or turn, use obscene gestures more often than their turn signal, or park their giant SUV in a compact space. Get out of your car for a moment to have a door swung back in your face as you enter the public space of your choice. Enjoy the cell phone conversations of others in places like the theater or library. It seems that everyone wants respect, but few are willing to give it.

Most of this asinine behavior is simply selfishness. Perhaps it is the anonymity that we have in a big city that makes people feel that they can mistreat others. After all you’ll never see the person again, and they don’t know your name to give you a bad reputation. To be generous, written rules of cell phone etiquette have only emerged in the past few years. However, do you really need to be told that talking on the phone during a movie or at a restaurant is rude? No, it’s common sense, and common courtesy. This kind of behavior has negative results. People get irritated and insulted. They get angry. Sometimes they get violent. Road rage is a common enough phenomenon to have a name. Where simple manners would have sufficed, we end up with grief, and lose our humanity in the process. In the dojo, many of the rules of etiquette can be experienced and integrated without explicit instruction. There is no rule book per se, but by using simple common sense and courtesy many things will come naturally. Perhaps if we could expand this notion outside of the dojo, we could have a more harmonious and dignified society.

Olga Mihailova continued:

We didn’t throw and fall but tried all sorts of movements, irimi and tenkan on the sand. This was not easy but challenging and the mistakes were seen so clearly. Maybe because there was no throw and no chance “to make the technique anyway”. Or maybe it was because we didn’t have the dojo and tatami and shomen – ha-ha, we looked much less gracious when tried to accomplish the natural movements being surrounded by the most real nature, by the blue sky, sun light, the sea and the forest.

And then the surrounding picture got its center – quite far in the sea we saw a green spot that was being brought from Kesteriems further and further. The green spot looked like an air-soft swimming toy with no one on it. We looked to the Kesteriems side. The fuss was beginning there, people were gathering, the ambulance had driven onto the beach. We were too far to see what happened but somehow it didn’t look like saving. “If it is someone from the camp, there will be troubles”, someone said.

That was not from the camp. We knew it when finished the practice and went to the dinner. Near the ambulance the elderly woman was sitting wrapped in her towel. Two other women were sitting near her embracing and crying. She was not crying. She was constantly swinging back and forward with a stiff frozen face. “Mummy knows it is over”, Linda said in a dead voice. We watched the beach. Everyone seemed to know. We were said that a 7 years old village boy had sunk. Because of the great coast’s wind that was blowing that day. Two young men, tall and strong, with great lean muscles, shaking and trembling, told us they tried to save the boy. He was swimming with this woman on his toy and the wind brought them too far away. She left him there saying to hold on and swam to the coast to ask for help. The guys plunged into the sea immediately but due to the wind they were swimming very slowly. The boy was very much afraid and when he saw the men swimming to him he jumped into the water and swam to them. It was too far yet, some thirty meters – impossibly far for a little kid. He sank in few moments. The guys dived and dived but they couldn’t find him. Then they swam back. It was very hard in that terrible wind that made the sea to look so calm but in fact turned it into the trap. They were shaking all the time while talking to us. The story itself sounded cold and exhausted.

We went away talking about the coast’s wind. It didn’t seem to be so dangerous when we entered the forest. It was great in the forest, the heavy hot air was as though hanging all around smelling with the resin, the birds were singing, the feet stepped silently on the soft and warm carpet of the pine needles. Only our words sounded cold. Near our cottage Linda stopped to hang her wet towel on the rope. I stopped too watching. It is wonderful to stand on the grass barefoot feeling the sun all around, to see the forest and the sky and the funny rope full of the colorful towels, to know that it is a summer day and your very much beloved friend near you and you are in the Aiki camp. The acute joy to be alive.

When I was going back to the beach after the dinner few children caught up with me. They asked whether I had heard about the boy who had sunk. Yes, I had. They said the woman was his godmother and wondered how she now tells everything to the boy’s parents. One little girl said she wouldn’t tell at all. Then one of the boys asked me how “sank” is in Latvian. “Noslika”, I said. “Zens noslika”, he pronounced carefully and they ran to the beach. They were eager to see the helicopter and the ships of the Coast Guard. Con’t.

Olga Mihailova continued:

The helicopter was making the rounds over the sea with lots of noise. It disturbed very much: no relaxation, no sleep, no talks. Then it made few rounds over the beach itself. It was so close you could see the pilot's face and the emblems of the Coast Guard on the sleeves of the uniform. "It starts to remind the party", Dzintars said. Then he took the sun-cream from Sandra. I thought it was a good idea and borrowed some oil too – Sandra always has lots of this stuff. "You are always a great surprise for me, folks", Sandra said, "how can you go to the beach without anything?" We laughed and told her that this sun is weak, not like that in the beginning of the July – when we had the children's camp and burnt really badly. There was a slight regret in our voice that the summer was going to its end. Then the helicopter flew away and we fell asleep. Not for long – it was back soon. The evening was about to begin, the sun was shining with a special dark golden light making the sea and the beach to look so calm – but the helicopter was flying searching the body of the sunk boy and the quiet of the sea was not real.

We left the beach and went to the training. We didn't go together, so I was a bit late. The practice was already going on when I entered the dojo. I thought I stepped in the fairy-tale – the dojo was all in the sun light and it seemed that Aikidoka were moving through it as though it was some shining mist. When the sensei would show the technique in the center Uke was falling directly in the sun rays with every single piece of dust seen clearly. When making ukemi you would feel the warmth of tatami with your hand first – just a moment before touching it with the rest of the body. And you would do it many times – the practice was long and intensive. I liked it very much for it suited the whole day ideally. The techniques all required lots of movement, turns and rolls, so by the end of three hours we were all exhausted and sweaty. Even while watching the demonstration in the center you would become more and more sweaty – the sun was shining directly in the back. And both the techniques themselves and the attack (mostly shomen-uchi) suited the day very much – straight and open. I think we were getting the pressure of the day out of us with that sunny training.

It seems now that the day was gone with that training, gone with the sun and heat. It is strange to realize that there was a great amount of different things till the night. We played basketball. I borrowed some money from one of the Aikidoka and paid sensei the rest of the camp's fee. After four days of desperate seeking the batteries for my camera I have got them - one of the guys was in the nearest big town and found them. I remember it so well but it seems that these little events don't belong to that day. It seems that the day training full of sun was followed by the starry night at once.

And the night was starry. The sky is always great here in the end of July and August. If you bother to look up. And you bet we looked up after that day. Though not at once. The night began with the film watching, "Spring, summer, autumn, winter...and spring again" by Kim Ki-Duk. I don't know by now whether the film, a hopeless story of falling and dying with nothing but a little hope in it, was really so good and piercing as it seemed. Maybe it was all due to our mood, or maybe due to the situation – you see things different at two o'clock of night when sitting in the dark little room with fifteen more people. We were not impressed, we were simply emptied. When the film was over some people exchanged few words about it but mostly we were silent. We were sitting in our common room examining the floor or the ceiling, smiling faintly, trying not to break the fragile moment of feeling

together.

It was strange to get out of that room and to realize suddenly that you are not absolutely empty yet. I wanted the training. Yesterday the sensei promised a night training that night. But yesterday no one knew what for the day it will be. And I understood that if he changes his mind – we will lose something wonderful. Now people were so tired that of thirty Aikidoka only six said they want to train. Six samurais, we decided desperately. And we made as desperate campaign to have our training. Sensei didn't want it at the beginning. Linda was talking to him and then asked us whether we will be very much offended if there will be no training. "Oh no, I said, no, how we can be offended with him, no... It is just such a special day and such a special night that it must be special till the very end... And it will be great... And he promised..." I think I looked frick – sleepy and visibly tired, in my dogi at two of night, trying to explain that I want to train till the morning. The rest said that they don't care so much – practice is good but no practice is also good. I think now that we were only two in all the camp who really wanted that training – me and Linda. And I think we just knew that we must not miss it – otherwise how could we persuade half of the camp?

It is one of the dearest memories – the sensei finally coming out of his room in dogi and hakama with the most reserved face possible and asking us, six awaiting students, whether we are really going to train – or will we be sleeping on tatami. He was absolutely serious about the question – sleeping can happen during the night training. We said those who want to sleep are in their beds already. We were all serious – I suppose we all had only as much strength as you need to keep your body straight and your eyes open. No chance for jokes.

But many others, some fifteen, had come to the dojo with us when they knew that there will be the training. While waiting for sensei to open the dojo we were standing outside looking on the sky full of stars. The night was so silent, only the birches near the dojo whispered something. "Your sneakers seem to be so far away now" I said to Elina. "It seems to be a sin to think about them now" she replied and sighed "the whole new life, right?"

Meditation sitting in the round. Various movement exercises. Various breathing exercises. The advanced techniques, some of them never seen before. Kokyu-nage. Interesting variants. Jiyu-waza. Jumbidoso. All together, followed by each other without any visible order. The music played, the candles were burning and the night was black and silent outside the window. The movements, rolls and falls were going on and on and then suddenly you could notice that there are twice less people and twice less candles and white figures are lying on tatami all around in the grey morning twilight. The grey morning light was creeping through the window, the yellow candle light was going away and the sleeping Aikidoka were disappearing too, one by one. Finally no candles left burning, the sky turned blue, the stripes of the clouds became bright pink, showing that the sun has risen, and we were six students left – the same six. And sensei. How strange – though they said they didn't really care they probably wanted that training very much too. And we trained for another hour or so – three pairs in the whole dojo. And then it became clear that the training is over. We stopped. The sensei said we can go to the cottage or we can stay if we wish. "Oh, but the mediation", we asked with Linda in sort of offended surprise. We started with that wonderful meditation in the round and we wanted to finish with it. "You don't understand, the sensei said, this whole training was like meditation." We agreed but we

wanted the sitting meditation in the round anyway. So it was – the short meditation, all the rei and with this the practice was over.

Yet how can you go away at once after five hours like those we had? You can't. We all stayed in the dojo for a little bit yet. I was walking here and there trying to remember everything that surrounded me, the light and the sounds and the feeling, watching Linda switching off the music center, and sempai folding his hakama, and Agita and Elina who were talking and laughing and then suddenly embraced each other and were standing so together. That gave me an idea – a Big Hug. I embraced them too and called Ieva who was standing few meters away to join us. It was Ieva's first camp; she didn't know what was going on. Not letting out the embrace we approached Linda – slowly and silently, trying to look as ominous as possible. And then, all five girls, we turned and walked to another corner of the dojo. The sensei was there checking something on his mobile phone, standing with his back to us, not seeing. We picked up the sempai on half-way too. He chortled about the sudden attack but we hushed and whispered that we have to be silent and invisible if we want to catch the sensei. The sensei turned when we were a meter away. Probably we did look ominous for his eyes opened wide and he made few steps back – but there was a corner! So we caught him. And now being all together we embraced each other really strong and stayed still.

We were standing for a minute or so, silent, staggering a bit, smiling, feeling the warmth, scent and breathe of each other. The dojo was around us, the tatami was under our feet, our Aikidoka were sleeping in the living cottage and we were in the Aikido summer camp. The perfect moment of no time and no thinking, just being. The moment that has passed away and gone yet always stays somewhere: an everlasting instant, full of light and silence. The center of warmth.

I would like to wish you a great New Year! Let it bring you lots of dreams and surprises, light and joy, thoughts white as snow and hottest fire to your heart! Be very happy! Best wishes, Olga



Anatole Savtchenkov
Aikikai 1st Dan
Aikido In Russia & Me

1991 was a year of a really bad crime situation. All changes in the regular life of Russian society made this temporary possible. Common person on the street found himself completely unprotected. The American way of a self-defense, a gun, was unavailable because it was illegal to have a gun in Russia. People were looking for help from martial arts. All kinds of fighting practice were really popular. I was a starving student at that time but I was looking for such help too. I choose Aikido for no particular reason. In fact the only important criteria for me was if this is no fancy dance but a real thing. In Moscow State University I found a group of people who practiced Aikido and joined them [1]. Name of the leader of that team was Kachan. The team had about 100 or more people and was growing every month. The first what we were doing in the beginning was falling, running, walking seiza (I am not quite sure in right spelling), striking shomenuchi, doing any kind of tsuki and a little bit of kokyu-dosa. That sort of beginning impressed me. I was thinking that if the very base looked so strong and fundamental this had to be really something.

Happy New Year 2005
To all our friends all over the
world. Best wishes always!

First year or two falling dominated above everything. We were rolling forth, back, rolling seiza, jumping forth over two, three, four people sitting in a row. We were doing break-falls on mats, even on a hardwood. Now I do not remember a full name of our Japanese teacher (I remember his first name was Namura, 4dan). He was saying, "We can not start until you can safely fall". And we were falling and rolling and jumping.

It was exciting. Now this looks unbelievable but most of the people practiced seven days a week for two hours a day.

In 1992 we got an additional excitement, a pulse to keep learning. We practiced in MSU with Moriteru Uesiba. That days literally every Aikido student from every Aikido team in Moscow were there or at least tried to get on the mat. I remember we had just the same Ikkyo during the class, that's all. Many people expected something unusual and were a little bit disappointed.

Aikido society in Moscow was really big. I am sure now it is strong too but that time I do not remember a single dojo with less than fifty people. Most of them had more than hundred participants and those who practiced very hard sometimes did not have to pay for studying. For students that was important.

I do not think I can tell plenty about modern position of Aikido in Russia. I have not been there for three years. Time travels fast. After all I did not see much. In fact all I saw was practicing in MSU Aikido club for five or more years, the yellow wall with Ueshiba picture and neverending Ikkyo. But maybe this paper will help you understand why and how people in Moscow practice Aikido.

[1] <http://www.aikido-moscow.ru/>



William Allen III
Aikikai 1st Dan
Keep Trying Hard

I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year, with special thanks to the students who attend the 5:15 p.m. classes on Tuesday and Wednesday. It has been my privilege to lead these classes for the past several months, and I hope that the students enjoy the classes and find them

helpful. The students in these classes are, on the whole, doing pretty well, and it is a very remarkable thing to watch these people progress in their training and improve in their techniques. I sincerely hope that in the coming New Year everyone will continue with their Aikido training, and I look forward to seeing ongoing improvement in all of the students.

Aikido seems so hard sometimes that your heart feels like it might break from frustration. From my own small experience, I know that

Bill Allen continued:

if you keep practicing, then understanding will come little by little. At first, it might be a mundane thing, like where your hands are, or which direction you need to face. As time passes, and you keep practicing, your understanding of how the techniques work will get better and better. Sometimes you will be able to articulate and explain what you know to other people, but a lot of the understanding is in your body and spirit and feelings. For most of us, these things exceed our capacity to really explain, so you just have to keep practicing.

In my own case, Aikido doesn't get easier. In fact, I have begun to realize that the feeling of understanding Aikido is often a warning sign that I am about to be clobbered or humiliated yet again. But Aikido continues to change and improve my life in ways that I cannot, and do not care to, fully describe, so I will continue to practice for as long as I can. Again, I hope that everyone will continue to practice and improve throughout the coming year. No matter what it feels like at the moment, the time spent practicing is not wasted.



Kevin Hoffer
3rd Kyu
Why Am I Here

A couple months ago, something hit me. Through the course of my training at the Dojo, I realized I had forgotten why I was practicing Aikido, specifically at this Dojo. That must sound odd, but without realizing it, all sorts of other agendas were playing out in my thoughts, my emotions, even my behaviors I am sure. Although I always wanted the teachers' attention, I hated when someone corrected my technique, because it meant I was not smart enough to catch it. More importantly, they might not know I am smart. I hated when someone pointed out I forgot to bow because that meant they did not know I was paying attention. If I were paying attention, I would not have forgotten, right? Because without knowing it, I had found a need for them to know I was smart. I was afraid they thought I did not understand, but I had to show them I understood. But why did this bother me so much?

I once heard from a friend that if someone called her a cat, she would think "That person is funny because I am not a cat." But if they called her stupid or ugly, she would assume they must be right and had found out her secret.

I have found the same thing to be true of my frustration with others on the mat. Everyone is unique, and as such, they practice their Aikido differently. Although less and less, I sometimes get very frustrated or annoyed with a behavior in another while practicing with them, or even when seeing them practice with others. And every time I have checked in myself to see if I do that behavior myself, to some degree or another I have. Sometimes more than they. There is so much behavior on the mat, even with our highest discipline, that varies from one person to the next, yet I would fixate on certain behaviors or people, thinking I had found what they were doing wrong. And, of course, for a short time, that made me feel better than them. If I were concerned with being better than others in my martial arts practice, then I am practicing the wrong art. I have always had a knee-jerk response of "I know" to explanations of any kind.

Without even being aware of it, I always said "I know." But if a teacher explains something to me, I must be showing to them that I do NOT know. Otherwise, why would they waste their time just to berate me and my little universe? And I have learned so physically through Aikido (and through my acting) that I can "know" in the intellectual sense all I want, I can explain to others that I "know," I can fool myself into thinking I am ready for the next step of knowledge. But unless I am "living" that knowledge, in my body and my heart and my actions, who cares what my brain has to say about it. I heard once, and repeated a few times that love must be an action, not an idea. Thinking about love does not warm my heart, but experiencing love does. Thinking about what I should do on the mat does not seem to improve my Aikido, practicing it does. Thinking about what I portray to others does not describe who I am, being who I am does.



Michael Vance
Aikikai 1st Dan
Iaido 2nd Dan
Rank & Responsibility

Greetings to all the branch dojos and students throughout the world! I hope this year ends well for you and the next begins even better. video games industry, they often say that they wish they had

my job--perhaps they think that I spend all day sitting around playing games, and wouldn't that be great. Of course, it's not like that at all. We work very, very long hours, sometimes months of 60-80 hour weeks, in order to get games done. I often gain ten pounds from all the junk take-out food we eat--not very glamorous, and probably quite far from what people think working on games is like.

In a similar vein, the other day my friend asked me what I was doing with my spare time outside of taking care of the new baby. I told him I was going to the dojo when I can, on the weekends. "You must be pretty high up by now?" he asked. I'm sure we all get funny comments like this from time to time, and consequently think about all the things that make us deficient in our practice in one way or another: not going to class as much as we should, not nearly skilled enough compared to the senior students, etc.

It also struck me how different my experience of our practice is from what is popular perception. I think most people imagine our practice as the training we do on the mats and the consequent achievement of rank--rank being this nebulous mark of accomplishment, a gold star. But the first thing that comes into my mind when thinking about practice is responsibility. This responsibility of course takes many forms, from something as seemingly simple as cleaning the dojo after practice or assisting Sensei, to the difficult job of helping beginning students learn the basics, and eventually teaching class.

When I was a beginning student I, too, imagined rank as a sort of carefree freedom of being accomplished. Of course we learn that this is not the case, in fact it is the exact opposite. As we progress in rank our responsibility grows, and to me this is the most daunting aspect of our practice, trying to meet the obligation we incur through our training. The reality may not meet the expectation, but that is hardly a bad thing, it is just the way things are.

Kawachi No Kami Nagakuni & Miyamoto Musashi

I recently came across this sword. Tracing its antecedents, This Nagakuni blade was first uncovered in the mid-1950's by a well-known collector and connoisseur in Tokyo. It was then referenced to in 1961 in the definitive Nihon Toko Jiten, published in 1961 by Fujishiro Matsuo. In 1963, it was again referenced in a book, entitled, "Tsuba" by Shibata Mitsuo, in regards to a study of a famous "Namazu-Hyotan (Catfish & Gourd Design)" tsuba made by Miyamoto Musashi. Soon after, in the mid-60's, it was then taken into the hands of another well-known collector and has been shut away for more than four decades. Several years ago in 1998, the owner passed away and as certain pieces of the estate were being liquidated, the sword was introduced to me.

By this time, the particular sword was largely forgotten. This is not a well-known or highly rated sword, examples of his work are very rare.. This is a little known sword by a little known sword maker. What is of interest is the fact that Nagakuni had met the great swordsman Miyamoto Musashi and became his student and friend and befriended Musashi's successor to the Nito Ichi Ryu or Two-Sword School of swordsmanship. Nagakuni was 13 year old at the time, Musashi was in his later years, just before his passing..

Description:

Signature: Omote: Kawachi (no) Kami Nagakuni.

Ura: Tenwa San Mizunoto-I. Ou Musho Ju Jisho Goshin. Murakami Uji Masao.

Translation. Front: Kawachi no Kami Nagakuni.

Back: 1683. Quote from the Diamond Sutra, a Buddhist Classic: (Made for) Mr. Masao Murakami.

Blade: Length: 32.76 inches. Sori: 0.71 inches. Width at hamachi: 1.18 inches. Thickness at hamachi: 0.30 inches.

Very long shinogi zukuri blade with ko-kissaki. Iori-mune. Jitetsu: mokume combined with masam, with strong pronounced masame in the shinogi-ji. Hamon: ko-gunome with notare feeling. Boshi turns back deeply.

Nagakuni was born in 1633 in Echizen Province and studied under Higo No Kami Yoshitsugu of the Hojoji Kunimasa School in Edo. He moved to Higo in his early years where he spent most of his life forging swords, although he travelled to various other provinces in his lifetime.

There is a local legend in Higo (Kumamoto), that Nagakuni wanted to test the sharpness of his sword and went out one night to find a victim. By the some chance, he met the famous swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi. There was no duel and no swords were drawn but it is said that Nagakuni prostrated himself before Musashi and immediately became his student.

Although there are many stories about what sword Musashi used during his life, like many aspects of Musashi's life, there are no accurate records to make good account. What makes this problem more difficult is that much of his life has been overshadowed and dramatized by many legends which surround this popular historical figure as well as the popular novel, Miyamoto Musashi, by Yoshikawa Eiji, not to

mention the more than three dozen movies and tv dramas about Musashi which followed in the golden age of samurai "chambara" films in the 1950's to the 90's.

In Musashi's early days, he most probably used a Izumi no Kami Kaneshige. He introduced Kaneshige to the Todo Clan where Kaneshige became their official swordsmith, later in his life, Kaneshige became the teacher of Nagasone Kotetsu.

There is one wakizashi by Nagakuni with the "shoji-mei" or owner's name of Shinmen Musashi no suke shoji, in the collection of the late Dr. Kajo Suzuki, former Managing Director of NBTHK. There is another record of a longer sword by Nagakuni with the same inscription published in the Token To Rekishi. It has been long conjectured that this blade was owned and used by Musashi. In recent research, however, it is now believed that Musashi-no-suke refers to one of Musashi's adopted sons or close relative.

This particular blade by Nagakuni is one of the longest recorded to date. It was made about 38 years after the death of Musashi for Murakami Masao, in his later years. Through this blade, we confirm that Murakami Masao was a student and adopted son of Musashi and later established the first Niten Ichi Ryu school of swordsmanship succeeding Miyamoto Musashi. The school was established in Kumamoto under the sponsorship of the Hosokawa Clan.

Masao inscribed on the blade is the same "Masao" inscribed on the Catfish-Gourd tsuba by Musashi. It is now believed that the tsuba was presented to Masao by Musashi. The name was probably inscribed on the tsuba as well as the blade by Nagakuni. With the additional inscription of "Murakami shi" (Mr. Murakami) we know specifically who Masao was and he is confirmed in various documents of the time.

The Catfish-Gourd design favored by Musashi alludes to the story of Ikkyu, the Zen priest. When asked, "What is the essence of Zen," Ikkyu waded into the middle of a lake and began to scoop the water with a small gourd dipper. The surprised inquirer asked, "What are you doing?" Ikkyu replied, "I am trying to catch a catfish with his gourd dipper."

"That is impossible!" replied the astonished young priest. "That's right!" replied Ikkyu, "It is impossible!" (to catch the essence of Zen.) The elusive catfish has always been a symbol of the essence of martial arts, because it is so hard to catch

The additional inscription of "Ou Musho Ju Jisho Goshin" is a quote from the Diamond Sutra in Buddhism and can be loosely translated as, "Do not allow your mind to abide in anyone place (allow your mind to move freely)."

Coincidentally, this is the same quote in Takuan's letter to Yagyu Tajima no Kami, entitled the "Chishin Fudo Myoo Roku" (Record of Immoveable Wisdom), discussing swordsmanship and the state of mind one must achieve to perfect his art.

This quote placed along with the Musashi tsuba also signed Masao, illustrate the strong influence of Zen in swordsmanship at the time. One might conjecture of the possibility that Musashi may have met Takuan at some point or have had context with the Yagyu family. Until now, it has only been part of his legend and story.

Kawachi No Kami Nagakuni Sword



Rare original tachi koshi-
rae made at the time of the
blade's manufacture.
Worn in the belt in uchi-
gatana style with the edge
downwards.

Iron fittings made by Jingo
artists. Tsuba is six lobed
in yamagane with strong
surfaces hammering.
From the tagane on the
nakago-ana, there is a
strong influence of Hikoza
style. The tsuka and saya
are wrapped with lac-
quered horse-hide over
polished same ray skin.
Made for actual battle.

Japan's Schools Get Harsh Lesson As Grades Slip

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Rote Drills Make Comeback As "Loose Education" Flops: Parents Hail Mr. Kageyama.

By Martin Fackler

Onomichi, Japan - For years, Japanese schools have been struggling to overcome the criticism that they churned out apathetic, fact-regurgitating robots. So why is Japan's most popular elementary-school principal preaching an extra-strict regimen of drills and rote memorization?

"Cramming facts is good for students," says Hideo Kageyama, head of the Tsuchido Elementary School in western Japan. "It energizes the brain, just like booting up a PC.

In a typical fifth-grade class at Mr. Kageyama's school in this ship-building port, the children began a recent day at their desks, pencils poised over sheets of paper. On cue, they began furiously scribbling, racing to write long-division tables from memory as a teacher timed them with a stopwatch. Once finished, they jumped to attention and started reciting 19th-century Japanese poems over and over, each time more quickly than the last. Still standing ramrod straight, they switched to English, shouting in unison sentences like, "I'm good at P.E." and "Do you like fried chicken?"

The highly regimented classes are extreme even by the standards of Japan's famously rigorous schools, and they've drawn harsh criticism from government educators. But Mr. Kageyama has become a national celebrity in Japan as part of a backlash against recent education reforms that many here blame for causing a worrisome trend: declining standardized test scores.

The controversy surrounding Mr. Kageyama underscores how Japan's national education system, one of the most widely admired public school systems in the world, is struggling to serve a new purpose. For decades after World War II, when big companies dominated Japan's economy, schools needed to churn out diligent corporate soldiers. The powerful Education Ministry imposed a national curriculum so uniform that classrooms across the country studied the same pages of the same textbooks on the same day. Class work consisted of cramming facts and memorization. The system worked so well that Japanese children regularly outshone Americans on standardized tests.

But in the 1990's, as market reforms and deregulation made once mighty Japan Inc. crumble, the government decided Japan needed more opinionated types who can succeed by thinking for themselves and being more entrepreneurial.

"Japan didn't pay much attention to individuality before, but competing in the global economy means Japan must teach students individuality and creativity," says Kazuo Ishizaka, a former Education Ministry official who is now dean of international studies at Gifu Shotoku Gakuen University in Japan.

The Education Ministry adopted what it calls yutori kyoiku, or "loose education," a U.S.-inspired overhaul of its education system that reduced workloads. The aim was to make Japanese children more

by cutting the number of facts they had to memorize and freeing up more time for critical thinking. The ministry slashed class workloads, cut the length of textbooks by 30% and gave kids Saturdays off. Educators also replaced traditional lecture-style instruction with out-of-class projects that emphasize analytical skills, such as visiting local merchants to write reports about business.

But at the same time, Japan's performance on international tests began to slip. Its students, who a decade ago consistently claimed the top spot in subjects ranging from science to reading comprehension, were now falling behind countries like South Korea and Singapore.

Now, a growing number of critics are starting to call "loose education" a failure. Across Japan, teachers and parents are rebelling against the new freedoms, blasting them for making students dumber, threatening Japan's competitiveness, blunting its work ethic and even contributing to a rise in youth crime. The criticism is sounding a sour note at a time when many Japanese have turned cautiously optimistic about the nation's prospects. With the world's second-largest economy finally starting to emerge from a decade-long slump, employment figures, wages and the nemesis of a runaway deflation appear to many Japanese to be trending in the right direction.

Not education, however, and the result is a swing back toward the old ways. Dozens of public school districts across Japan, including entire cities like Sapporo and Fukuoka, are resisting the "loose education" standards. They're readopting lecture classes, hiring back retired teachers as tutors and even creating their own stricter sets of standards. That's a radical step in Japan, where the Education Ministry has long imposed uniform national standards. Richer families are moving their children to private schools, threatening the cherished egalitarianism in Japan. The reactions has forced the Education Ministry to back-pedal. This year, it rushed out thicker new textbooks restoring most of the cuts it made in 2002.

The turmoil comes at a time when U.S. schools are trying to look more like Japan's old educational system. Not only are American school districts talking about lengthening school days or years, but President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind law has increased spending on teaching basic skills and imposed national standards for school performance.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Kageyama emerged on the national stage in Japan with a simple message: Rote-intensive learning works. He seems to back it up with results. Last year, before Mr. Kageyama took over Tsuchido Elementary, the school scored close to average in a national test of reading and math skills, or about 50 on a scale of 1 to 100. This January, the scores jumped nine points, to well above average.

Such success has led the Japanese press to proclaim his teaching approach - which he immodestly dubbed the Kageyama Method - a "miracle," helping to make him one of the best-known teachers in Japan. Auditoriums fill to hear him speak, teachers from all over the country gather to observe his classes and his 15 books - titles like "The Real Way to Improve Academic performance" - have sold four million copies.

"Many in Japan thought that the direction of educational reform was wrong, but they hadn't spoke out," says Mr. Kageyama.

The 46-year-old Mr. Kageyama, a short, energetic man with a boyish smile who ran an after-school day-care program before being hired as an elementary teacher, says he first felt dissatisfied with the ministry-mandated teaching styles in the late 1980's, before the reforms were in full force.

He found the answer one day in a used book store, where he stumbled upon a history of medieval Buddhist temple schools once common centuries ago to teach children of samurai and wealthy merchants. The descriptions of students competing to solve equations on the abacus and reciting lessons under the eyes of switch-carrying monks represented the focus on basic skills that Mr. Kageyama felt modern Japanese schools had lost.

This inspired him to develop a similar method - with a few modern twists like stopwatches, English and no switches. When he first began to make students do recitation and math drills, parents immediately complained about his unorthodox methods. But on Parents Day, Mr. Kageyama asked parents to compete against the students in writing out multiplication tables. The slowest child finished before the fastest adult. "Parents couldn't believe it. After that, they were firmly behind me," Mr. Kageyama says.

Meanwhile, he quietly monitored the progress of his first batch of drill-method students, an unusually large number of whom won acceptance to top universities. Of his 50 students, 10 were accepted into Japan's rigorous national universities, about twice the average acceptance rate, he says.

He also claims his drills do more than just improve test scores, but even make children more creative and analytical. The drills, he says, serve as mental calisthenics that strengthen the brain and build self-confidence, helping children to voice opinions and explore new ideas - exactly what the Education Ministry hoped to accomplish with its reforms. "I share the same goal. . . .but achieve it in an entirely different way," Mr. Kageyama says.

Education Ministry officials disagree, saying rote memorization and cramming can't possibly lead to independent thought. In fact, they say, the old teaching styles have actually hurt Japan's competitiveness because Japanese lose interest in learning after leaving school.

Officials point to surveys the ministry conducted in 1999 and 2000 showing that while Japanese students routinely outscore U.S. students on international science tests, U.S. adults are more knowledgeable on science than Japanese adults - proof, they say, that Americans maintain a lifelong curiosity for learning. But they admit they can't stop rebels like Mr. Kageyama because the reforms also decentralized ministry control.

"I don't like what Mr. Kageyama's doing, but it is now the school's choice," says Ken Terawaki, a former ministry official who helped engineer the reforms.

At Tsuchido Elementary, on a hillside overlooking blue-collar Onomichi's busy shipyards, the first hour of every morning is devoted to the drills. The rest of the day is spent on more standard, textbook-based lessons to begin the long process of preparing students for Japan's demanding entrance exams,

Parents at Tsuchido Elementary generally express support of Mr.

Kageyama, saying their children have become more self-assertive and confident since he took over as principal two years ago. Shizuna Hiramatsu, a former kindergarten teacher who moved to Onomichi from suburban Tokyo in March, says she's seen a remarkable change in her 12-year-old daughter, Asako. Before the move, her daughter seemed passive and uninterested in conversation. Now, she says Asako has become more out-spoken in school, campaigning to get a classmate on the student council, joining the Japanese taiko drum club and even shouting out answers during her most dreaded subject, math.

"The drills help me concentrate and remember things," Asako says.

But Ms. Hiramatsu isn't entirely satisfied with Mr. Kageyama's method. For instance, she wonders why Tsuchido Elementary doesn't teach more advanced thinking skills by adding activities like debating. "There's no debating time now," she says, "memorizing is important, but it's not enough."

Mr. Kageyama, standing next to her, is quick to respond. "We'll be adding debate time soon," he says, "But children have to have a firm grasp of the basics before they can start debating."

Article submitted by Andrew Maria, Iaido 3rd Dan.

Random Conversations & Thoughts On Aikido In The Modern World:

In October, Isoyama Hiroshi Sensei of Hombu Dojo came to visit our Dojo. Although I have seen his Aikido on several occasions in the past and have met him several times in the past very briefly, this is the first time that I was able to meet him formally and we sat down for a brief chat which came to last several hours. I found Isoyama Sensei to be a very bright, clear thinking and wise teacher whom I hope to have more contact with and learn much more from him. He made several points during our first meeting which caused me to think deeply about a few points that have been stirring in my mind for several years now. These are just my own impressions and thoughts.

I think that Sensei was a little surprised but pleased to see such a traditionally Japanese style dojo in a tiny alley in Little Tokyo. He is one of the older generation of Japanese teachers whom I thought are very Japanese in their outlook, but Isoyama Sensei made the point that Aikido is at the stage of becoming such a strongly "international" art and that perhaps our outlook should adjust to meet the needs of many non-Japanese students and those students who are not interested in the uniquely "Japanese aspects" of the art. I notice on the internet that some even want to do away with the hakama as an inconvenient, expensive and unnecessary part of the uniform. I don't know if the internet is a good measure of people's attitudes and feelings but I think enough people participate in it to take notice of what is posted. Although uniquely Japanese, I thought many people enjoy the hakama as part of the uniform and a notable symbol of Aikido as a traditional martial art. It is issues such as these which may need more attention and consideration in the future.

Inexplicable Japanese culture and customs can be a daunting challenge for many people to understand when all their efforts are into trying to comprehend the mysteries of Aikido. How much is Aikido intertwined with Japanese culture? We see Aikido in light of O'Sensei and then again how we view it in this modern world.

Con't.

Continued: Although chronologically, Aikido can be considered a “modern” martial art on the historical timeline, its form, practice and ideology are very much rooted in the traditional and ancient culture and wisdom of the martial arts. I think this is hard for many people to appreciate. Isoyama Sensei pointed out that in early Aikido, training was extremely tough and demanding. This concept doesn’t fit into our modern age when students have less time and effort to devote to the art. Aikido today cannot make such demands perhaps and must be packaged in a form more compatible and easily digestible for people today.

In early Aikido, we listened to O’Sensei’s teaching but these were very difficult to comprehend their profound message. Today, the message of Aikido was made more clear and more easily accessible to people today.

Finally, there are some aspects of Aikido, we might think, that are “too Japanese” for students of other countries to comprehend? This is quite possible. Old traditional Japanese ideas of “undying loyalty,” and “absolute unquestioned authority” are feudalistic Samurai ethics that may not have a place in modern minds and attitude today.

Today, we don’t want to pursue something “without end” and “takes a entire lifetime or two.” We are in a quick-paced age moving as a cybernetic pace of “instant gratification” and “easy, quick answers” to everything.

These three general aspects of “traditional” Aikido must be thought out very clearly as Aikido continues to grow all around the world and into the future. At the same times, there are many aspects of early Aikido which may prove to be invaluable tools for today’s modern living.. Aikido’s profound respect for the value of life. It’s emphasis on the spiritual aspects of training as well as its physical demand of practice.

As you can see that Japan is a small tiny island with only about 15% of arable land. It lacks many natural resources so from ancient history, it has always been a poor country. Japanese has always geared itself to adapt cleverly to this, and makes use of its meager products in the best way. There is here the philosophy of making use of very little and taking care of what we do have - this has come down to us in Japanese thought as “caring for and appreciating the value of all things,” a worthy and valid ideology in a time of plenty and careless waste and a growing egoism which diminishes our responsibility to respect all living things.

Question To Readers: Should Aikido be Westernized or Americanized?

11-04-04: This may sound a little ultra-orthodox, but the most westernization I’d like to see in Aikido is to allow westerners to participate. Part of the appeal of Aikido is the immersion in Japanese Culture. The teachings, the techniques, everything should be kept the way it is.

Too much of the world is becoming westernized, or “modernized.” Indigenous cultures around the world are disappearing, and with them goes the last bits of protohistorical knowledge. Preservation of cultures and their respective knowledge is essential to our coming together as a species with understanding. Changing something just to change it and make it new and fancy is westernization. Western cul-

ture has made people consumers of novelty and quantity, and not consumers of quality.

If, through training beyond our teachers, and their teachers, we discover a more effective way or technique, then, and only then, should something be changed. This takes decades of training, and study. Aikido should not change with the phases of the moon, nor the ebb and flow of the tide.

How can we modernize a tree? By cutting it down, we could make it into all sorts of things, but then we’d be destroying the tree, and it would cease being a tree and we end up calling it a table, or desk, or paper, or whatever we want to call it as creators/destroyers. Sorry for the gut reaction, but this went straight to the core. S. S.

11-04-04: It seems to me that these days to westernize or modernize something basically results in making it more marketable for the masses, more commercial. Although I know this isn’t what is necessarily meant by modernization, it does seem to happen as foreign practices become more diluted with our ideals. Also, things may tend to become custom-made or tailored for the individual’s whims and desires. Whereas many Asian communities have a different concept of themselves as they relate to the rest of society or to the family, Westerners seem to have more of a view that they are set apart from society and more of an individual than part of the whole. The idea that a person is part of a whole, whether its family, society, or universe, which is more predominant and built in from birth in many Asian countries, is essential to understanding things like blending and and non-violence in general.

Aikido, as one of the most recent forms of budo, is, in my opinion, very modern indeed. Perhaps it is the westerners who need to blend with the ideals within aikido that they find conflicting with their outlook rather than the art form itself. Once hybridization occurs, the original is sure to be compromised. It is a wonderful experience to walk into the aikido dojo and feel as if you are in a different time, whereas many other dojos don’t have much more of a different look or feel than the storefront or fast food joint that might be next to it. Anyways, my \$.02. Hope all is well. Warm Regards, B. D.

11-04-04: I prefer Aikido not to be particularly modernized or Westernized at all. One of the things that is very interesting to me about Aikido is the culture it comes from and the many nuances that go along with it. I think Aikido would lose something if people tried to take it out of its context. These daily messages and topics are very helpful to me, as I know very very little about Aikido and Japanese culture in general. It is all very interesting to me. Thanks! -Paul Major

11-04-04: My first automatic respond was “none !”. Then after thinking a bit I came up with this: The only thing I can think about is that Sensei(s) all over the world should be more aware of healthy practice. I see too many people damage their body at the dojo. Too many instructors do not have even basic knowledge in sport medicine, first aid and resuscitation, correct warm-up and correct gradual practice and other elements that create healthy practice for all ages. I see people damage their back because they were taught Ukemi in a wrong way, I see people damage their shoulders because they don’t learn how to roll correctly. I see people apply techniques in a dangerous way and sometimes injuring other people not because of bad intention but because their instructor did not pay enough attention to healthy practice. Ze’ev Erlich, Israel Aikikan

Letters & Correspondence:

10-27-04: From Latvia: Autumn: Good day, Sensei! The days here became rainy. It was a warm and sunny September but now it is always wet and cool. It seems the rain never ends even if there was no rain for days. As though it is here, in the air, all the time, only changing faces.

Sometimes it becomes the mist or the fog. In the mornings there is usually a mist, even if it is thick it looks feeble and pale and disappears quickly. But the evenings hide in the fog, wet and heavy, creeping everywhere. There is no sky then, only the ground, the trees and the fog. The branches of the trees disappear in it looking for the sun or stars and not finding. Street lamps are giving a bit of the yellow and heavy light, it has no strength to get through so it stays around the lamp not daring to go away.

But happens that the sun returns, the autumn smiles and the sky is again where it should be. But it is not like the summer's sky. This one is light blue, transparent and so high, so very high that it is hard to look up. It seems to be clean, pure, shining and indifferent to what goes above. There is almost nothing left of the year, why should the sky bother. Now it can have a bit of time for itself. Before the winter comes.

If you are the one who looks up from time to time you may be lucky to see the birds flying away. A word of good-bye written on the eternal piece of paper. In Russian the word for "to fly" is "letat'" and the word for "summer" is "leto". I always liked to think that saying about the birds that they "uleteli" we mean that they have taken away the summer.

The mornings are dark and cold and wet. Every single morning. The autumn morning is not thought for people to mess around. The wet and dirty golden leaves are covering all the roads and shining in the street lights they look very much by themselves, as though they don't belong to our world anymore and just stay here still for a short while. Due to their own golden reasons.

It is going to be very silent and empty in few weeks. Every single piece of the summer will go away. Everything will be ready for the winter. But the winter won't come at once. The winter always waits a bit. Snow and frost is not yet a winter. When the winter comes the nature will close her eyes and go to sleep. You will be wandering around the white beautiful lands feeling the dreams the nature sees in her winter sleep. But not yet. Now it is the time for emptiness and silence. Olga.

10-28-04: Concentration & Control: Good day to all! Sensei, I have sort of a question to you. I hope my attempts to explain it will make any sense for I don't really understand what is the problem.

I had a sudden confusion last training. We were doing jodan-tsuki ikkyo. Usually when we have some tsuki/uchi attack sensei would emphasize very much that the strike should be real and get through, not just reach the partner or stop half-way only because the partner started to do the technique. When he takes some Uke in the center he would check the quality of attack by just standing there without doing anything. If the strike of Uke actually goes that far that he has to turn aside to avoid it then he is satisfied. I was in the center yesterday once, so I had to make that jodan-tsuki and as usual after few ikkyos he suddenly didn't move anywhere. My tsuki was all right, it

hit beyond his head. It was only that moment when I realized that I was making it without bothering whether he turns aside or not. If he didn't I would hit quite strong. I didn't think about it at all, I just made as good and real tsuki as I only could.

Now I can't understand one thing. If I just hit then I have a good strike but apparently no control. If I watch how my partner reacts and moves so that to be able to stop the strike if he doesn't react (happens during the practice, especially when the technique is new) - then I don't have such a strong and concentrated strike and I have to make a special effort to finish it when a partner starts to make a technique. How would I get both the concentration and control together? And is it really something I have to do or the problem is something different? I don't know. It is just that yesterday thinking about it I remembered some old amazing stories of the sword masters and mastery of control. It seemed to be easy when I was reading about it. Now I can't even understand the sense of it.

10-29-04: Balance: Hello Sensei, This is a question about a different kind of balance in practice, but, at the same time, it's closely related to the balance you are discussing.

I have noticed something in the past few months, and I'm not sure what's really going on. It used to be the case that I found it difficult, or at least strenuous, to throw people. Lately, it seems that, with many people, I barely do anything, and they fall down, or get thrown. This isn't true with every technique, of course. Though I would like to believe that it's advancement in Aikido that is behind this phenomenon, I rather think that some people are not really trying very hard to maintain their own equilibrium, and are just falling down to be polite. With the advanced students, I can clearly feel that they are in control of their own motion, and so I have no question about what they are trying to do. With the less advanced students, I'm not sure if they are really as off balance as they feel, or if they are trying to go with the technique, or if they are just falling down because that's what's supposed to happen. --Best Regards, --Bill

10-31-04: Very First Halloween:



Cyan and Mrs. Danielle (Steve) Shaw in Littleton, Colorado.

11-01-04: Inner Peace??? Dr. Phil proclaimed "The way to achieve inner peace is to finish all the things you've started." So I looked around my house to see all the things I started and hadn't finished, so, before leaving the house this morning, I finished off a bottle of Merlot, a bottle of White Zinfandel, a bottle of Bailey's, a bottle of

Inner Peace continued: package of Oreos, the remainder of both Prozac and Valium prescriptions, the rest of the cheesecake, some saltines and a box of chocolates. You have no idea how freaking good I feel!! Please pass this on to those you feel are in need of inner peace. Submitted in fun by Dr. Helen Hsu. Oakland, CA.

11-04-04: Why Zen? Sensei, Why did Zen Buddhism become the cultural force that it did in Japan? What I mean is, the Japanese scholars who travelled to China, and then returned to Japan, brought back more than just Zen. I know that Confucian doctrine certainly plays a large role in the development of Asian - including Japanese - culture, and I assume that other schools of Buddhism were introduced from China, as well as Taoism and other philosophies. Why did Buddhism, and Zen in particular, become predominant in Japan? I don't really know how Zen first arose in China, and I don't know if it became as influential in China as it eventually became in Japan. In my own case, I cannot really separate Japanese culture from Zen, and vice-versa. To me they seem inseparable, but this is obviously a fusion that developed over a long, long time.

I actually don't expect answers to these questions on line, but I thought they might be considered as topics for the study class. Also, if you could recommend some reading materials (in English?) as a starting point, that would be very helpful. --Bill Allen

Sensei's Reply: Briefly On Zen: This is just to give you a little info on this topic off the top of my head. I think this question deserves for time and attention which I will devote to a little later as my schedule settles down. I think this question is particularly timely as I have read several items stating that Zen has nothing to do with Japanese culture and especially Japanese martial arts. I do not know how such ideas came about but obviously there is some misunderstanding here.

The exact origins of Zen are obscure. We understand that it is the "meditative" aspect of many schools of Buddhism, but not a separate school in itself in the early days. According to tradition, Bodhidharma, the 27th Patriarch of this meditative sect immigrated to China in 520ad and became the 1st Patriarch of this so-called sect. Meditation aspect of Buddhism in Sanskrit is known as Dhyana or "quiet meditation." In China, this term, dhyana, was transliterated as "Chan," as it is known today. The character used is made up of the radicals broken down to mean "single-robe," referring to a priest. As the Chan Sect was introduced into Japan, "chan" was transliterated as "zen."

Chan was popular in the Tang Dynasty and again in the Sung Dynasty, during high points in Buddhism in China. Buddhism and Taoism, often rivals to Confucianism rose and fell with support and patronage of the current emperor. During the reign of Buddhist emperors, Buddhism flourished, but when emperors embraced Taoism or particularly Confucianism, Buddhist declined. During the later Ching Dynasty, China was under Muslim rule and this particular religion flourished in the country.

The Dhyana sect of Buddhism or meditative aspect of Buddhist came to Japan in the early 7-8th centuries along with esoteric Buddhism such as Tendai and Shingon. It was much later, when Dhyana became a separate sect in Japan as it developed into it's own school in China.

Zen became very popular with the rise of the warrior class in the 11th



Osuna-yaki chawan. Tea bowl with character, "Kotobuki" or "Long Life."

century. The early schools of Buddhism which came into Japan was largely practiced by the court society and like the court, these schools were complex with sophisticated and involved rituals & ceremonies.

The samurai class which suddenly held the reigns of the Japan's government were largely uneducated, unsophisticated warriors who primarily made their living as farmers when not employed by feudal lords to fight in battle. One of the first laws passed by Minamoto Yoritomo, the 1st Shogun, to his troops was to educate yourself immediately. This the origin of the saying, "military arts and education are two wheels of the same cart." This idea of education still exists today as a samurai ethic. Zen appealed more to these warriors because Zen was quite simple, direct and easy for the warriors to grasp. Zen priests who were more travelled were also more broadly educated and this also appealed to the samurai. It was quite easy to sit down with a Zen priest in these days to have a cup of tea and talk - quite different from the long, involved ceremony of the other forms of Buddhism. Also, Zen is one of the schools of Buddhism which all came about at this time, as the warrior class took over - of Buddhism for the masses - the common people - this is also the time of the rise of Jodo-shu and Nichiren-shu, along with Zen, which appealed to the masses of common people and not the imperial court aristocracy.

As the samurai began to educate himself and settle into ruling the land, the samurai also began to create his own culture and society, far different from the "other worldliness" of the court culture. Although the samurai adopted all three of these religions, Zen priests, with the strong contact and education in China, had a greater sense of art and culture than Jodo-shu priest and Nichiren followers so it was a natural evolution that Zen was used to dictate the taste, art, culture and society of the warrior class. . . .

This is so superficial and incomplete, I am ashamed. . . let's talk about this more in coming posts and dialogues - it is much too complex to cover everything in a single essay such as this .

11-04-04: Meaning of Bushido: I've been looking for the exact meaning of the values of the bushido, but I've found almost-equal descriptions everywhere, and they are so brief and, usually, they come from what common people think bushido is. Could you give me a more detailed explanation of the seven codes of the bushido?

Sensei's Reply: There is no set code or exact definition of Bushido. Bushido is a code of ethics for the samurai warrior but these are based on individual "ka-kun" or "family instructions" which were written by the heads of family or clans or feudal lords as "instructions" or "rules to live by" for members of their family and samurai retainers. Each of these codes differ according to the taste of the individual author but they all embody the same general code of ethics of hard work, patience, loyalty, compassion, duty, trust, do not lie, and on and on. These kakun became popular from the 11th century onwards to present times. Some of these are quite short and informal and some

written as a small book of instructions.

In the 18th century, a collection of many stories were compiled known as the Hagakure Bushido and these tell of the heroics and bravery of the Nabeshima Clan lords and their followers. This is in many volumes covering several generation of lords and many of these stories are repeated over and over. Hagakure means "Hidden under the leaves," and the idea was that the ideals of the samurai warrior have been lost or forgotten (at the time) as if buried under the fallen leaves and these stories would restore such ethical values. This was later known as Hagakure Bushido and it is from this work that the term "bushido" came into popular usage. The reference here is to the famous opening lines of the Hagkure:

"Bushido towa shinukoto to mitsuketari. . . ." or "after all, the 'way of the warrior' is the matter of his death."

Bushido here means "do" or "way of" the "bushi" or samurai warrior. During World War II, the term "bushido" was used widely as a propaganda and campaign tool by the Japanese army so it came to have a negative nuance among Japanese after the war and into modern times. The famous author, Mishima Yukio, also wrote his own version of this work entitled, "The Modern Hagakure Bushido," in which he extols old samurai values in modern society and these, by Japanese, form the ultra-right wing ideology of extremism which is also discredited in modern times.

The seven values to which you refer are the traditional Confucian values which is often associated with the ethics of the Samurai as Confucianism was the basis of the educational system of the Samurai warrior and also in Japanese society.

However, in writing these family instructions, the authors borrowed not only from Confucianisms but all sources of wisdom - whatever they valued as ideals for their readership.

Some of these family instructions are very Buddhist or Zen in outlook and some are just very common sense instructions which are not necessarily Confucianist or Buddhist. I was just reading the "kakun" of Goto Shimpei as famous thinker and doctor of Western medicine in the 20th century. He simply wrote: "Do not become reliant on others and do not cause people obligation, act compassionately without any thought of reward."

So Bushido is a very general term which include all ethical teachings which were thought appropriate for the samurai warrior by his superior, feudal lord, or father or any any such figure that held a position of authority and respect. Commonly today, fathers might write this for their children. A teacher might write it for his students. A famous Japanese businessman, similar to a Japanese Carnegie, often wrote such samurai-like "instructions" for his employees and these are published to become popular books on doing better business. These are modern examples of this style of Bushido which began with the education of the samurai warriors. I hope this clears this question up for you. Many thanks.

Sensei's Reply: On Japanese Diet: No one can prove if the Japanese diet is the best, as many people might say, but it is a proven and documented fact the Japanese live longer, on average, than any other people in the world. The average age for a male is 44 years. There are more people over 100 years old in Japan than most

countries so by this fact, many infer that it is because of their diet. Of course, the Japanese diet can be criticized for too much salt and not enough protein. But the Japanese diet focuses on fresh vegetable in season, very little fried or deep fried cooking, and much of the cooking is cooked or stewed in broths or seasonings made from kombu (seaweed) or katsuo, dried bonito fish flakes. Protein comes mainly from soy products such as tofu, eggs and fish. There is very little red meat in the diet. I suspect that there was much less salt and sugar used in the diet in ancient times because sugar and salt was very expensive. Salt was hand processed in a long procedure using sea water. There was no sugar cane in Japan, so sweeteners came from potatoes and other starches.

This type of diet was originally influenced by the dietary recommendations brought over from China by priests. The philosophy of eating was "to nourish the body in order to practice meditation." Another early idea about food was that "food is medicine." In many traditional dishes, we see a lot of root vegetables included - some of these vegetables were used as medicine in the very early days.

Tea, imported into Japan in about the 8th century, was originally drunk a "medicine to promote long life and cure all ills." As a matter of fact, the tea used in the tea ceremony is still ground into a powder as they would do a medicine in the early days. Today, we have finally begun to appreciate the "health" and "medicinal" benefits of green tea. Ume-boshi or dried (cured) plum was also a type of medicine imported into Japan from China around the 8th century as well. Although today it is a food and type of confection, originally was eaten to calm the stomach.

In Japanese cooking, the philosophy is based on the freshness of seasonal vegetables and food and also cleanliness and purity in the preparation. Eating such things as "raw" fish and such, idealizes this philosophy.

These are just bit and pieces about Japanese cuisine. Most likely they way O'Sensei ate in his day and age. . . . Studying Japanese cooking is very interesting because one understands, at the same time, the Japanese view of health and medicine.

If you are interested in this subject, please read the Yojokun, a 18th century classic on Japanese medicine and health. Almost all Japanese of the older generation know something of this book. It is available in English translation. There are many, many books and monthly publications (in Japanese) on Japanese cooking. Cooking shows are still the most popular shows in Japanese television. Health and freshness is always emphasized and taste is always determined by the natural taste of each ingredient.

Today, the Japanese diet is very Westernized. No more miso soup, rice and fish for breakfast but it is not replaced with toast and coffee or bacon and ham and fried eggs.

As a result of the Western diet, Japanese are much bigger, taller and a sturdier people today. Japanese over 6 feet tall is very common nowadays. However, at the same time, heart problems and diabetes is now a major problem in Japan, effecting children from their pre-teens. "Adult," "later life" and "senior" diseases such as heart problems, gout, diabetes, etc which effected Japanese is later life now come at a much earlier age. Several years ago, "adult, later life" diseases had to be renamed as "modern life style" diseases,

11-10-04: From Riga, Latvia, Europe: Dear Sensei, Hello! Hope this finds you in good mood. Thank you very much for the newsletter you have sent me - I have received it today. It is a great job if you do it all yourself and an expensive one too. I really appreciate your care and interest.

Though it was very strange to read my own letters there. Very strange indeed. My dad laughed and said that my articles have been published in the American newspaper. THAT sounded good and funny! But I don't mind if nothing too personal concerning other people gets published. I hope you understand. You once wrote in your daily message that so many people write to you but get angry and frustrated if their messages get published in Internet or otherwise revealed to other people, though they know neither you nor those other. I think many people really use the Internet like a place where you can be totally anonymous and if they suddenly open themselves to someone they certainly don't want the more people to know them. I don't think like that, if your students and other readers of the newsletter like my stories about our Latvian doings - let them read it. . . .

That was very interesting yesterday to return to the training after the illness. I have only missed 9 days but it seemed to be a whole life. Don't really know why, but everything seemed to be different. In a very unpleasant way. I didn't forget anything but the way I was doing it was as though I haven't been training for months. The very last training before the illness I have suddenly managed to make a nice taking of the Uke's hand when doing shomen-uchi nikkyo omote, I was really glad for I could never do it before. Yesterday I couldn't take his hand even trying hard, the fingers just were getting tangled in the uke's fingers. And the same was with all the other techniques and moments an details and everything. What was even worse - I could see lots of mistakes in my partner's work too. That was not good too, because I don't think I have already the level to distinguish the mistakes so easily. But it was out of my control, the thoughts and movements seemed to act on themselves and I was just looking from outside trying to persuade myself to act differently. It was like "I know he tries his best and I must move even if he doesn't do it correctly, we all are the same here --- but he DOESN'T do it correctly, why shall I move, this is NOT the kote-gaeshi, I feel nothing, I don't want to fall if I don't need to, and this is NOT an ikkyo-ura, I won't turn only because I am supposed to --- it is a training, come on - fall, you will do even worse!" and on and on and on, all the training, and we were doing lots of jiyu-waza, so I experienced almost all the techniques I know. With the same poor result. Nearly got my elbow strained (at least!) when a tough guy decided that I have to fall anyway and finished his ikkyo ura in some Aiki-jutsu style, and nearly got my shoulder out of its place when someone else performed a kokyu-nage I have never done before, so it took time to realize that I better fall here - OUCH! I was glad the practice was over at last for I am not sure I would manage to escape the third traumatic accident.

First it all seemed to be very sad. But then, after the training, I have calmed down. I started to analyze the situation and came to think that this is just a lack of talent and nothing more. I have suspected this before, thinking about my rolls which I can't fix however hard I try. They are good enough, easy, light and quick, but wrong. "Don't do the simple front roll, turn aside and make a mae-ukemi", I have heard this so many times, but whatever I try I just can't get this. Even those who train less say that they really look a bit too straight, my rolls. So I thought this is probably a lack of talent, if even those who train less can do it better. But yesterday I have got absolutely sure about this. No talent and not other problem! All the progress comes from the number of training, I train much - average 4 training a week plus weapons. You would become better with anything if you do it all the week. I think if there was some formula for the efficiency of training it would look like number of training x hardiness of work x talent I mean that it all is equally important - how much you train, how hard you train, how talented you are. So, you will

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be great if all three rates are outstanding, you get good if only two are good and you will be quite ordinary if only one point is all right. I am probably something between ordinary and good and no way to become something very good. Like my sensei, for example, you see.

Please don't think I am whimpering. In fact I have never cared about the talent in all the year and a half and I am not going to do it now. I will be good in my own way. We say here that from those who are given much much is demanded. And vice versa. So it is okay as it is. And then I have a very good teacher, so I will progress anyway. I have just remembered this saying from your book, something like "The bad student will only progress under the good teacher, the good student will progress under any teacher". Ha-ha, I feel glad about that ANY teacher I haven't gone to. It would be sad - I would probably go away soon or he would hang himself with a student like myself. In fact it was somehow refreshing to realize one new thing about myself and my practice.

I only became curious how does it feel when you actually are a talented student. How is it to understand quickly, to do good, to see deeper, not to lose the skills in few days and not to be in need of very regular many training to get some remarkable level. If Aikido is a way, then my way probably looks like a forest path in the twilight - you can walk slowly, enjoying yourself and the time and the surrounding beauty. But those with the greater abilities - I thought they might walk as though along the ray of light. Just curiosity. I like both the twilight and the day very much. I don't care what the Universe thinks is more suitable for me. It is okay as it is, indeed. Hope I didn't depress you with my funny thoughts. I just wanted to tell anyone and to see how it really sounds. Have a good day! Olga.

11-11-04: Hello! While walking here and there and doing all sorts of stuff I was thinking about what I wrote you this morning. I have suddenly remembered the situation described in one book. The story was about the adventures of the son of one great actor of No theatre in some 15th century, as far as I remember. The story was fictional but the heroes might be real. The old great actor was called Zaemi Dabutsu, there even were the cites from his book "about the flower of the art" or similar. I think it can be a real person in the history.

The story was about his younger son who was a very ordinary guy, no talents, nothing special at all. The story is full of changes and mystics, I learned much about the Japanese folklore from it. The situation I talk about described the things which this son, Motoyoshi, noticed about his teachers. He was learning the swordsmanship attending some great master, he was learning something like poetry or calligraphy or so, I remember it had something to do with writing, and of course his father was teaching him the art of the actor. Motoyoshi wasn't a talented person. But he was a son of the actor and he saw the nuances of the people behavior. First he saw it in the eyes of the writing teacher, then in the eyes of the sword teacher. He saw how the curiosity appeared first when the teachers met him for the first time. Then, as the practice was going on, he saw the curiosity to get changed with the irritation, then disappointment and finally all the interest was gone from the eyes of the teacher. The book started at the period of life when Motoyoshi saw the first signs of disappointment in his father's eyes and dreaded the day when even the disappointment will be gone.

The story was about different thing but this description was really interesting. First, the author has much to do with the theatre, he has the education connected with the theatre, he writes the plays, he was the actor himself and even a make-up man. Second, he seems to be very educated in what is connected with the Eastern cultures. And then he must know what the teacher feels. He is a Goju-Ryu Karate-Do 3rd Dan and a chief instructor of Harkov's (Ukraine) Goju-Ryu school. A reliable source. Reliable enough.

I wonder is this true. And I am a bit surprised. I remember I liked the description but I thought it has nothing to do with me. I have never been doing seriously the things I could not be really good in. SO if I had no success it was usually because I didn't work at all. But if I work - then everything is always fine. Because actually there are spheres where I am talented enough, I know it and I use it. I quitted football because I could not achieve something good there. It was natural to quit. I like to do things which I can do really good. I had never to learn hard in school to be one of the best. I just was. It in fact is the problem for I don't know how it is to work hard. I could always get everything through the natural abilities. If I couldn't I lost interest. Why spend the time doing something you cannot feel deep. That is why I don't care about such the things. I am not used to care about something I have. That is funny, right? Strange too. I have no idea to

quit Aikido. When my cousin asks whether I still train it sounds as though he asks about other person. Nothing to do with me. So it seems that I am about to face something totally new. Ha-ha, I don't know how it is - to love something you will never be able to do great. I don't care. The love never cares, it loves. So it is fine. But I think I wouldn't like to see the above described emotions in my relationship with my sensei. I wouldn't like this at all. It just does not depend on me. And I know I will never ask him something like this. The stupid pride maybe. So new. That is why I write so much - it is a completely absolutely new thing in my life. I am surprised not worried or angry or offended or anything like that. Surprised. I wish you the more pleasant surprises, Sensei! Best Regards, Olga

LA Times Calendar Section Article:

Photo of dojo appeared in article about martial arts in Southern California.

11-11-04: Sensei, This morning's Times Calendar section has an article on Bukido and in the middle a picture of our dojo during a class and an address listing in the Aikido section. Funny that they would think there is no pain involved! Tom

11-11-04: Hello Sensei, Nice picture in the times today. What was up with that article? Bukido? People will actually pay 1500 hundred bucks for a weekend of ball kicking and eye gouging? kind of depressing if you ask me. See ya soon .J. M

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KODO In Hungary

11-12-04: Publishing KODO in Hungary: Dear Rev. Kensho Furuya, As a Hungarian Publishing Company we are interested to publish your Kodo, Ancient Way book in Hungary. We tried to reach the Ohara Publishing Company who issued it at 1996, but we have not found them. We are committed to develop the martial arts literature in Hungary. Please help us to find the appropriate person with whom we can negotiate the publishing in Hungary. I appreciate your help. Yours sincerely, Robert Cselovszki, managing director, Libruna Publishing Ltd. abrafaxe@mail.tvnet.hu

More From Latvia

11-15-05: More From Olga:"Fire." Dear Sensei! Hello! How are you? Thank you for your Yahoo messages in recent days, those concerning Shojin, mastery etc. I don't know whether this was your intention or not but seems you answered even those questions I was not thinking about first. So thank you very much for your words, sensei. They were encouraging even though I didn't feel discouraged and they really gave lots to think about. I don't know how to tell but it feels like I had two different opinions, equally strong, and the one was what I wrote to you but you answered to the second. If it makes any sense. If you still remember what I talk about. :)

I am sorry I haven't been writing for a while, I had lots of work and an outstanding week-end. The week-end was ideal. In some way. Would you like to hear? Saturday was an extremely long day full of surprises. I had to wake up at 5 a.m. and spent few hours at the computer translating a nice text where 3 words of 4 were medical terms. It was not pleasant . . . I felt somehow easier. Old things just go away. Let them go.

Then I went to the weapons training. That was strange too. We were doing one of the most difficult kumi-tachi on the bokkens and on the jo there were the kumi-jo. So I had lots of stuff to not understand and to get sad about this. But then I remembered those your words about the mastery you wrote in one of the last posts. Those about polishing and polishing once again. Remembering this I stopped to bother so much and I was just doing the technique. But I still have much to work on - the face remained as sad as it was before. :D Finally the Sensei looked on me in the same sad way and asked to smile a bit. I managed to smile. That is better! - he said grinning broadly and we suddenly started to laugh over it. And we laughed so heartily that not a single drop of sadness was left. :)

There is an Independence Day in Latvia on November 18, Thursday. To make the following Friday free so that people could have 4 days free we had to work for that Friday this Saturday. That is why only 10-15 children came to the children training - the rest were in the school. It made me happy - with so few I could stay for kids training too. Usually the Sensei does not allow. So we were two to stay - me and Linda. The training was nice and it was a great pleasure to work with the children - I haven't been doing it since the children camp in the beginning of July. I like the kids training very much, earlier I attended them quite regularly, but when many grown-ups started to do the same the Sensei forbade it. There is no place on tatami for 35 children and 10 more grown-ups. Yet sometimes you can find your chance. Kids are great!

So we trained and there was lots of interesting stuff. In the end of the practice there was a game - a hand-ball. We played for some 10 min-

-utes when an unknown man opened the door and said there is a sauna burning. Saying this in a completely calm voice he was gone. We needed few seconds to realize what he wanted to say - you know usually people who inform you about the fire care whether you heard them or not. :) So the training was over. Sensei said everyone to get out immediately. We, five girls, ran to our dressing room. The corridor was all in the dirty yellow semi-transparent smoke that smelled so nasty. The little girls wanted to change their clothes first but we said them to take everything and get out immediately - right now, while it is still possible. So we ran out in the street through the smoke. There was a slight burning in the eyes after this and a slight cough too. But where are the boys, we wondered. Me and Linda, we ran to the dressing-rooms again - and the smoke was twice busier and darker and the burning in the eyes was twice worse. The boys were changing. Out you go! - we cried collecting their clothes. A bit later I realized how lucky we were to have only 10 boys instead of usual 25-30. Girt came at that same moment and helped us to collect the clothes and get them all out and then ran to the dojo - to close all the cases and the dojo itself - you wouldn't like to lose all the equipment that costs so much. The smoke was getting blacker and blacker and my and Linda's eyes burnt so badly, but we all got out. We looked around - the children seemed all to be here yet there were some untaken yet clothes so we decided to check. We ran to the dressing rooms again, happily there was no one there. Then we ran back but turned to the dojo - to check for sensei but mostly because there was no air at all, only black smoke. We wanted to breathe a bit. There was a ventilation in the dojo and the air was almost perfect. Girt looked on us and cried why are we here and not outside - you see, we both looked so badly - red and crying and breathing heavily and coughing. Then the ventilation and half of light switched off and the black smoke got in the dojo in few moments. Just in time. We took some towels and hankies and ran out. Nothing could be seen in the corridor already, only the black smoke - and there was nothing to breathe with. The corridor is rather short so we could ran by the memory. At least I closed the eyes and counted the steps and stairs.

When we got out we probably looked like some heroes from the films. :) Happily we were not - from what I know the real heroes are often the dead heroes. Though we coughed and coughed and the eyes and the lungs and the throat hurt so badly - it got better after the while. It seems we were lucky not to get some large dose of that smoke. The smoke was so bad that it would be enough with 2 minutes inside there to be dead. The firemen said. I never thought before that there can really be something like that in the simple fire. For it was just the sauna burning and some plastic and rubber inside it - but it felt as though it was some chemical plant. We see today how bad it is in the dojo. We want to wash the dojo today. I hope we'll be able to ventilate it quickly. If there is the electricity in the building. If everything is all right. If the smoke is away already. If... We feel so strange about it. It seemed that finally the dojo is okay, so nice and clean. Now we have got the problem we were not expecting to face at all.

Then we went to the center to have some meals. The sunrise was fantastic. It looked like there was a liquid gold instead of the west horizon. We met Dzintars, sensei's brother, and enjoyed the evening immensely. Together. It was pleasant for us to get someone who could listen to our excited story. We had all sorts of jokes and talks and discussions. This was an ideal evening full of ideal moments and I felt great. I was happy that my friend didn't invite me to the marriage. I would have to go to the event where I know almost no one instead of having such a day and such an evening with the friends I love. Con't.

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Olga continued: When I was younger and dreamed or planned something about my future I could never think of myself being older than 22. Not because I was going to die but I always thought that 22 - it is still me, only grown-up already, but 23 or 35 or 50 - it is all another life. Different life. I don't know why I thought so but I never looked further than 22 - even when I was already 20 or 21. Even at the age of 22 I could not foresee anything that can happen to me a year later. Maybe my previous life finished at this age. So the closer my 23rd birthday was the stranger it felt. As though I suddenly could have a little look inside something that has always been closed for me.

This Saturday was the last day in my life when I was 22. That is why I think it was in some way ideal. Old friends and new friends and the fire and the smoke and the sunrise and the people you love around you. Can it be a better promise for the coming different life? :) Now I am going to see how really different this life is going to be. Olga.



Latvia Aikido Dojo

11-20-04: Questions About Practice: Honorable Sensei, I have recently begun attending classes at ACLA, and after just three I can see that I may not be approaching with the right attitude. I have only taken Aikido once for a very short time, at Aikikai Peru, in Lima, Peru, with Miguel Morales in 2002. In the classes here, I get wrapped up in worry about what foot goes where, which hand on top, which direction to step, until my head is completely full of noise and I don't even realize that I am not relaxed (until a blackbelt mentions it to me). Many of the techniques are techniques that I studied before, but my body doesn't seem to remember anything except how to roll, and poorly, at best.

I hope that it is not impertinent for me to seek your advice on this. I am going to attempt to attend the fundamentals class, as I seem to be very out of harmony with the open beginning classes, which are full mostly of non-beginners. The only problem is my work schedule, which makes it difficult most of the time to reach any class occurring before 6:30. If I can't attend too many fundamentals classes, is it rude for me to attend the open beginning classes, with so little experience? And what mental adjustment can I make, while still being humble, as I know very little, to be able to study confidently?

I certainly agree that relentless study of fundamentals is important and should never be met with any complaint. The same applies in music, and I learned that lesson the hard way. I am also happy to receive correction; I just get frustrated with myself when I can't understand the correction, much to the annoyance of the corrector.

The bottom line is that I deeply desire to make study of Aikido a central component of my life, and I would be honored to do it at ACLA if at all possible. I just need to find the right mindset. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Sincerely and gratefully, Theo Waddell

11-22-04: On Awareness: Sensei, I found your talk on awareness very enlightening...for at the same time I was thinking about martial arts I was also thinking about visual arts (such as painting and drawing)! In painting or drawing the same principle applies - draw what you see, not what you think you see. Meaning a vase is not really the vase in your mind, it is simply the vase in front of you. How ironic that I really did not make the connection to martial arts until now! Haha. In everything there is a link to other things. Much like how Musashi, though a master swordsman, was also a master of the brush! Egads! I must go and do some more artwork now. Thank you for the mind opening Sensei. take care, Will :)

11-23-04: On Gratitude: From my experience, Gratitude is the most powerful tool we have to transform consciousness. Thank you Sensei for your dedication and commitment to your art. Thank you Sensei for your commitment to teaching. Thank you Sensei for starting and maintaining the Dojo. Thank you Sensei for your tireless writing and sharing of your thoughts and experiences. Thank you instructors and senior students for your patience and tireless instruction. Thank you to all of the readers of Sensei's daily message and group posts. Dennis Long

11-25-04: Thanksgiving Greetings: Dearest Sensei, Our family wishes you a most wonderful and Happy Thanksgiving. May your heart be filled with joy and peace today. You are in our daily prayers and thoughts. Also, Hayward Nishioka, sends you his warmest regards and says "Hello!" We met up with him last Sunday at a Judo tournament in Baldwin Park. When I thanked him for telling me about your dojo and had actually started training there he was very happy and had nothing but high praise for you. Once again, have a blessed Thanksgiving! All our love, The Emnaces - Sandra, Ray, Ariana and Rosalina

12-01-04: Steve Shaw In Colorado: I am teaching a book called *The Samurai's Tale*, by Erik Christian Haugard to my fifth grade. They are very excited about it. It is about a retainer in Takeda Shingen's army, and all my knowledge of the samurai sub-culture, Kawanakajima, feudal society, swords, they are eating up. Today we read about an exchange in the book that ended in violence. The action sequence was very short, and the children didn't understand why there wasn't more sword fighting, so I told them how fast a sword moves, and how most incidents ended with only one or two moves. They were marveled with some of the tales I learned from you and passed to them. Thank you for teaching me. The students and parents seem very happy to have me as a member of the teaching community. They want me to start teaching Aikido as an after-school program. I am under the impression that they will cover the costs of the mats, and pay dues. I have sent out an interest survey, and over 15 students have signed up, 3 parents expressed interest for themselves, and several staff members are also interested. I was shocked with the response. How do I need to proceed? I want to do it right. If I end up teaching Aikido, I want to continue the traditions you have taught me... . . . Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to assist with the children's class, but in no way do I even know where to begin with the running of a dojo. Any help, or advice, you would spare would be greatly appreciated... am going to do my best to be there (LA) for Sunday.

Welcome To The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido Center of Los Angeles

Visiting Our Dojo:

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. Interested students and visiting Aikidoists are always welcome to join our practice. We are directly affiliated with Aikikai Hombu, Tokyo, Japan. Please make inquiries by email: aclafuruya@earthlink.net.

Please Visit Our Website:
www.aikidocenterla.com
Aikido-laido-KODO@yahoo



Rev. Kensho Furuya, 6th Dan

The Kensho Furuya Foundation:

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

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 & related arts and their history, culture and traditions. Your donations & contributions are welcome.

Japanese Swords: 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 Swordsmanship:

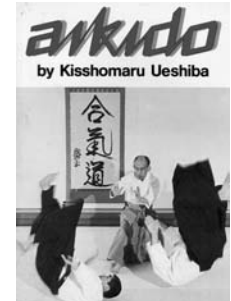
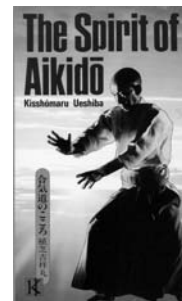
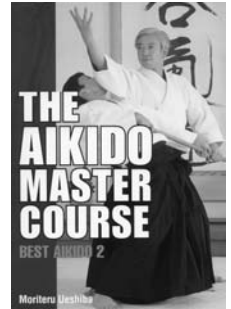
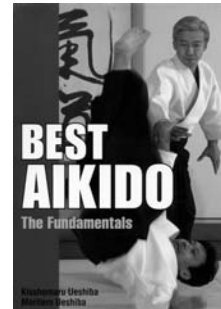
Traditional Muso Shinden Ryu Iaido

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 fine hundred years. It is an art which is rapidly disappearing in our modern world today. We welcome all interested students to join our training. You will learn the proper etiquette and handling of the Samurai sword and its usage as a real weapon. This is not sword play, movie stunt action or performance-competition. This is a real, traditional martial art discipline.

Mission of the Aikido Center of Los Angeles:

We are not-for-profit, traditional Aikido dojo dedicated to preserve the honored values and traditions of the art. We are continually focused on 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, enjoying all the benefits Aikido can offer.

Recommended Readings:



International Aikido Kodo-Kai.

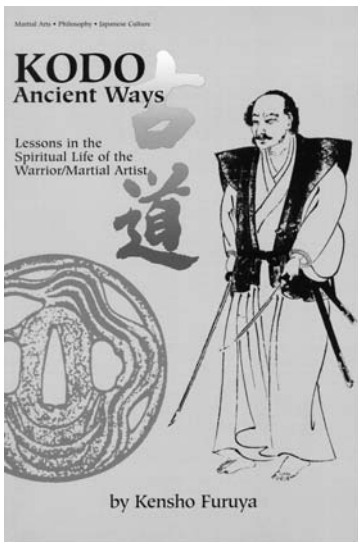
We do accept all Branch Dojo affiliations with any dojo who practices and wishes to follow the Aiki Kai Hombu Dojo training, rules and standards. This also includes commitment to 3rd Doshu and the Ueshiba Family as the Founding Family and Originator of our art. You are welcome to make inquires by email or letter. Our purpose is to help others in the correct practice of Aikido and to spread the correct transmission and understanding of O'Sensei's teachings.

**Visit our official website daily at www.aikidocenterla.com
Become a member of [Aikido-laido-KODO@yahoo.group](mailto:aikido-laido-KODO@yahoo.group)
For Sensei's Daily Message and current news & postings.**

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Tel: (213) 687-3673. Email: aclafuruya@earthlink.net
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Publications By Furuya Sensei:



Kodo: Ancient Ways: Lessons In The Spiritual Life Of the Warrior

By Kensho Furuya

\$16.95 plus tax.

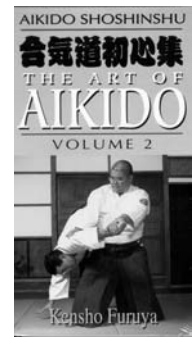
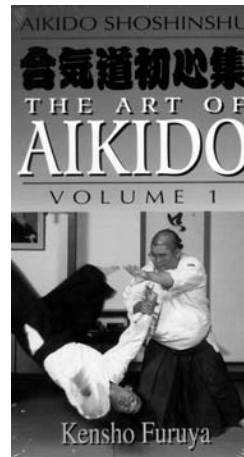
Highly recommended for all students of the Dojo. Please request for your autographed copy by Sensei.

The Art of AIKIDO

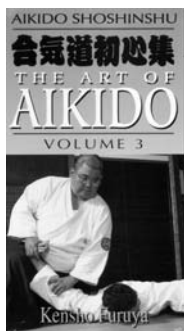
Instructional Video Series s Now Available in a new DVD format.

"Top Rated" Karate Illustrated
"Impressive Scope" Aikido Today,
"Exhaustive" Aikido Journal" "Best in the English language on the market today," Budovideos.com.

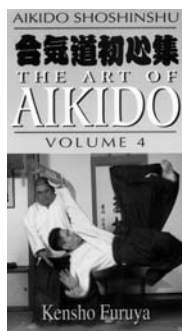
This video series is considered to be the most comprehensive and detailed instructional video on Aikido available today. Clear depiction of each technique and very detailed explanation of all of the fine points.



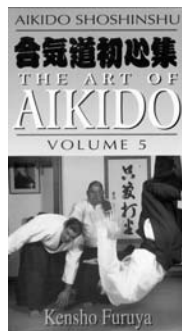
Basic Techniques
Throwing & Joint
Techniques, Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo & Gokyo



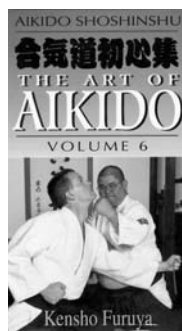
Ukemi-Breakfalling Basics Continued
Free Style Techniques
Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



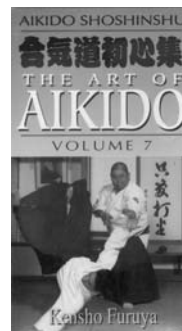
Katatetori Ryotemochi:
Ryotetori: 2-hand.
Reigi-saho: Etiquette.
Koshinage-Hip throws.



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



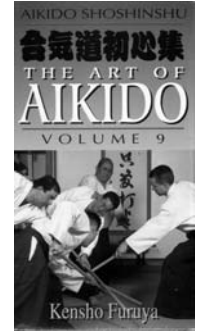
Tsuki: Strikes & Punches
Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side of the head & neck.



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



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



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

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

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
Weapons Class: (Bring Bokken & Jo)
7:45-8:45pm, 4th Kyu & up.

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

Saturdays: Open Beginning: 9:30-10:30am.
Open Beginning: 10:30-11:30pm.
Every 4th Saturday: Instructors' Aikido:
6:30-8:00am. 2nd Kyu & up only.

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

7- 16 yrs old

Sunday Mornings 9:00 -10:00am

Sign-up anytime for on-going classes.

We are directly affiliated with:

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 (Weapons)

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

No Classes on the last weekend of the month.

Private Classes Available.

No Appointment Necessary To Join:

You are welcome to visit us anytime during our adult Open Beginning Classes. Signing up for classes is very easy and only takes a few minutes. We accept personal checks, MO and cash. Please bring valid ID such as your driver's license and the name of your insurance company. Many thanks and Welcome to the Dojo!

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.