

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

\$3.95
Donation

March 1, 2005

Volume XXIV. Number 3.

O'Sensei's Annual Memorial Service & Special Seminar With Kei Izawa Sensei. April 23-24.

The annual memorial service for Morihei Ueshiba O'Sensei, the Founder of Aikido, will take place on April 23, in the Dojo along with a special two-day seminar with Kei Izawa Sensei, 5th Dan, of the Tanshinjuku, in Colorado. James Nakayama Sensei, 5th Dan, of the Chushinkan Dojo, will also participate. Kei Izawa will arrive with his wife, Mrs. Mariquita Izawa, 3rd Dan, who will also conduct class.



Kagami Biraki Practice With James Nakayama Sensei, 5th Dan January 29.

On a very nice, sunny Saturday morning, James Nakayama Sensei from Buena Park, conducted a special practice to celebrate our Kagami Biraki, the official opening of the new year. Everyone greatly enjoyed his class and afterwards Sensei treated Nakayama Sensei and his two visiting students for luncheon.

Photo submitted by Olga Mihaikova, Latvia. Russian cherry blossom?

April 23

James Nakayama, 5th Dan

9:30-10:30am

Kei Izawa, 5th Dan

10:45-11:45am

37th Memorial Service for O'Sensei & 1st Year Memorial Service for Mitsunari Kanai Sensei

12:00-12:45pm

O-Doki Lunch

1:00-2:30pm

Mariquita Izawa, 3rd Dan

2:45-3:45pm

Kensho Furuya, 6th Dan

4:00-5:00pm

April 24

Gary Myers, Iaido 5th Dan,

Mark Ty, Iaido 4th Dan,

Introduction to Iaido for Beginners

8:00-9:00am

Ken Watanabe, 5th Dan

9:15-10:15am

Kei Izawa, 5th Dan

10:30-11:30am

Lunch

11:30-12:30pm

James Doi, 5th Dan

12:45-1:45pm

Tom Williams, 4th Dan

2:00-3:00pm

David Ito, 4th Dan

3:15-4:15pm



Special Practice Masatake Fujita Sensei 8th Dan, Aikikai Hombu March 9. 7:00-8:00pm

We are honored to have Masatake Fujita Sensei visit us once again for a special practice on March 9. All levels are invited to attend. Guests from all dojos, regardless of affiliation are also welcome. Mat fee for guest Aikidoists is \$25.00. Everyone is welcome and urged to attend.

RSVP by April 10. \$50.00 per person by April 10 for both days. \$75.00 after April 10 or at the door. All Aikido affiliations and levels welcome. Please bring your own bokken and tanto. In downtown Los Angeles, near Chinatown and walking distance to Little Tokyo. Free parking on 2nd and 3rd Streets. Everyone is welcome. For more info: www.aikidocenterla.com

Kagami Biraki Practice. January 29.



James Nakayama Sensei during Kagami Biraki practice.



Recent Dojo Guests:

Nick Kiritz Sensei Visits Dojo From East Coast. January 30.

Naoji Karita Sensei, Sword polisher visits from Tokyo, February 13-15, to spend several days with Sensei.

Welcome Ms. Shelly Wang, originally from Beijing, China, who recently joined the Dojo. Welcome to all our new Students!

Welcome:

San Fernando High School Students Visit Dojo. March 14.

Fifty students from San Fernando High School studying Japanese culture with visit the Dojo for a demonstration of Aikido and a short lecture by Sensei and his assistants. Volunteers needed. to help out with the demonstration.

More On Ukemi:

(01-05-05): We have had lengthy discussions on Ukemi before so I hate to repeat myself over and over again. What I do see here is a very common unconscious tendency to lump sports, exercise and martial arts into one group.

Any kind of activity which enhances one's physical performance and agility such as breakfalling will have obvious advantages to your Aikido training. But the meaning of ukemi is not simply rolling on the mats or taking so-called high breakfalls.

Ukemi takes place before the actual physical technique begins when the initial ma-ai is taken. Ukemi evolves within the technique itself as you blend, move with your partner, continually positioning yourself within the context of the way your partner or opponent is trying to manipulate yourself, always keeping yourself in a safe position or stance where injury or retaliation cannot occur. Finally, the release of power of the technique which cause you to fall, lose your balance or be pinned or immobilized and how you negotiate the final throw or pin from a safe position, and finally to zan-shin where you are in ready position, not breaking your mental concentration despite the technique - totally focused and ready for the next move. . . .

Breakfalling is the exercise of rolling on the mats. In my own opinion, high breakfalls are not safe in "real" martial arts techniques in a critical situation because it leaves you too vulnerable to your opponent's counter attack. But, like high kicks in other martial arts, high,

flashy break-falls are very good for demonstrations and showing off. Finally, it is very common to see students not connecting with the technique, but simply waiting for the so-called "end of the technique" and then they just "jump" away and take a fall or breakfall. This is misconceived ukemi.

It is good that you practice breakfall or rolling and it is always good to enjoy your practice. But please remember there is a very subtle but very important distinction between Aikido ukemi and the "exercise" of rolling and breakfalling.

They may be related or look similar and one may be used to enhance the other, but they are NOT the same thing.

Some of the very best ukemi I know in the world do not take flashy, high falls and may appear to some to be "unskilled" in ukemi but they are excellent in the way they can read and follow and move with their opponent. On the other hand, I know many who can take very high breakfalls but are unable to "connect" with their partner or opponent at all. Please study and think about these above points very carefully in your practice.

Readers' Comments On Ukemi:

01-05-05: Sensei, We practice ryotemochi kokyunage almost every single class, but I think I do not understand the technique very well at all, particularly after last night's class. With some people, especially really strong people, I have a lot of difficulty keeping my grip on their arm with both hands as they step back and raise their hands. I don't really feel pulled around, I just feel like my wrists get jammed up and I have to ease off on the grip. It's as if my grip collides with the movement of their arm. Once the grip breaks, then tori can move easily. I think that when the technique is correctly executed, tori moves easily, and uke doesn't feel his wrists get jammed up.

As for ki energy and ryotemochi, I don't understand why it works when you tell me to move from my little finger, but not when I tell myself to move from my little finger. --Bill Allen.

01-05-05: I enjoy ukemi. In fact I love ukemi. I enjoy trying to cover a great distance and yet landing smoothly and as quietly as possible. I enjoy practicing ukemi on grass and on concrete. I love the roundness, the softness, the blend with an immovable partner. I want to fly further through the air each time, with more energy, and yet always come up smoothly quietly and on posture.

I am not very confident or good at 'high-falls' or 'sacrifice falls' but they do not make as much sense to me. A high fall onto concrete would be a painful and potentially serious injury would be likely to follow.

But I have often felt my enjoyment of ukemi is not really Aikido - more me enjoying rolling around on the mat and 'tumbling' almost like gymnastics.

The other day someone who has just passed there black belt told me that before her grading she injured herself and had to take a month or so off. When she began to train about 6 weeks before her grading she asked her teacher what she should focus on. Her teacher, a 6th Dan, said "Ukemi". It surprised her and it surprised me.

Did he say that in order to get her confidence back and get a feel for

the mats? Or is there more to ukemi than I am currently aware of? I would greatly appreciate people's input on this. What benefits do people find through ukemi? Many thanks, Ambrose

01-05-05: I practice it almost every day after my gym workout (by myself). Next to Tenkan Kokyuho, it is the hardest technique for me, personally. Of course, I am only a beginner, so what the heck do I know... Sensei tells us to practice tenkan every day (probably for a reason) - I have also added ryotemochi kokyunage to that list. Both techniques look so simple when you start out, and I read that people spend a lifetime perfecting it.

BTW, I experience the same problem with some of the blackbelts, but it must be me not being relaxed enough. After some sore wrists I am now trying to grab firmly, but not too firm - giving me the opportunity to 'blend in'. However, I am not sure that something like this can be explained intellectually - can it, Sensei?? "Answers can be given: they are all lies." Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, from The Book of Secrets.

01-06-05: Well there you have it. I am confusing rolling with ukemi. Ah well - nothing wrong with enjoying rolling. At least I am now clear that that is not Aikido. I hope that my ukemi is coming along quite well as I am often uke for Sensei so I do experience good, clean technique though I confess not everyday. Best wishes, Ambrose

01-07-05: Thank you Sensei I would find it helpful if you could tell me where ukemi begins in the practice with your partner.

I think my problem arises because of my interpretation of what forms ukemi. We do 'ukemi practice' at the start of each class. This takes the form of practicing rolling backwards, forwards, mixed, forward rolls on one leg so that when you arise you must be balanced and centered etc. I think for this reason when someone says ukemi I have always had a limited view of what ukemi is. Ukemi is the bit right at the end of the technique where you are projected I thought.

I hope that you will say that ukemi starts almost immediately I, as uke, attack. I tsuki and nage blends and initiates kote gaishi. Immediately I, as uke, blend with the technique, looking to stay centered, following nage's lead, perhaps looking for openings to counter if appropriate. As the technique continues I adapt my body to the it, minimizing the strain on my body and perhaps looking for an opportunity to spin out of a weak technique if appropriate.

I fall to the mat as rounded and softly as possible and relax as the technique is completed and the stretch is applied allowing me to develop my flexibility. Finally as the technique is released I arise quickly, centered, aware and ready to attack nage once more. Is all that ukemi? Thanks! Ambrose

To Develop Good Ukemi:

I recommend that the best method to develop ukemi is to have a good Aikido person - someone with very good, clean technique throw you around, every day. in six months, you will develop very good ukemi. In one year, you will be excellent in ukemi with regular practice.

Rolling around on the mats may not help you to develop good ukemi, only good rolling. High breakfalls may not help you to develop good ukemi, only high breakfalls. Please keep up your training.

THE PATH OF MEDITATION: A PERSONAL STORY

Jake La Botz

I have recently returned from a month long meditation retreat at a place called Shambhala Mountain Center (SMC) in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. It was a month of sitting meditation, walking meditation and meals eaten and served in the traditional Zen practice of oryoki. The days began with morning chants followed by sitting until breakfast time. After breakfast we sat some more...and then we had walking meditation...and then we sat until lunch...after lunch we sat...and then we had walking meditation...and then we sat...and then it was time to do more chants...and then we sat...and then dinner...and then we sat...and then we did the closing chants...then bed...then start all over again. Sound boring? Well, yes...pretty boring. Not much happening at all. So why would somebody want to meditate? What is the point? Wouldn't it be better to be doing something? Making money, or saving the world, or going on vacation? Anyway, what is meditation?



If you look in the dictionary you may find definitions of meditation that refer to focusing the mind, calming the mind, deep concentration, contemplation of spiritual matters, etc. To me these definitions seem vague and don't give much insight.

Although I don't really know much about this subject I can offer you my limited experience in hope that it might give some benefit.

I didn't come to meditation by way of interest in "spirituality" or even a desire to calm my mind. For me it was the tragic life I had created for myself which landed me on the cushion. From the age of fourteen or so I was drinking heavily and using drugs, eventually becoming a heroin addict. Drugs and alcohol, which at one time were able to make me feel comfortable in my own skin, eventually turned on me, leaving me in a state completely removed from reality. I wound up living in cars, S.R.O. hotels, and on couches in flophouses. There was a total feeling of uselessness and panic that came creeping in. I was arrested several times and also went through drug/alcohol rehabilitation centers. My thoughts grew more and more towards suicide. Something had to give.

Eventually I got help, and got clean and sober through a 12 Step program. I did "the steps" with my "sponsor" (a sober alcoholic who has done all of the 12 Steps with their own sponsor and who guides a new person through the 12 Steps). The idea in the 12 Steps is that a person admits they have a problem and begins finding a Power which transcends their own ego in order to stay sober, face their fears, right the wrongs they have done, and be of help to others. For me doing the steps was not about altruism or being a good guy, but about saving my life.

When I reached the 11th Step, which says "Sought through prayer

and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him..." I became curious and began looking for books on the subject of meditation. The books I read told me things about posture and how to work with the mind, but left me with the feeling that there was something missing. It was sort of like reading a play out of a book instead of seeing a live performance. It was the human element that was missing.

Just like Aikido, which we learn not from a book but from a Sensei in a lineage going back to O'Sensei, it was important to me to find an instructor in a meditation lineage.

Meditation has existed in many of the great religions and spiritual traditions of the world, and there are also secular paths of meditation. I was looking for a strong living tradition and I found that within Buddhism there are several lineages where teachers have given oral instructions to their students dating back to the time of the Buddha (particularly some of the Zen traditions, the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, and some of the Theravadin lineages of southeast Asia).

I made a connection within one of these lineages and began practicing regularly and studying the Buddhadharma (teachings of the Buddha). I was taught that meditation is about synchronizing one's body and mind to be completely present in the moment of reality as it is, not about "spacing out" or "going to another realm". And that it's also not about keeping out thoughts or feelings, but actually allowing thoughts, feelings and sensations to arise without judgment. Through doing something very simple and boring like sitting down and being mindful of the breath going in and out a person can actually make friends with themselves. A wedge gets slowly placed in the middle of one's habitual neurotic thought patterns allowing space to occur; the natural space of one's own Buddha nature or awakened state.

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, the Tibetan Buddhist lineage holder and spiritual head of Shambhala International (of which SMC is one of the main retreat centers) says that we are always meditating. Whether we know it or not our mind is focusing on one thing at time constantly. It may seem like a thousand things are happening at once, but in reality there is one thought and then another and then another...all happening very rapidly. When we sit down and practice we have the opportunity to calm and strengthen the mind by placing it on just one object. Many people know the benefits of a workout for the body; meditation can be seen as a workout for the mind.

A lot of us find that we have a meditative-like experience of body/mind synchronization through doing various activities, but we're not really alone with the mind in the same way doing something as we are just sitting. With sitting practice there is not much to give distraction except one's own mental discursiveness, emotional upheavals and body sensations, which may be entertaining for a while, but eventually become very ordinary and boring as one sees them come and go over and over again.

As I sat on my cushion for a month at SMC, I conjured up many fantasies about myself and other people. Sometimes I would look around the room at the other meditators and think, "I really like that person", or "I really hate that person". The funny thing is that I would usually change my mind within a few days and like the person I had hated and dislike the person I had liked. Through practice it becomes hard to buy into these thoughts, which are always saying, "I like this, I don't

like that". A mind that is "ego-centric" (this means everybody...we're all looking out for "numero uno" to some degree) is always grasping for what it wants, pushing away what it doesn't want, and ignoring everything else. In Buddhism they call this the three poisons: passion, aggression, and ignorance. It is said that these three poisons keep us trapped in an endless cycle of confusion. The Buddha was a human being who was courageous enough to look at his mind.



He taught that life is characterized by suffering, that this suffering is caused by a confusion about who we are (the illusion of ego) and our attachment to this idea of who we are. And he also taught that there is a way out which requires discipline and exertion (the noble eightfold path). The Buddha's examples and teaching emphasize sitting practice so that one can experience one's mind completely and see a view much larger than the little view of "me", and actually be grateful for this precious human life and use it to benefit others (as opposed to: "I'll do something nice if it makes me look good or if I can get what I want").

One does not have to be a Buddhist or even be religious to meditate. Obviously the Buddha himself was not a Buddhist. Many of the practitioners on my retreat were affiliated with other religious backgrounds or none at all. We were all there so that we could each experience his or her own mind within the precious container of retreat and begin to overcome our discursiveness and conflicting emotions. If we didn't have neurosis there would be no need for a path of meditation, so luckily our own neurotic trips are actually the road that we tread on (which is where we are right now, not some place else.). It's a very personal path for each meditator, but the tools are the same.

What Do Trees Have To Do With Peace? A Woman Named Wangari

Submitted By Kay Sera

02-12-05: Thirty years ago, in the country of Kenya, 90% of the forest had been chopped down. Without trees to hold the topsoil in place, the land became like a desert.

When the women and girls would go in search of firewood in order to prepare the meals, they would have to spend hours and hours looking for what few branches remained.

A woman named Wangari watched all of this happening. She decided that there must be a way to take better care of the land and take better care of the women and girls.

So she planted a tree. And then she planted another. She wanted to plant thousands of trees, but she realized that it would take a very longtime if she was the only one doing it. So she taught the women who were looking for firewood to plant trees, and they were paid a small amount for each sapling they grew.

Soon she organized women all over the country to plant trees, and a movement took hold. It was called the Green Belt Movement, and

with each passing year, more and more trees covered the land.

But something else was happening as the women planted those trees. Something else besides those trees was taking root. The women began to have confidence in themselves. They began to see that they could make a difference. They began to see that they were capable of many things, and that they were equal to the men. They began to recognize that they were deserving of being treated with respect and dignity.

Changes like these were threatening to some. The president of the country didn't like any of this. So police were sent to intimidate and beat Wangari for planting trees, and for planting ideas of equality and democracy in people's heads, especially in women's. She was accused of "subversion" and arrested many times.

Once, while Wangari was trying to plant trees, she was clubbed by guards hired by developers who wanted the lands cleared. She was hospitalized with head injuries. But she survived, and it only made her realize that she was on the right path.

For almost thirty years, she was threatened physically, and she was often made fun of in the press. But she didn't flinch. She only had to look in the eyes of her three children, and in the eyes of the thousands of women and girls who were blossoming right along with the trees, and she found the strength to continue.

And that is how it came to be that 30 million trees have been planted in Africa, one tree at a time. The landscapes--both the external one of the land and the internal one of the people--have been transformed.

In 2002, the people of Kenya held a democratic election, and the president who opposed Wangari and her Green Belt Movement is no longer in office. And Wangari is now Kenya's Assistant Minister for the Environment.

She is 65 years old, and this year she planted one more tree in celebration and thanksgiving for being given a very great honor:

Wangari Maathai has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She is the first African woman to receive this award.

After she was notified, she gave a speech entitled, "What Do Trees Have To Do With Peace?" She pointed out how most wars are fought over limited natural resources, such as oil, land, coal or diamonds. She called for an end to corporate greed, and for leaders to build more just societies.

She added: "Our recent experience in Kenya gives hope to all who have been struggling for a better future. It shows it is possible to bring about positive change, and still do it peacefully. All it takes is courage and perseverance, and a belief that positive change is possible. That is why the slogan for our campaign was 'It is Possible!'"

"On behalf of all African women, I want to express my profound appreciation for this honor, which will serve to encourage women in Kenya, in Africa, and around the world to raise their voices and not to be deterred."

"When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and seeds of hope. We also secure the future for our children. I call on those around the

world to celebrate by planting a tree wherever you are."

As she received the Nobel Peace Prize this week in Oslo, she invited us all to get involved:

"Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own."

"Where does the rainbow end, in your soul or on the horizon ?"
~Pablo Neruda

Ukemi: No Beginning, No End.

01-07-05: Please read my previous post regarding ukemi. This is one of the problems prevalent generally in our ego-centered society, we assume that we can satisfy our intellect by making quick, instant judgements ruled by our sense of logic and reasoning without considering that perhaps something may lie outside of our experience and scope of our knowledge. Such is the case with Aikido in many, many instances.

In practice, we, perhaps everyone for that matter, immediately likes to say, "Ok, this part is the throw, and this part is the ukemi." Of course, from what we see, this is what it generally looks like and this is what we can reason. And it is "not far" from the truth.

However, in Aikido, we must try to go deeper and deeper and deeper into many other levels of meaning beyond what we see.

From the standpoint of our practice, we must see ukemi from the moment the opponent moves near our space and as we begin to establish our ma-ai and connection with him. . . . Ukemi doesn't end with the end of the throw, nor does it begin with the "fall." As you move towards the so-called "end" of the throw, we see in our practice, that this is only the beginning of the next move. . . . There is no beginning or end in Aikido movement. It is all connected, continuous and eternal. Movements are connected through the flow of our Ki energy and by zanshin - although the physical movement appears to begin and end, the movement is actually continued and whole through our zanshin - mind.

If we think about how we live and act - one thought and action leads to the next and the next and the next. They may be different actions and thoughts with different intentions and goals, but thought and action is continuous. Like breathing, it never stops but is continuous like our hearts, and other organs. There is not a time (thank, God!) when bodies shut down totally. . . . What happens is that our so-called "discriminating mind" distinguishes and categorizes our thoughts and actions into various values and meanings.

In Aikido, thought and movement is more organic - living and alive - without gaps. It is hard to see ourselves are living organic beings - heart pumping, breathing, and all of our other organs and brain functioning and working continuously, even when we are not conscious of it.

What is this process of Life? This is what we call Ki.

I have strayed from the point - many apologies. In ukemi, as you gain more experience and awareness in practice, you will begin to see the

movement as connected and continuous. I hope you will keep this in mind in your training. . . . Try not to break up your movement and thought and try not to create "gaps" in thought and action by the conscious process of creating values, categories and priorities.

As I practice myself, I try to create a continuous train of thought, moving continuously without break, continuously from one movement, technique or situation to the next. It is not so much 1st throw, now 2nd throw, now the third. and on and on.

In ukemi, the "end" of one throw, is the beginning of the next. The "end" of one "fall" is the beginning of the next. The "end" of one attack is the beginning of the next. . . . This is not a very clear explanation, I am afraid, but please try to understand what I am trying to say.

Talking & Understanding:

Reply 01-07-05: Yes, you are exactly right and I think this is the danger of such discussion groups as this. I think discussion is good, but here, I am more interested in the dissemination of correct information as much as possible within the context of enhancing, helping, guiding and aiding your practice.

We can take any subject and argue endlessly, one point or another. It is easy to criticize or make opinions about anything. It is easy to explain something in our heads. The problem which we must be constantly aware of is that most of the time, understanding in our heads is not really understanding or "real understanding" - which can be applied to our practice and our lives for the better. In the context of Japanese martial arts, "understanding" is described as "thought in action." Or, in other words, it is not real understanding unless this knowledge in our heads can be materialized into the daily activity of our lives.

Of course, the subtle concept of ukemi cannot be understood right away, this understanding is cultivated and nurtured and matures through one's practice. This takes time. It is contrary to our world of instant gratification. And it is contrary to our world of endless chit-chat and conjecture on the internet. . . . Through correct practice, correct ukemi will always come to you. . . .

Seek Simplicity In Practice:

Martial arts is actually simple to understand - just refine the few fundamental techniques to their highest level. Today, we get stuck on multiplicity - thinking that more is always better, - and always get stuck on the "more."

Get rid of all the fancy fluff and sparkle and seek out the essentials. I try to teach you the most important points in every practice, but it is up to you to finally open your eyes and ears. . . .

Sensei's New Computer Fund:

Many thanks to the following contributors who helped to finance Sensei's ailing computer. It is greatly appreciated.

Kevin Hoffer, Jeff Wheeler, Eugene Asahara, Andrew Maria, Gary Myers, Dennis Long, Michael Vance, Bill Allen

Letters & Correspondence:

01-09-05: No Absolutes In Practice: For myself, I have come to the conclusion there are no absolutes. When I was in high school and really learning about the complexities of the world for the first time, everything seemed simple. Black and white. It was bad. Or it was good. Decisions were easy. Opinions were readily created.

As I've grown older, I keep realizing that there always seems to be an exception to any rule. This is especially apparent when you learn a great deal about history and how people have steadfastly held opinions that turned out to be wrong. The universe (sun) doesn't revolve around the earth. The earth isn't flat. You can go faster than the speed of sound without dying. 640k is not more than enough for computers and the tonsils really are an important part of the body and shouldn't be removed without due cause. This is, of course, just to name a few of the many, many examples of opinions held to the bitter end that proved to be wrong. The ironic thing is that the opinions that replaced them may very well be out sync with the realities of the universe as well.

How many opinions do we hold today that seem like universal laws? You can't go faster than light. Wisdom teeth should be removed or damage to the jaw will occur. Etc, etc, etc. Perhaps in 30 years we'll look back and wonder at our foolishness. Again. We will wonder at our foolishness despite the fact that history teaches us that our way of looking at the universe is transitory and not to be held too tightly or too religiously.

All these opinions and classifications are merely an attempt to control the environment around us. We attempt to make sense of the universe and then attempt to change it. The difficulty I often face in my current phase of development is that I believe I know that the universe just IS and doesn't need classifying. But I cling to the notion that "progress depends on the unreasonable man" (see <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/692.html> for the full quote) and I have a hard time letting go of the idea that I must bend the universe to my will rather than effect the universe by just being a part of it. I am the universe. Why must I bend it/me to my will? Why must I spend so much time analyzing, classifying, and justifying?

Most things are not black and white, but shades of gray. To say that there are no absolutes is, in itself, a contradiction since it seems to be an absolute statement. But it seems closer to the truth to me than black and white.

We converse about martial arts techniques as if they were things outside of the universe - another classification. In fact, they are the same. They are the universe. They just are. And our understanding of them is a reflection of our current phase of development, not only in how to perform the technique, but our current phase in development with regard to our view of the universe. Are we going to bend the techniques to our will, or are we simply going to realize we are a part of each and every technique and are not separate from them? We act and think as if the forces and energy that go back and forth between uke and tori are something to be manipulated outside of us. In fact, they ARE us. The "us" at the moment we do the technique. But that "us" will be different the next time we do the technique because we will have changed, even if it is in some small way.

So, what is understanding? It is transitory. It is ever changing. Would it be worthwhile to consider that perhaps our understanding of

of a "technique" could always be incomplete simply because we will constantly be learning and growing? Once we cross the boundary of certainty and say with some authority that we absolutely know a technique aren't we falling into the same old trap of believing that there is a final state to understanding? Of course, all of the above is just a reflection of what I currently am. It's all likely just hogwash and I'll realize my foolishness tomorrow..... Jesse W. Asher

Furuya Sensei wrote: Give anyone a keyboard and internet connection and in 32 seconds they can come up with any answer in the world. It is easy to talk to people you don't even know or can even see - so easy to say anything you feel like or even insult them. . . all in the name of "learning" and "open honest inquiry." It is nothing more the public masturbation. Even very important and serious topics are bandied about with no more importance than buying a bag of Fritos in a liquor store. Don't hold on to your narrow-minded opinions like they are God-given Universal Truths. You people are becoming as one-dimensional as your posts here.

01-09-05: I am one dimensional and shallow. My view of Aikido, my understanding of Aikido is wafer thin.

Sensei is one of the few voices in amongst the tripe out there that knows the depth of Aikido and does care enough to metaphorically slap me round the chops. Sad that I need it but I do.

Aikido is not part of my life like cleaning my teeth, or preparing my evening meal are. It remains something separate. Which is why I need the slap.

The question is how long will Sensei have the energy to continue the thankless and apparently virtually pointless task of slapping me before I truly grasp the depth and beauty of Aikido and let it be an intrinsic part of me?

At the moment I dabble, skim across its surface, dip in and dip out. I believe this will change as my circumstances change. I have a whole host of excuses as to why this is the case at the moment. But I am sure Sensei would dismiss them all with the contempt they deserve.

Ultimately it comes down to the hard graft of continuous honest practice to reveal the truth. Right now I choose to stumble in the wilderness, far from the path. Odd and rather sad I suppose. Anyway - enough public masturbation - I must do some weapons practice and perhaps begin the 1000 mile journey back to the Way. Thank you and best wishes as always, Sensei, Ambrose Merrill

01-11-05: I often think about how I can be sometimes too pessimistic about things in life, especially society. By this I mean that there isn't enough of things like honesty, courtesy, integrity, etc.

Just simply driving down the road I can get angry at a person who cuts me off or cuts another person off without signaling or even caring about what lives they may put in danger. Or perhaps when I am in the mall and someone pushes into me and does not apologize for doing so. I make it a point to always excuse myself and or apologize. However, it is this very thing that sometimes irritates me...that I wish or want other people to do this and thus a negative attitude towards society comes about. My mother is always telling me that "you know the world really isn't such a horrible place." And when she says this it puts me to shame. As a martial artist, have I put myself up to

such high standards that I also expect others to be that way as well? Do I purposely put too much emphasis morals and values to such an extent that I cannot accept that another person is a good person and perhaps was never taught these things? I ask myself these questions a lot when I get angry, and most often than not I try to think of better ways to go about such things in a less pessimistic manner. Am I wrong in thinking like this or am I simply still looking for a better way to approach life? How can I get rid of this pessimistic approach, and still be a good martial artist outside the dojang? So hard this is for me. Tetsu.

01-16-05: Likes Poems: Sensei, Today's poem was very beautiful and makes me think about my own situation a great deal. I just wanted to post one of my own little poems for the group even though I sent this one to you a while back.

Who knows which way the path will go?
what determines how the vine will grow?
just follow your heart where your mind won't go.

no such thing as foe or friend,
no spirit to break, no will to bend,
just stay the path from beginning to end,
Oh look, the apple is just an apple again!

01-16-05: Sensei, I felt that I should let you know how grateful I am that you write these columns. I feel that it has given me things to think about on the mat in terms of technique, but if I were to choose one thing that I believe I've gained from reading your writings, it would be a greater appreciation for those who teach aikido. I know that my own sensei has a number of difficulties which he works through in order to instruct us - for one thing, not being able to take classes himself. One particular piece of advice which I try to apply each class is to attempt to understand what my teacher is thinking. Thank you very much for helping me to see aikido from this perspective. -Paul Sanderson-Cimino

01-18-05: Dear Furuya Sensei: Thank you for your teaching today and all year-round. I came across one of your daily messages while surfing the net. It was relative to the way American people talk to each other in the training hall. You pointed out that the register of speech (level of formality, politeness, social distance, imposition awareness etc.) was not quite appropriate to the setting of a training hall. I wondered Upon further reading and reflection, if your feeling was that practitioners didn't appreciate what the training hall really is. I agree that right speech evokes and extends the "training spirit" of the training hall so everything "improves". Such speaking is training the same as keiko is training. The problem arises that perhaps in our minds, the training hall has yet to reach the status of being an institution. All institutions, have very refined and particular discourse patterns in order that relationships are defined and maintained and the business of the institution can continue. Think about a courtroom. Who can say what, when, how, and to whom they may say it, is strictly defined. School classrooms are the same. Interactional resources are unevenly distributed in institutions. Institutions are therefore very resistant to willy-nilly change. Also the business-at-hand is carried out smoothly. It takes a long time for the proper institutional modes of speech to be worked out and adopted.

Perhaps a lot of teaching, socialization, and modeling of the desired

modes of talk along with some gentle consciousness-raising would get the ball rolling in the right direction. I hope that eventually we in this country will be able to produce right speech for the training hall. I think it's very important because the AiKiDo and our words come from the same source. Bless you and your work, Michael Ryoyu Allen

01-21-05: Rev. Furuya, My students and I really enjoy your daily messages. Its nice to know there are still people willing to share their lives, traditions and art with the world. You are a very inspirational speaker. Your daily message on January 18th really piqued my interest. I'm assisting another instructor during a Tai Chi class and we have a student who is vision impaired. He can see shadows, but that is it. You said you had a discussion about teaching a sightless person.

I'm finding it very challenging, especially with the parts of the form where the whole body posture must change. If you have any helpful suggestions, I'm all ears. Thank you! Rev. Furuya, Don

01-23-05: Aloha Kakahiaka e Sensei! Please pardon my delay in replying, I've been rather busy with work lately. It is great to hear that the Shichimi from Asakusa still "delivers!" I only wish that I could have visited Asakusa myself to get it this time, but I have had to postpone my trip to Japan . . . I would truly enjoy seeing -- and smelling -- all seven bins of spices that go into the final product!

And please allow me to thank you for your "Grains of Sand" allusion. I'm reminded of how many people can enjoy the beach, but actually dislike all that sand . . . and of the metaphor of the Pearl in the Oyster. A little discomfort, even pain, can be the catalyst for great changes . . . and I personally find that many of your words stick with me, and remind me to 'keep training' all the time. I'm sure that this is the case for others as well.

Today we celebrate Kagami Biraki, and I have been collecting fresh pine needles and plum blossoms for our kado matsu. There are lots of tsugi pine trees around Volcano, but relatively few pines -- the look and smell of true pine needles cannot be matched -- and searching for the perfect, healthy pine tree really opens one's eyes to all the trees, even for me, and I spent much of my time outdoors, in the forests. So much to really see, all around us, all the time! Thank you, Herald Mon Farrington, Aikido of Hilo

01-25-05: Hello Rev. Kensho Furuya. Just wanted to let you know that I appreciated this poem. I have been a member of this group for about one month and though I have been a "lurker" to this point, there are pieces of writings and thought that stick with me. Thank you. I am a beginner in the art of Iaido, in Nelson, British Columbia. Aikido greatly interests me though I feel I will have my hands full for quite some time studying the heart of Iaido. I wish I could be there for the Miyamoto Musashi presentation it sounds very interesting. Thanks once again for your writings. Nathaniel Snider

Sword so sharp and bright,
Drawing to see the light,
Does it know wrong and right?
Can it defeat the evil might?
Cutting like a lightning bolt,
Binding tight like Fudo's rope
Only returning home again,
Once again, - out of sight.
(Rev. Kensho Furuya)

From Latvia, Eastern Europe:



02-14-05: Dear Sensei! Thank you very much for your great support and help! Though it is tomorrow when Girt makes his final decision and we are still thinking at the moment - you cannot imagine how much easier and more comfortable the deciding process is when we have your suggestions and advice! Both the names themselves and the knowledge that we can be absolutely sure about their meanings and how appropriate they are. I hope it doesn't sound too pathetic for we really feel so. Thank you a lot! I inform you what name is chosen when it finally happens. I just wanted to say you this big "thank you". :) I attach one picture of our Iaidoka at the beach, I think I haven't sent it before. I thought that maybe you will enjoy it. Lots of gratitude and best wishes, Olga

Letters:

Hello. This e-mail is for Kensho Furuya, regarding his post on Aikiweb. Anyway, I would just like to inform you that I read and enjoyed your post on your memories of your instructors. I am a very recent student of Aikido, and your post made me consider the idea of ranking and modesty a great deal. It seems like things were a lot different a long time ago, I wish I had been alive just to talk to some of the old teachers. Thank you very much for such an inspiring post. Sincerely, Bryson Nitta

01-29-05: Sensei Furuya, I read your article about people joining and leaving this group. I edit a news letter for my club and have similar feelings about "not hearing" from the readers.

I thought about your question - "Why don't people respond?" After reading the postings for the last few weeks and visiting your website in the past, its hard to keep up with you. I wish I had as much time to read as you have to write.

If a student compliments me on a great class, I'll ask what they liked about it, in an attempt to learn how to keep their interest. Do you mind if I try doing a poll, so you can find out who your readers are? Or you can have a poll on what your readers would be most likely to discuss? (Practical approach...) Sometimes, just reading your words is like watching a sunrise, over a placid pond, listening to the bird songs, and feeling the inspiration. Just being present is a good dose of enlightenment and peace. Sometimes, responding is like throwing a stone in the water and scaring away the birds... Thank you for living and sharing the art. Don

01-31-05: Dear Sensei; for me, as I approach my first anniversary, being a member of ACLA, I reflect, and still feel one of the GREAT-EST attractions is the (extremely rare) opportunity to learn an ANCIENT art in an ancient manner. Stories and writings about "freedom, choice, and a faster, easier way to learn" are available everywhere, thank you. -Dennis Long

01-31-05: **Not Too Much:** Sensei: I do not think you write too much on the yahoo group, and I am always happy to read what you have to say. I know the reason that I am one of the lurkers is that I do not always have something to contribute. If I am only going to agree with you or thank you, I feel like I might as well spare everyone the trouble of wading through those messages, and I know you personally get a lot of email.

In terms of dispelling misinformation, this group has been very helpful to me -- I would be truly embarrassed if you realized how many silly misconceptions I held when I started at the dojo. I have been thinking that maybe some of your posts may be a little advanced for people who are just beginning or are just curious about aikido, and that may be one reason you get so much coming and going. When the conversation is over your head, it's easy to duck out instead of waiting until you understand. It took me a long time to understand exactly what Hombu was or who Doshu is, or who the Yoshinkan people were, or many other things I overheard, just like it sometimes takes me longer to learn the names of the moves in the dojo than to learn how to do them. It is never a nuisance to learn these things!

One more thing I wanted to tell you is that I will be going back to Georgia for work this Sunday, and will be gone for three weeks. The good news is that I am hoping for a promotion at work that would mean I don't have to go to Georgia any more after this. I will be back at practice in early March. I enjoyed the Kagami Biraki practice this Saturday very much. Please keep on in the yahoo group, I think it is a good way for people to learn things that will help them practice aikido. Thanks, Maria Ferrari

02-02-05: **Greetings From Indonesia:** Hi! I joined the Yahoo.group yesterday and I think it will be polite to introduce myself. I apologize for any english mistakes in advance, because it's not my native language.

My name is Gisela, I'm from Brazil (Rio de Janeiro). I'm studying Aikido for about 12 years now and teaching for about 5. I teach mostly children in my teacher's Dojo and I love it. I enjoy their energy and happiness. I recently began to study Iaido and Jodo too. I study Aikido under the supervision of Shihan Ichitami Shikanai Sensei. I'm very happy and honored that I received an invitation from Furuya Sensei. Thank you very much Sensei! I'll start to read the messages now, so I can catch up with you all. I'm sure I will learn a lot from you Sensei and the other members of this group. Thank you for the opportunity. Best regards, Gisela, Brazil

02-02-05: **Introducing Myself:** In keeping with the spirit of participation in MSN group message boards, I thought it'd be a good idea to introduce myself to you all. My name is Dave (most people call me Koga) and I am a novice in iaido, having just started my training at ACLA two weeks ago. As a fourth generation Japanese-American who grew up in Orange County, I don't have a really strong connection to my cultural heritage (my grandparents don't even speak

Japanese!). In coming up with my New Years resolutions for 2005, I saw the study of iaido as a great way of incorporating some Japanese culture into my life, of teaching me to be more disciplined, and (in a more indirect manner, I suppose) as a way of incorporating some of the principles of Zen Buddhism into my life.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, Sensei, for all of the work you do, not just in the dojo, but also for the daily messages you post on the ACLA website and for all of the poems and thought provoking messages posted here in this forum. You serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration in this complicated, fast-forwarded world we now live in. I consider myself very fortunate to have found your dojo and, subsequently, this MSN group online (Google is a wonderful thing!) and I look forward to continuing my iaido training at ACLA for years to come. Thanks again, David Koga

02-02-05: Regarding Diamond Sutra: Sensei, Regarding the inscription on the Kawachi no Kami Nagakuni sword: "Ou Musho Ju Jisho Goshin" The translation you have provided reminds me very much of something I have learned and practiced in my Taoist studies with Master Ni. It is "the six true words":shing chu yuan ming wu nie" the mind is a bright pearl which rolls smoothly with no obstruction.
(the translation is mine. I take full responsibility for any inaccuracy.)

shing: mind, heart, center

chu: pearl

yuan: round, smooth rolling, complete in itself

ming: brightness, clear

wu: none, no

nie: obstruction

Sincerely, Tom Williams

02-02-05: Reply: The Diamond Sutra or Kongyo Kyo, is one of the most fundamental and difficult readings among the Buddhist sutras so I am not qualified to comment on this with a lot of confidence because of my lack of experience. To inscribe a quote from a Buddhist Sutra on the tang of a blade is very rare and unusual and I conjecture that Masao did so to preserve these words for eternity - words which he most likely received from his teacher, Miyamoto Musashi.

This quote is also notable as it appears in the Chishin Fudo Myoroku, or "the Letter of Immovable Wisdom" written by Takuan to Yagyū Tajima no Kami, fencing instructor to the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun, Iemitsu. The theme of "non-abiding mind" is the basis of this letter. And since this letter, the idea of the non-abiding mind" (mu-ju-shin) has been a major principle in Japanese swordsmanship and clearly illustrates to strong link between Zen and the sword.

I am not certain of the text from which you quote but this idea appears frequently in Taoist thought, especially Taoists thought from the Han Dynasty onwards when it took on influences from Confucianism and Buddhism which was flourishing strongly at the time. We also see this idea pervade Neo-Confucianist thought from the Early Sung Dynasty.

I think in Buddhist and in Taoist thought, the idea of the non-abiding mind is very similar to the original Taoist idea of wu-wei or non-action as referred to the Tao De Ching. In Chinese, non-abiding or wu-ju is also interpreted as "non-stopping." As much as Buddhism influenced Taoist thought in the early periods, later, Taoist thought

ended. Taoist thought in the early periods, later, Taoist thought came to influence Zen Buddhist thought in the same way.

The "six words" to which you refer is a very famous phrase often quoted and interpreted and permeates Eastern thought. I think it is confusing to many to discuss "non-abiding" or "no obstacle" along with the idea of center or vital center. . . . as in focusing in the tan-tien (Japanese: tanden).

Generally, in Japanese literary and religious history, when they refer to, "the six words," they are usually referring to the invocation of Na Mu A Mi Da Bu(tsu)," or "Glory to Amida Buddha." I think you reference is specifically Taoist and from Chinese Taoism. I hope this helps.

As a side note: The famous, powerful feudal lord, Hosokawa Tadaoki carried a sword by Kanefusa of the Mino Seki School and he named it "the Six Words." This name, (Six Words, is inscribed on the tang as in the case of the Nagakuni praises the cutting power of this blade. Each time, Tadaoki cut down an opponent on the battlefield, we would recite, "Namu Amida Bu" to pray for the salvation of the souls of his fallen enemies. This is an unusual inscription and for a long time, it's meaning was unknown.

02-03-05: Dojo Names: Hello Sensei, My name is Chris Wright, I live in England, i have been training in Aikido for about 2 years, i found your daily message and this group an excellent source of information and greatly thank you for it and your hard work. i found your article on Dojo names very interesting, the association i train with is called the White Rose Aikikai. The White Rose is a symbol of our region in England (Yorkshire)and has been since at least the 14 century, back then there was a war between 2 powerful houses the house of York(White Rose) and the house of Lancaster(Red Rose) so it became known as the war of the roses. The White rose remains a symbol of our region and is often a symbol of pride. Despite this , the site of a White Rose in a summer field is a sign of natures resilience and beauty. Just some thoughts, Thank you once again Chris

02-08-05: Gung Hay Fat Choi Hi Sensei, Happy Chinese New Year! Hope all is well with you. My wife and I are doing well and have been staying in shape doing Modern dance and ballet. I have a friend , a happa gal , who has an interesting idea to do a short film. The subject is a ghost story that originates in feudal Japan. I mentioned to her that I knew a Sensei who was a genius in all areas of Samurai and Japanese culture and history. Needless to say , she and I would like to meet with you. Let me know if you can meet with us sometime in the next couple of weeks. Thank you and all the best.
Russell Wong

02-10-05: Relax! Last night was a minor milestone in my Aikido journey. I was uke for the lesson and at the end Sensei came up and said how relaxed I felt. Since the day I started Aikido I have been tense and using strength and so often Sensei would remind me to relax, soften, use my centre. So for Sensei to comment that I had none of the tension that I have had for so long was wonderful to hear.

I think there are two reasons I have relaxed and softened. The first of course is practice! I have felt how relaxed Aikido is so much more powerful and enjoyable than Aikido with strength and tension. I have felt the Aikido of friends who started training when I did also grow softer and more relaxed and yet seemingly paradoxically get much

more powerful and irresistible.

The second reason is that my approach to life has change over the past few years. My three beautiful children have helped me to see what is truly of importance in my life. I have also been through an enormous amount of stress with the business that I run. Though the problems and failures have caused me a lot of stress the experience has also taught me a lot.

And through the last few years the influence of Aikido and of Sensei Furuya have been profound. Sensei's kind and thoughtful messages when I was feeling very sad and low. His inspiring messages and his chiding messages have all helped and guided me. Kodo that I read and reread almost daily. And also his recommendation of the book "From The Zen Kitchen To Enlightenment" that has helped to guide me and still challenges me as I reread it (and probably always will!).

I hope that maybe I am 'settling into my life' and this settling is both helped by my Aikido and is also helping my Aikido. I hope you don't mind me sharing that with you but as you can tell it was important to me! Best wishes Ambrose

02-10-05: Reply To Relaxation: Yes, this is indeed a great breakthrough and exactly what makes me so happy to hear about your training. Ukemi has always been a difficult obstacle for many people coming into Aikido. It seems to come, I think from a natural fear of falling - falling to the ground being equated to injury in our minds. I know many students who never overcome their fear of ukemi and continue to stiffen up every time they take ukemi even after many years of training. For a lot of people, it is difficult to learn to relax in their ukemi and in their technique as well. It is not to throw one's self against the mat and it is not to fight one's natural instinct of falling - if anything, it is another aspect of blending with your partner's movement and going with the natural flow and timing of things. It is good that you have developed the correct understanding of ukemi and it is showing up in your practice and technique in a very positive way.

I remember when you were having many problems with your work. I remember saying that good days will surely come. . . and they did! This only reinforces my faith in the traditional teachings.

The Tenzo Kyokun was for many years considered a text only for training priests. Only recently have they presented it to the public and I am glad that you are getting a great deal of knowledge from it. The Tenzo Kyokun is said to embody the correct spirit of training and one's life. Please keep studying this as I do, it is a very valuable source of wisdom.

I am also glad that you are deriving strength from your family and children. I think this must be the greatest source of strength for all. From childhood, I had always felt a calling for the priesthood but I had no idea how to realize this because my family was not strongly religious. Somehow, it came about that I was blessed to be ordained by a great teacher. With the early sad death of my parents and the loss of all of my family, the choice came easier. In my youth, I felt so strongly independent as well that I felt like I could emulate the great swordsmen of the past and "be married to my art." In my later years, however, I regret that I never married and never had a family now. . . if I had I would have a son or two perhaps in their mid 30's - perhaps fine Aikidoists as well. . . . Cooking my own food, doing my own laundry, I don't take care of myself very well and now I feel

it in my body. I often miss the strength and company of a family but this is my fate. I am surprised how much I can remember of my mother and father these days - memories of so many years ago. From this point of view, I can say that I can think of nothing more important than your family and children - please must treat them like treasures and raise them correctly and safely, which I am quite sure you can. I think it must seem like a great personal sacrifice to devote one's time and energy like this but the strength you derive from them at so many levels cannot be measured in any way.

f you practice correctly, and follow the singular path, you will have many more breakthroughs such as this. This will only strengthen your resolve to continue your practice and continue making progress in Aikido and in all aspects of your life and those around you.

02-10-05: Sensei Part of Survey: Greetings, I am a graduate student at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. My speciality is adult education with an emphasis on the Japanese Way of Tea. I found Kodo: Ancient Ways and have started reading it as a source for my master's thesis. While I am not a student of aikido, many aspects of the Way of Tea are also found in aikido and other traditional Japanese "ways."

I have already made myself aware of the work of Csikszentmihalyi on creativity and I am particularly interested in intuition and "true" creativity as I call it - (creativity which comes from one's original nature). I am familiar with the works of Dogen, Hakuin, Ikkyu, (et al) and Uchiyama Roshi. I have been a Zen student since 1984 and lived for a short while in a Zen temple in Kyoto and studying chado (Way of Tea) at Urasenke in 1986.

I am in the process of gathering information for my thesis and also of getting a scholarship to return to Kyoto to finish my tea training (also some Zen training) so that I might teach through a university here. It is my desire to show, in my thesis, the importance of intuition and true creativity in our lives and how the educational system in the US and other countries could benefit from changing their traditional methods (one that emphasizes the goals of secondary values - that ultimately breed fear) to one that is more holistic for each being; one that allows the development of our directly experiencing the interconnectedness of all that is, the wonder of life, what Krishnamurti calls highly awakened intelligence.

If Kensho Furuya Sensei is interested, I would like to communicate with him regarding these subjects as there is no real system of developing intuition outside of a "way" in the traditional, mainstream US educational system. Thank you for your time and consideration. Deep gassho, Shelley Thomas

02-11-05: Self Consciousness: I know that my state of self-consciousness unfortunately is, at times, carried onto the mat. I am aware not of what I am doing, but of how what I am doing might look to others. I become acutely aware of it when a prospective student is watching class. I often have to nudge my focus back to the teacher, my partner, or my movements. I think being aware of how my behavior affects others is okay, but being obsessed with how they will interpret it, over just actually BEING respectful, attentive, etc. it counter-productive. In acting, I believe that if one is paying attention to how it looks or sounds to others, over simply acting as one was taught, it is easy to give a flat, uninspiring performance. If I am Continued:

focused on practicing Aikido correctly and earnestly, I learn much. If I am concerned with showing others how attentive and smart I am, I tend to act pretty stupid. Kevin Hoffer

02-12-05: Lesson From A Shower Head: This is probably a little odd but I had an insight into relaxation whilst waiting for the hot water to emerge from my shower.

Every morning I turn the shower on and hold the shower head as at first only cold water comes through. After 30 seconds or so the hot water arrives. One morning I was standing holding the shower head, waiting for the hot water when I noticed that as it arrives there is subtle increase in the power of the shower that was just perceptible to my hand.

The odd insight for me was that I only noticed this subtle change in the power of the shower because my grip was relaxed, natural not tense and forced. I realized that in order to be aware of the subtle changes in my opponents attack I also had to be relaxed. Tension would block the sensitivity, at least until my opponents energy had increased.

If I am to become skilled in Aikido I need to sense those changes instantly - or even before they take place as O'Sensei seemed to be able to do. And that will never happen for me whilst I am tense. Strange how we are surrounded by lessons from nature that we may never see. Even the shower can teach me a profound lesson! I obviously have much still to learn! Best wishes, Ambrose

02-12-05: I enjoy reading what everyone has to say, so, I promised myself as a New Year's resolution that I would not be a "lurker" of the group this year and eventually post a message. So, here it goes:

My own self-consciousness on the mat comes from being shy. Sometimes it's there, and sometimes it isn't. When I don't have my "shy" moments, class is usually great because I have forgotten myself and am able to throw myself completely into practice. But when I find myself feeling "shy" I find I inhibit myself and eventually end up pretty frustrated because I missed out on learning the proper technique. I am working on figuring out what triggers my shyness so that I can overcome it. The good news is that the more that I practice, the less shy moments I have. My goal is to get to the point that every-time I set foot on the mat, I'm able to totally throw myself into practice. Doreen Cole, Green Sash Kung Fu, School of Chinese Martial Arts, Berkley, MI

02-14-05: Sensei, I find it interesting that as of late the topic has turned to self-consciousness. I have been thinking about my training, and how some times after a hard humbling session I feel as if I have accomplished nothing. It almost feels like I want to give up. But few days later I tell myself to get back on the mat and do it again, and the feeling of self-worth or worthlessness goes away and I understand that I am just whining about things instead of actually training. This becomes most apparent when I think of a little girl in our dojang who is undergoing a liver transplant. I think to myself "wow you really have it hard don't you. You take self pity on yourself because you cannot do this technique to the best of your ability and yet this little girl is doing something 500 times more difficult and painful than you! Stop whining to yourself and keep practicing."

Sometimes I find a solution to being self-conscious is to look at

those who really do not have all the best that we have. A house. Food on the table. Good health. Good family and friends. It is truly humbling to compare yourself to those who are less fortunate than to those who are amazing at what they do. Once I think of this I understand that I really do have things good in life and that my training must continue no matter what. Also, I do notice that I too look at others to see if I am looking ok with my technique on the mat. This is very bad, and I keep telling myself that I need to get rid of this and just train. This is so very hard to do! The greatest enemy truly is to defeat yourself haha! Will, New York, New York.

02-14-05: Repetition In Practice: If you like, would you discuss a little more about repetition in practice? as you told me in class - *if you repeat something a million times incorrectly, it doesn't become correct, you just reinforce the mistake* - Early in my practice, I embraced repetition, but looking back I think that my purpose was more to achieve a goal of doing 300 suburi every morning for example, doing them more as exercise, rather than trying to make each cut as perfect as I can. At this point in my practice I am doing FAR fewer repetitions (20 - 30 suburi every morning) and doing them much slower and trying hard to make every part of the move as correct as I can. Am I on the right track? Thank you, Dennis Long

02-14-05: Sensei's reply to Repetition: I think that in your case, it is better to go slowly and deliberately with your suburi at first until you get the correct hang of it. Once you understand suburi well enough, then you can begin to increase the numbers and strength within the context of always trying to improve your skill.

I am afraid that most people, I see, are merely swinging the bokken or sword up and down without any thought of whether this is a true cutting action or not. It is very hit-and-miss in most cases. Even students who have practiced for many years still do not really get it correctly and often are doomed to a haphazard chopping motion.

Which do you think is more constructive? To make ten good cuts, or one thousand bad ones? You need the numbers to develop your strength and stamina in using the sword, but, above all, as I teach you, correctness is always of prime importance in the way your practice. Develop yourself slowly and carefully at first and always work within a good, comfort zone without straining yourself or the limits of the technique.

Aikido-laido-KODO@Yahoo.groups.

Please join us in our Yahoo group for daily discussions and the latest updates in our dojo. Your participation, questions and inquiries are welcome and greatly appreciated. Please have all your friends join us as well. We welcome everyone here and would like to see our membership grow. See you soon!

Poems By Sensei:

Get down off the money tree,
Free to be politically free,
Practice like the deaf and blind,
Practice with a Single Mind.

A wooden stick you must not be,
A stone cold stone is not free,
A heart that's quiet, a heart that's calm,
Clearly sees what's right, what's wrong,

Leaves changing color in seasons,
Falling to earth in the fall,
The roots, deep and unseen,
Where all is born,
Never, never change at all.

Aikido Center of Los Angeles

www.aikidocenterla.com

To make your cut straight and true,
Practice till your hands turn blue,
Cut to the left, and cut to the right,
Master the sword of right over might.
Make your mind so bright and clear,
This boat of Life, rough waters steer,
Sword of Heaven, Sword of Hell,
Life passes on, night's temple bell.

Move your arms and swing your legs,
Move your head in three ways,
Dancing like a dancing fool,
The fool to be is a fool like you,
Do not hear the words profane,
Steady your heart to take good aim,
Good will follow where evil came,
One day by day is all the same.
To see the art, its divine degree,
Make your mind all clear and free,
The Warrior Path, not two, not three,
The Single Path in you and me.

Hold dearly to O'Sensei's Way,
With his wisdom, to fill your day,
With his art, to move and think,
With his teachings, your heart to drink.

Who knows the Path of this mysterious art?
Can you find it without your soul and heart?
Begin with the finish and end with the start,
Seek the Whole and deny the parts,
Start with 10,000 and end with just one,
When you start it is ended, when you end it is none.

Can you Irimi against the sword?
Only the one with Sacred Word.
Seek out the teachings which lead no where,
Be with no trace and vanish like air.

Seek out the teacher without a name,
His words are like gold, but holds no fame.
Do not seek fortune, as other men seek,
Avoid the strong and abide in the meek,
Follow the Path which no man follows,
What all men seek is vacant and hollow.

Do not listen to the words of others,
They are mean words, the heart to smother.
Seek out the single word, no one hears,
The word no one hears is the one to be feared.
Hear with your eyes, and see with your mind,
Speak with your heart, and act from your soul.
This is what keeps you safe and whole,
This is the secret that no one can find,
All seek it in fortune, all one of a kind.

We talk and talk,
And all for naught.
Listen, listen,
Till your mind will glisten.

One life coming to a close,
Like a drawn sword
Returning to its saya.
Quiet now and forever,
Home again. . . .

You cannot learn, without the
burn.
There is no art, with the heart

From one root ,
Grow many branches,
From one branch,
Grow so many leaves,
Falling in season,
There is a reason,
The root remains the same,
Don't forget O'Sensei's name.

Affiliated Branch Dojos

Aikido Kodokai
Salamanca, Spain
Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Hacienda La Puente Aikikai
La Puente, California
Tom Williams

Wyoming Aikikai
Sheridan, Wyoming
Tom McIntrye

Bahamas Aikikai
Grand Freeport, Bahamas
Seymour Clay

Jalisco Aikikai
Jalisco, Mexico
Eric Jaracho

Aikido of Guadalajara
Guadalajara, Mexico
Raul Blackaller

Aikido of Puerto Vallarta
Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
Eric Jaracho, Raffi Badalian

Association D'Aikido Pour Demain
Paris, France
Cyril Danan

Aikikan
Rehovot, Israel
Ze'ev Erlich

Valladolid Aikido Dojo
Valladolid, Spain
Felix Ares

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

Marco Giuseppe Marangoni
Monza, Italy

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:

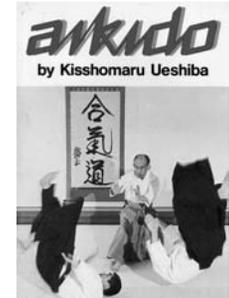
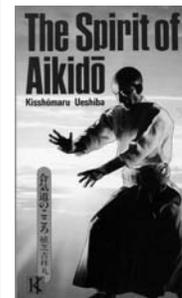
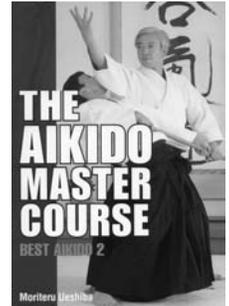
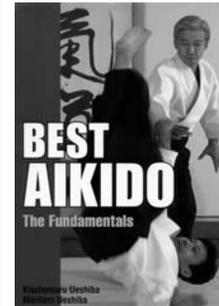
Traditional Muso Shinden Ryu Iaido

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.

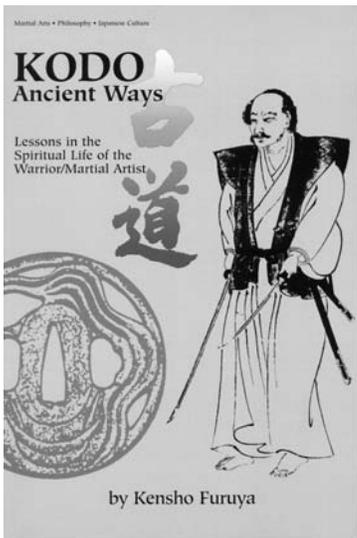
We do accept all Branch Dojo affiliations with any dojo who practices and wishes to follow the Aiki Kai Hombu Dojo training, rules and standards. This also includes commitment to 3rd Doshu and the Ueshiba Family as the Founding Family and Originator of our art. You are welcome to make inquires by email 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:aiafurya@yahoo.com)
For Sensei's Daily Message and current news & postings.**

Copyrighted © & All Rights Reserved.

Published by Rev. Kensho Furuya, The Aikido Center of Los Angeles, 940 E. 2nd Street #7, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Tel: (213) 687-3673. Email: aiafurya@earthlink.net
No portion of this publication may be copied or reproduced without written permission from the Publisher.

Publications By Furuya Sensei:



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

By Kensho Furuya

\$16.95 plus tax.

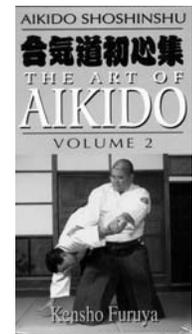
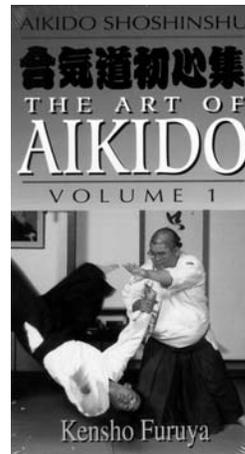
Highly recommended for all students of the Dojo. Please request for your autographed copy by Sensei.

The Art of AIKIDO

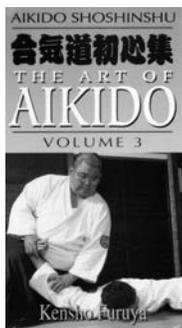
Instructional Video Series s Now Available in a new DVD format.

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

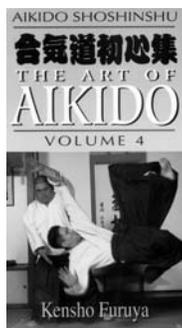
This video series is considered to be the most comprehensive and detailed instructional video on Aikido available today. Clear depiction of each technique and very detailed explanation of all of the fine points.



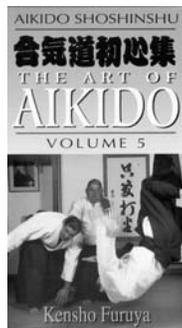
Basic Techniques
Throwing & Joint
Techniques, Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo & Gokyo



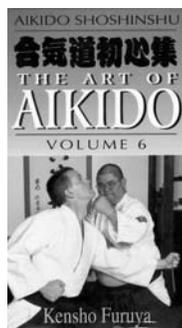
Ukemi-Breakfalling Basics Continued
Free Style Techniques
Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



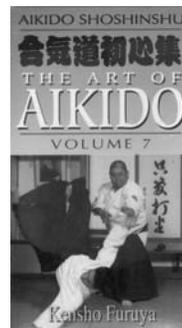
Katatetori Ryotemochi:
Ryotetori: 2-hand.
Reigi-saho: Etiquette.
Koshinage-Hip throws.



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



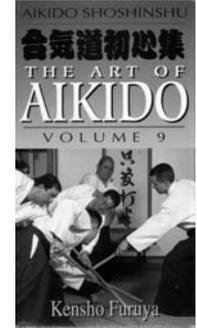
Tsuki: Strikes & Punches
Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side of the head & neck.



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: Beginning Basics: 5:15-6:15pm.
Open Beginning 6:30-7:30pm.

Tuesdays: Beginning Basics: 5:15-6:15pm.
Advanced Intensive 3rd & Up: 6:30-7:30pm.

Wednesdays: Beginners': 5:15- 6:15pm.
Open Beginning 6:30-7:30pm.
Aikiken & Weapons: 7:45-8:45pm.

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

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

Saturdays: Open Intermediate: 9:30-
10:30am. Open Beginning: 10:30-11:30pm.

Every 4th Saturday: Advanced Intensive
Aikido: 6:30-8:00am. 2nd Kyu & up.

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

Wednesdays: 7:45-8:45pm (Weapons)

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

No Classes on the last weekend of the month.

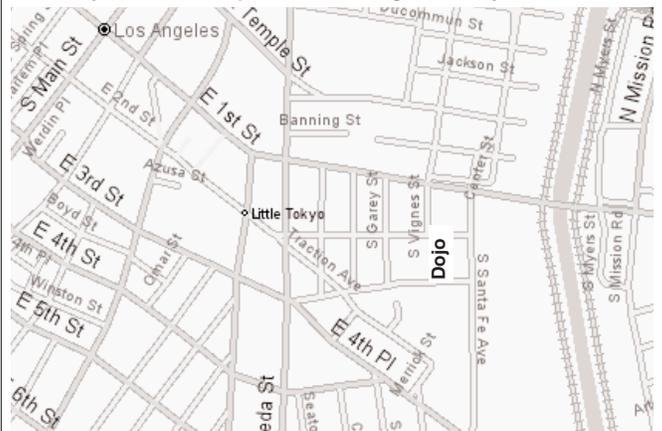
Private Classes Available.

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.