

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



道の為、
世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Upcoming Events

November 27-28th:
Dojo Closed: Thanksgiving

November 29th:
Instructor's intensive

December 6th:
Dojo Christmas Party

December 20th:
Osoji: Year end clean-up

December 24-26th:
Dojo Closed: Christmas

December 27th:
Instructor's intensive

December 30th:
Osame keiko
Last practice of the year

Letter From the Editor by Mark Ehrlich Editor, The Aiki Dojo

I'd like to kick off this issue of *The Aiki Dojo* by thanking all of our students and parents who came out to make this year's Halloween Party such a big hit with the children. Everyone's costumes and energy contributed to the fun day. I hope that all who read these words enjoyed a safe and happy holiday.

Speaking of which, it appears that we've arrived at the start of another holiday season. I find myself wondering where all the time went and how yet another year has come and gone. As the year of our 40th anniversary winds down, I'd like to extend my gratitude to everyone for all you do each day to help keep ACLA going – whether helping mail newsletters, or doing extra chores around the dojo, or simply paying your dues on time and training regularly, every little thing makes a difference, and those of us charged with running the place appreciate all the help we can get. Thank you!

Appreciation serves as an appropriate theme for this month, what with Thanksgiving and all, and November's contributors deliver yet again more thought-provoking essays that touch on appreciation, both in the sense of gratitude and of awareness. Ito Sensei writes on the Japanese concept of *giri* and how it works to deepen relationships (and how we might benefit from incorporating it into our own lives). Watanabe Sensei considers one of the key ingredients to developing in our practice beyond mere effort (Hint: Do what you love, and the mastery will follow.). And as always, Sensei drops in from our archives to correct any misconceptions we may have toward what constitutes good practice; basically, attitude is everything, for without proper mindset we will never push past our own self-imposed limits. I learned a thing or two preparing this issue, and I hope you find it instructive as well.

On behalf of all of us at ACLA, please accept my best wishes for a very Happy Thanksgiving. Take care until next time, and I'll see you the mat!

Kindness and Remembrance

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

Japan may be a small island country but it is strangely different than any other island nation. A rudimentary glance at any other island culture and we see that the indigenous people seem far more laid back and generally less technologically advanced than Japan. Why is this? It could be their proximity to the equator which gives them a hotter climate or it could be the long history of subjugation by other countries which might have suppressed their economic or technological developments. Who really knows why and I am sure it is a myriad of things.

What makes Japan unique could be that it is the only island nation on the Pacific Rim that has all four distinct seasons. The weather ranges from hot and humid summers like all tropical islands to the snow and rain of more northern countries in the winter. In the past, the people of Japan had to work together to survive each season. If they didn't, most would perish in the winters with little food because they failed to get things done and make preparations in the summer. In short, Japan is unique in that the people function as a unit, where each person depends on the next.

This mentality of having to depend on each other and work together is what sets Japan apart. Within a family, members depend on each other and this interdependence is called *amae*. *Amae* is difficult to translate but it roughly means "depending on the benevolence of others". This concept of depending on others lies at the core of Japanese society and it leads to other altruistic concepts such as to *enryo* (self-restraint) and *giri* (indebtedness). As a general rule, everyone in Japanese society works for the common good of the whole.

Outside of the family unit this idea of dependency becomes a bit different. Japanese people don't necessarily have *amae* with strangers or people outside their family. How can we depend on our neighbors or people we barely know? How can we trust that they will show up when we need them? We know that we can depend on them or that they will show up because of *giri*.

Simply translated, *giri* is as obligation or indebtedness but the meaning of the word runs much deeper than the literal translation. *Giri* is so complex that it is hard to explain easily because it involves a feeling that accompanies an action. Perhaps a situational example might help. Let's say that you have a project deadline coming up at work. At the end of the day on your way out the door, you see your boss is still working and you stay to help him. In this country, we usually stay because we want to show initiative or to score points in our favor. In Japan, they stay because the boss stays and they want to support his sacrifice, because they feel responsible for the outcome of the project, or because they feel a sense of gratefulness to their boss and/or the company. *Giri* amounts to a communal sense of ownership and responsibility.

When most of us think about *giri*, we think "debt", but debt isn't exactly right. Debt implies that we owe someone something. We would do better to think of *giri* as a circle that perpetuates itself once we enter into it. *Giri*, however, means that we act out of appreciation and gratefulness and not solely out of obligation. An act of kindness is not something that someone reminds us of, but it is something that we hopefully never forget. In Reverend Fukushima's book *Going with the Flow*, he writes, "In terms of respect, never be outdone" and *giri* is thought of in the same way. Someone thinks of us and we in turn think of them -- this is *giri*.



Thanksgiving lies not far off as we enter into the month of November. Just for whom or what do we give thanks and how do we make good on our *giri*? It is our job to remember those who have put themselves out for us and to honor the sacrifices of those who have come before us. This holiday season let's please remember those people with whom we have entered into *giri*. Remember, *giri* is the glue that holds people and nations together. *Giri* enabled a small island nation to become a superpower despite having very few natural resources. What does or did *giri* do for us? That is for each of us to remember this Thanksgiving.

Happy Thanksgiving!



Save the Date: Dojo Christmas Party

At the Smokehouse in Burbank
Saturday at 6:30 PM on December 6, 2014



In The Community...

In Memoriam



Kiyoshi "Skip" Kawaratani
1926-2014

Kawaratani, Kiyoshi "Skip", owner of Rafu Bussan, Inc., 88 year-old San Juan Capistrano (California) born resident of Monterey Park, passed away peacefully on October 23, at St. Vincent Medical Center. Funeral services were held on November 2 at Zenshuji Soto Mission. He is survived by wife Aiko Kawaratani; siblings, Tsutomu (Atsuko) and Yukio (Lilian) Kawaratani, Yoshiko Tanaka, Fumiko Ozaki, and Toshiko (Isamu) Masumoto; also survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives here and in Japan.

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty

October 11, 2014 - April 26, 2015



The Japanese American National Museum and Sanrio present *Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty*, the world's first large-scale Hello Kitty museum retrospective.

Organized as part of the global icon's 40th-anniversary celebrations, the exhibition examines the colorful history of Hello Kitty and her influence on popular culture. *Hello!* includes an extensive product survey, with rare and unique items from the Sanrio archives, alongside a selection of innovative contemporary artworks inspired

by Hello Kitty and her world.

Hello!, the first exhibition of its kind in the world, is curated by Christine Yano, Ph.D., author of *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*, and Jamie Rivadeneira, founder and owner of pop culture-inspired boutique JapanLA.

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty will be a specially ticketed exhibition. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-17, free for ages 5 and under. All admissions based on timed entry. Obtaining tickets in advance is strongly encouraged. Tickets on sale September 29, 2014.

For more information: <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/hellokitty/>

Samurai Armor on Display at the Resnick Pavilion at LACMA

October 19, 2014 – February 1, 2015



Travel back in time and discover remarkable objects that illuminate the life, culture, and pageantry of the *samurai*, the revered and feared warriors of Japan. The Samurai Collection of Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller, one of the finest and most comprehensive collections in the world, presents a treasure trove of battle gear made for high-ranking warriors and *daimyo* (provincial governors) of the 14th through 19th centuries. The exhibition illustrates the evolution of samurai equipment through the centuries, featuring more than 140 objects of warrior regalia, with full suits of armor, helmets and face guards, weapons, horse

trappings, and other battle gear.

During the centuries covered by the exhibition, warfare evolved from combat between small bands of equestrian archers to the clash of vast armies of infantry and cavalry equipped with swords, spears, and even matchlock guns. Arms and armor were needed in unprecedented quantities, and craftsmen responded with an astonishingly varied array of armor that was both functional and visually spectacular, a celebration of the warrior's prowess. Even after 1615, when the Tokugawa military dictatorship brought an end to battle, samurai families continued to commission splendid arms and armor for ceremonial purposes. Because the social rank, income, and prestige of a samurai family were strictly determined by the battlefield valor of their ancestors, armor became ever more sumptuous as the embodiment of an elite warrior family's heritage. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with essays by some of the leading Japanese samurai armor experts.

General admission tickets go on sale now!

<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/samurai-japanese-armor-ann-and-gabriel-barbier-mueller-collection>

Congratulations Santiago Almaraz Garcia Sensei and the members of Aikido Salamanca Aikikai – Kodokai Dojo on their recent move and new dojo!

New address:
 C/ ABRAHAM ZACUT, 25
 37003 SALAMANCA
 ESPAÑA



Website: <http://ackodokai.wix.com/kodokai#>

The Furuya Foundation and The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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



DOJO FUNDRAISER



THE ICE HOUSE
Comedy Club
24 N. Mentor Ave., Pasadena
Reservations: 626.577.1894
www.icehousecomedy.com



Aikido Center of Los Angeles
1211 N. Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
323-255-1424
E-mail: aikidocenterla@gmail.com
www.aikidocenterla.com

ADMIT ONE

90 day expiration date
Two drink minimum not included

Ticket #

The Ice House Comedy Club in Pasadena has kindly arranged help us raise funds by making tickets available for purchase (\$20 each). You can buy a ticket and catch one of their shows, get some for friends and family, or just get the warm glow that comes from helping out the dojo.

Many thanks to student Jackie Cruz for making this possible.

Please contact Jackie Cruz for tickets or more information.
 E-mail: jcgu3ss@yahoo.com
 Telephone: 323-365-5586

For the Love of the Art

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

How much do we love what we do? Why do we do it? Do we do it because we think we'll get something out of it? Are we doing it for the money, for the women, or for the bragging rights?

People start practicing Aikido for many different reasons: learning self-defense, getting into shape, or experiencing Japanese culture, but ultimately, their enjoyment of the practice becomes the most important reason for practicing. Yes, there are many benefits to practicing Aikido, some of them obvious and others, very subtle; but the idea of practicing a martial art because we think we'll get something out of it leads only to disappointment.

My teacher, Furuya Sensei, always said, "Aikido is not medicine!" that is, Aikido will not magically cure whatever problems we may have. When Sensei began Aikido training, he liked it so much that he practiced every day of the week. In fact, he practiced so regularly that the one time he happened to miss class, the other students didn't see his car at the dojo, thought practice was canceled, and went home, leaving the teacher alone on the mat wondering what happened to everyone.

However, in Los Angeles, back when Sensei started practicing, there wasn't a dojo that was open every day. If students wanted to train every day, they had to drive to a different dojo every day of the week. That is what my teacher had to do to train every day. No one had to tell him that he had to do all of that just to practice every day; he simply loved Aikido and wanted to practice every day bad enough that driving to a different dojo every day of the week seemed a small price to pay.

When I began practicing Aikido back in the late Eighties, I, along with quite a few other students, also practiced every day. Of course, the difference between Sensei's time and our time was that we had the luxury of practicing at a dojo that was open every day. Like Sensei, no one needed to force us to practice every day; we just came to class because we felt enthusiastic about Aikido. Yes, for us Aikido was difficult to learn; it felt scary to practice sometimes; and yes, we missed out on spending time with our friends;

but that period of time when we practiced every single day really gave us a boost to the next level.

I had an interesting experience watching the 2005 documentary, *The Comedians of Comedy*. The film contains a sequence where the featured comedians discuss their early days of performing, and one of the comics, Patton Oswalt, remarked how in the beginning of their careers, he and the others wanted to perform comedy as much as possible – nightly, if they could. He went on to say how important he thought this initial, enthusiastic stage of practice was to their development as comics.

Watching this scene, I thought, "That's like practicing Aikido!"



"Practice for the sake of practicing."

This idea of practice for the sake of practicing really struck a chord with me. Here was this group of people who seemed to have with nothing to do with Aikido or martial arts, trying to learn and discover their craft, and they also thought it was important to perform every day, not because some how-to book told them to, but because they hungered just to DO it.

Clearly, the idea of regular and enthusiastic practice permeates almost everything,

from performing stand-up comedy, to playing a musical instrument, to practicing Aikido and Iaido. That period of enthusiastic training when the practitioner loves the art and is the most hungry to learn about the art, really acts as an important springboard to the next level.

A love for the art becomes especially important after our progress seems to slow and isn't so obvious. It's very easy for students to become discouraged about practice or believe that they can reserve training for special occasions. We've had students who only came to special black belt training classes, or only to advanced or weapons classes. Some students only came to the dojo when either a high-ranking teacher came to teach, or a special out-of-town guest visited for practice. Many students felt they should only practice in the classes when Sensei taught. After all, what's the point of attending the regular classes, right? It's going to be the same old stuff anyway.

Continued on page 6...

Important Upcoming Dates



November 27-28: Dojo closed for Thanksgiving

November 29: Instructor's intensive

December 6: Dojo Christmas party at Smokehouse in Burbank

December 13: Osoji – Year end Dojo cleanup 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

December 24-26: Dojo closed for Christmas

December 27: Instructor's intensive

December 30: *Osame keiko* – Last practice of the year 6:30 PM

January 3: *Hatsu keiko* – First practice of the year 9:30 AM

January 10 (Tentative): 2nd Doshu *meinichi* memorial service 9:30 AM

January 11: *Kagami Biraki* – Dojo opening ceremony practice and party 10:45 AM

January 31: Instructor's intensive

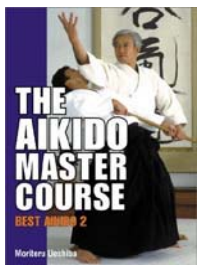
For the Love of the Art *continued from page 4...*

It basically comes down to this: Do you love the art enough to practice it even when you don't feel like practicing? Even when you're not feeling 100%? My teacher used to go to class regardless of who taught regardless of whether or not they were a "master" teaching the class. He wanted to practice so badly that it didn't matter as long as he was on the mat. There are many students who, although not the most skillful or most talented, practice regularly and quietly without this spirit of "Me! Me! Me!" They practice, not because they think they'll get something out of it but because they simply enjoy the practice.

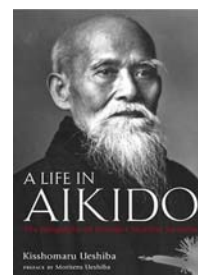
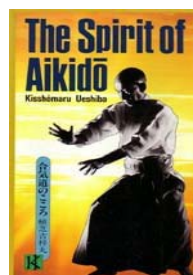
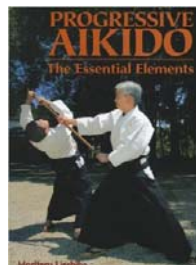
It's said that we should practice in a joyful manner. Most people interpret this to mean that practice should be "fun", like the fun of jumping in a bouncy-house or the kind of fun from drinking at the pub during happy hour. It's easy to misinterpret "joyful" and turn practice into a party or social hour. The concentration and focus required when practicing martial arts really doesn't lend itself to laughing and carrying on. On the contrary, the joy of practicing comes from the satisfaction of learning and discovering about the technique through our practice, as well as the joy of learning and gaining skill in an art as special as Aikido. Regardless of whether we had a great day or a bad day, are rich or have no money, no one can steal that understanding and skill that we earned on the mat.

Ultimately, the best attitude is that we practice simply because we love it. We aren't doing it because someone is paying us and we aren't doing it to show off. Students may begin practice for many different reasons, but ultimately, they continue to practice simply because they love it. My teacher used to quote one of O Sensei's students, the great Aikido master Kisaburo Osawa, who said "Just do good Aikido." It's easy to think about, but without the proper spirit in practice, impossible to do.

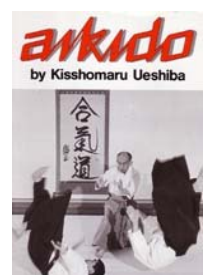
Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru





Proper Attitude

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

At the beginning of class, we do many warm-up exercises to prepare our bodies for training. At the same time, it is important to settle and focus the mind at the beginning of class, too. We always change into

our uniforms right away and get to the mat as quickly as possible. Standing straight at the edge of the mat, we settle our mind for a moment and bow quietly with a feeling of thanks and respect. We then step onto the mat and sit in *seiza* and quiet our mind again. We focus on O Sensei's photo and think about his great contribution and what he did for us and how we will train hard and bow one more time in appreciation and thanks. After we bow, then we warm ourselves and stretch out before class. About two minutes before class begins, we find our place, sit in *seiza* and quietly calm our mind, focus our concentration and determination, and ready ourselves for class. Of course, all of this sounds like a lot of trouble, but it does not simply involve a sequence of empty forms and protocols; rather, this process embodies the essence and content of spiritual practice bringing our mind, focus, body, and spirit into one focused energy and feeling of gratitude. This feeling of gratitude humbles the mind and gives us the mental openness and spirit to learn. Without this, our mind will remain closed throughout the class and we will learn nothing.

Usually people enter the dojo with many bad habits. They come in complaining or bringing in all their problems which have built up during the day. To distract themselves from their problems, they either bend someone's ear to air their complaints or distract themselves with empty chit-chat and gossip. Their minds hold so many questions, "Shall I practice today," or "Today seems no good, what shall I do," or "I feel too tired," and on and on. We have no way to learn if we enter the dojo with an impure and cluttered spirit. As we enter the gate and pass through the garden, we need to leave all this inner clutter behind. We do not track dirt and garbage into our house because we want to keep it clean. In the same respect, we leave all of our mental garbage and trash outside the dojo and enter with a clean, pure spirit and energy.

When I see people chit-chatting and just standing around before class doing nothing, I already know that their mental distraction will spoil their focus on their training. By the time they get their minds into training, the class will have ended already! For teachers, it feels discouraging to see. On the other hand, when teachers see all the students warming up before class and getting ready for training or sitting in *seiza* focused and alert, it feels extremely encouraging and empowering. We think, "Oh my, everyone looks anxious to learn something today, I better do my best to teach them!" Most students forget this, and just sit there like they do at the theater, waiting for the movie to start. Half asleep and with sloppy posture, looking at them in such a state it becomes easy to see that some students do not think much of themselves.

Physical training has an important place, but spiritual training must play a part in everything we do. Our physical training faces limits of time, space and circumstances. Our spiritual training, however, can and must occur in every waking minute from morning until night, and even when we've gone to sleep. In order to learn, we must keep mentally ready, and the protocol of entering the dojo intends to enhance this readiness. Do not ignore it and understand it lightly.

The other day, I felt so shocked when I came down to teach the Iaido class and saw everyone sitting there, so sleepy and not aware of anything. Even when they saw me, the *sensei*, watching them, they didn't even think to themselves, "Oh, Sensei is watching, let's try to make the line straight; I had better watch my Ps and Qs!" Maybe it seemed different in my day: when the teacher watched us or stood around nearby, we always did our best to stay on our best behavior – if only to save ourselves from a scolding! Haha! Today things work very differently. . . .

Proper learning never begins with the teacher wanting to teach; it must always start with the student wanting to learn. In ancient times, teachers admonished their students, "Steal my art. I won't reveal it to you easily!" This simple declaration shows how great the level of instruction was in those days. Not like today. When it comes to teaching for the sake of everyone's money and just to entertain or baby-sit them, I better quit teaching altogether! And finally, for the hundredth time, I must say again to everyone, Aikido and Iaido is not a sport or exercise!

Sometimes when I think about life and the process of Nature, everything can seem so inevitable! We are born, we grow old, and we die! How depressing! It often feels better not to think about such things at all. Yet much of how we look at things in this life depend on our mental posture in the moment. In our practice, we must cultivate and encourage the correct state of mind: open, in the moment, aware, and focused on our mission.

It seems so temptingly easy to turn off our minds or distract ourselves and focus on something totally meaningless and wasteful. Of course, sometimes we need this "off time" just to relax and take it easy. But, in practice, it matters just as much that we develop the proper attitude just as it does that we develop the correct physical techniques. Though I have to focus on your learning of the physical techniques in practice through the form of the technique, you must learn the proper spiritual state for yourself. In this, the way we bow, the way we sit, and everything we do in our conduct becomes so important. Because in our training, our actions also reflect our state of mind. When we bow, for example, we must bow in a way to reflect or express the proper mental state; we do not simply lower our head or shake our head for a moment. Please learn to bring your actions and your mental state into one form.

Editor's Note: *Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on June 8, 2003.*

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

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

10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Advanced*

6:30 AM Instructor's Intensive:

*last Saturday of the month by invitation only.**

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

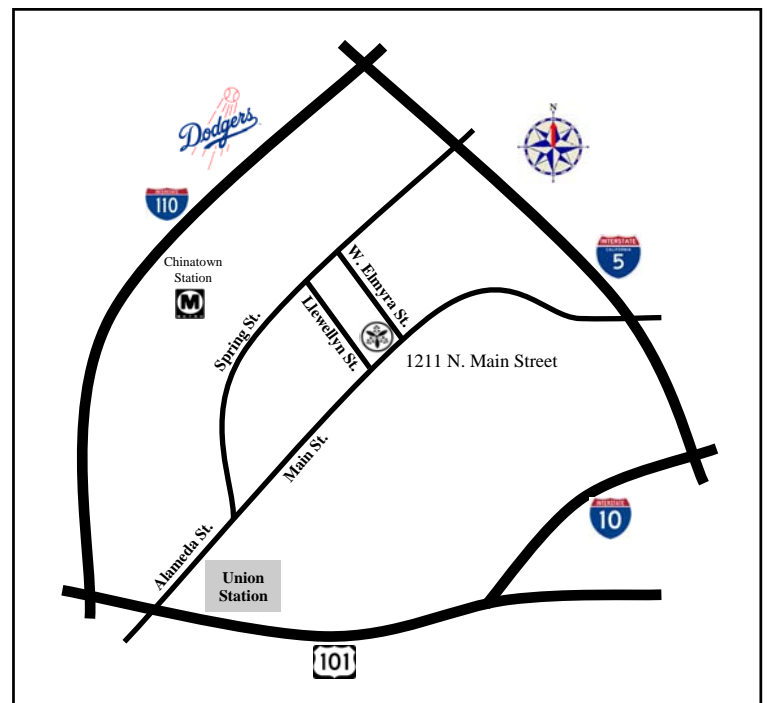
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



We are directly affiliated with:

AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS

公益財団法人 合気会

Aikido 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 Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.



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The Aiki Dojo
Official publication of
the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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

Publisher: David Ito
Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at

1211 N. Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

We are across the street and one block northwest from the Chinatown Metro Station.

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:

You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.