

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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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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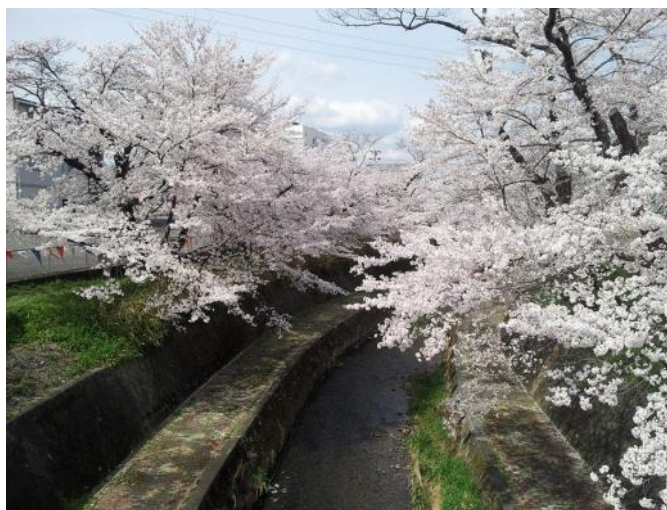
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Upcoming Events

April 25-27th

O Sensei memorial seminar

April 26th

O Sensei memorial service

May 26th

Dojo Closed
Memorial Day

May 31st

Instructor's intensive

June 28th

Instructor's intensive

July 4th

Dojo Closed
Independence Day

Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

We've just returned from Japan. Many thanks to everyone who made the trip possible, and to all those who showed us such extraordinary hospitality. Heartiest congratulations once again to Doshu as well for his accomplishment; we were honored to have the chance to join so many illustrious Aikidoists to celebrate with the Ueshiba family, visit with old friends, and make some new ones.

Speaking of friends, this month we also have our annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar. I hope everyone at ACLA (and elsewhere) plans to train with us over this three-day event. It always serves as a time to recommit to our training and enjoy good fellowship. See the schedule posted on page 3 for more information, and please contact our Web site with any questions.

Some of our newer students might wonder why we offer this seminar year after year, since we never have anyone famous come teach class and for the most part, the participants all belong to ACLA. Given these facts, and the additional work involved to host a seminar, why do we bother? To answer this question, consider the cherry tree.

As you can see in the photograph above, blossoming cherry trees possess a beauty that can catch the breath. However, the time in which they bloom spans a very brief period, so if we want to appreciate them, we have to make the most of the moment. We can say the same thing about our seminar. Sensei started this event as a way for us to join with our friends once a year and, by training hard and practicing right relations, help honor the memory of the Founder by spreading Aiki spirit just a little bit more. Come join us, and I'll see you on the mat!

The Wind and the Sail

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

One of my favorite things about Japanese culture is the symbolism. I really enjoy researching and discovering hidden meanings; perhaps that's why I have been getting more and more interested in *tsuba*, or Japanese sword guards, lately. *Tsuba* are littered with symbolism and I like to spend my free time deciphering their intended meanings. Most symbols are fairly straightforward with lots of information written about each motif, such as the cherry blossom or the crane. Others, though, are more allegorical and require more widespread knowledge in many different fields like Asian history, Buddhism, Shintoism, military arts, and Japanese culture, to name just a few.

Recently I had been looking into the different themes of Yagyu *tsuba*. It is said that each Yagyu *tsuba* has a secret meaning or teaching hidden in the symbolism that relates to the study of swordsmanship. One of the Yagyu *tsuba* that I have been looking at lately is the *kazeho* or billowing sails theme.

There are a number of competing explanations for the *kazeho* motif. I have read two theories about the meaning of *kazeho* and how it can be represented in the mind of a swordsman. One popular *kazeho* explanation is that the student's mind should use the teachings like a ship's sail uses wind. The ship relies on the wind to fill up its sails to move just as students rely on the teachings of the art for their development. No wind means no movement, and likewise a student can only develop so far without following an art or, more precisely, following a teacher.

Another popular theory is that the goal of the mind of the practitioner is to attain *mushin*, or "no mind", in which the mind moves as easily as a ship with full sails moves through the water. After a student has thoroughly mastered the physical forms of the art, the techniques become second nature. Within this time the journey begins towards becoming one with the art where there is no recognition of what is you and what is the sword. D.T. Suzuki commented on this state as, "the place where he now forgets all that he has learned, because he is the learning itself and there is no separation of learner and learning. Indeed, this is the ultimate goal of discipline in all arts where learning gained is learning lost."

From a technical point of view the *kazeho* motif could represent how we should move in respect to our opponent's attack. The wind pushes the sail easily and smoothly with no effort. There

seems to be a "sticky" quality between the sail and the wind where they become almost one. The sail moves the boat because of the wind, and the wind is only apparent when it fills the luff of the sail. Becoming one with our opponent's movements enables us to put pressure on him and facilitate an opening known as *seme* in swordsmanship. We apply *seme* to his sword, to his technique, and eventually to his *ki* in order to defeat him. *Seme* begins with the oneness of *kazeho*.



I have come up with one other possible theory about the meaning of the *kazeho*. The other day Watanabe Sensei and I were discussing teaching and he said something interesting. He remarked that, "As teachers our job is to point the student in the right direction." This seemingly simple statement struck me as quite profound, and in that moment I thought about the Yagyu *kazeho tsuba*: the student is the vessel and the wind is the teaching. Therefore a teacher's job is to put students on the right path so that they can catch the teachings and head in the right direction. This is not meant to mean that the teacher is the source of a student's success, but rather that the teacher is primarily responsible for setting a student on the right course by teaching the right things, and it is the students job to make an effort

to learn. Suganuma Sensei once said, "The master simply does what he should do, not straining himself in an effort to teach. Therefore that fact that some students' inner eye will open as a result of the master's words and actions and others will not cannot be helped. The master is like the rain falling from the sky, without discrimination on the grass-covered plain. Understanding or not is up to the student on the receiving side." Like catching the wind, the teacher merely sets students off in the *right* direction and the students must work hard and sail off toward their own success.

The true meaning of the *tsuba* is open to interpretation. There are some symbols with intended purposeful meanings, but like a Buddhist *koan*, it is supposed to spark our curiosity. Reading a book on *koans* doesn't make us enlightened or wise – it is just knowledge. Knowledge is not the same thing as wisdom. Wisdom requires action. Knowledge doesn't require wisdom, but wisdom usually requires knowledge. Wisdom is the result when knowledge intersects experience. Putting knowledge into action is the makings of wisdom. Therefore, symbols, *tsubas*, swordsmanship, and life are really up to us to figure out for ourselves. In order to figure it out, we have to put in the work just as Sensei often admonished, "There is no substitute for hard work." So, what will the *kazeho* motif mean to you? Figure it out.

by

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of



The Elusive Sensei

Stan Sung, Aikido Shodan

remember when I first started training at ACLA in 2002. I had watched a practice with a friend and decided to join. Teaching the practice I was watching, and every other practice I attended after that for about a month, was Ken Watanabe. Since I only glossed over the ACLA Web site before I decided to explore joining the dojo, it was an accepted reality for me that the lead instructor for the practices was Ken and that Sensei had retired and no longer taught.

After the first month of coming on scattered days during the week, there was one particular practice where I saw Sensei out of the corner my eye walking slowly down the stairs near the end of our warm-up. Not initially recognizing him, since I was a new comer, I remember wondering to myself: "Who is this?" My first impression was that this person, while a stranger to me, was nonetheless someone very

important and very powerful. It wasn't until he started teaching a class using Ken as *uke* did I realize that this was Sensei actually teaching a class! The class was very eye opening and very insightful.

After that incident, for months afterwards my practice attendance increased. I kept hoping that each practice would see Sensei coming downstairs once more to teach. To me, it felt like a reward if that would happen. Sometimes, I still get that feeling when coming to practice, hoping that Sensei will come walking down the stairs to teach class. I'm saddened to know that it will not happen again.



O Sensei Memorial Seminar

April 25-27, 2014

April 25th (Friday)

6:30-7:30 PM: David Ito

8:00 PM: No host dinner

April 26th (Saturday)

9:00-10:00 AM: David Ito

10:15-10:50 AM: Ken Watanabe

11:00 AM: O Sensei Memorial service

12:00 PM: Lunch

1:15-2:15 PM: Ken Watanabe-Weapons

2:30-3:15 PM: James Doi

6:30 PM: Seminar social

April 27 (Sunday)

9:00-10:00 AM: Ken Watanabe-Weapons

10:15-10:50 AM: Santiago Almaraz Garcia

11:00-11:45 AM: TBA

12:00-1:00 PM David Ito

Schedule subject to change without notice

Everyone is welcome to attend

\$100.00 per person



If you're looking for good food in Little Tokyo, please support our friends at JiSt Café.

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Los Angeles, CA 90012**

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Saturday-Sunday: 8AM-3PM
Closed Mondays
www.Jistcafe.com**



The Furuya Foundation

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.



Friends and Blossoms

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

In the last part of April, Watanabe Sensei, Mark Ehrlich, and I traveled to Japan to attend Doshu's Ranju Honsho party, celebrating his receiving the Medal with Blue Ribbon from the Emperor of Japan last November. Our visit was jam packed with seeing old friends, making new friends and, of course, Aikido training.



Our first day in Japan we spent the evening in Saitama prefecture (about one hour's train ride outside Tokyo) training and having dinner with the members of Omiya Dojo and our good friend Ichizuka Sensei. We have known the members of Omiya Dojo for decades, and I got to visit with so many people that I had trained with 20 years ago when several members of Omiya Dojo visited us in LA. We also saw our good friend David Smith, an American ex-pat who visited LA with the students from Omiya and acted as translator for us. I really enjoyed training at Omiya Dojo; the students demonstrated a very cheerful spirit and everyone seemed eager to train hard.



On the second day we attended Doshu's party at the Keio Plaza Hotel in Tokyo's Shinjuku neighborhood. The party was full of good cheer, good food, and great company. While it was a very impressive celebration, attended by over 1,600 people, it also gave us the chance to see a lot of old friends who have passed through ACLA over the years. Yoshida Sensei was in town receiving his 7th Dan (Congratulations!). We met many people who had known Sensei over the years as well, and even met Sensei's first Aikido teacher, Tadaharu Wakayabashi. After the party we caught up with Yoshida Sensei and spent the afternoon talking about Aikido.



Later that night we were treated to a remarkable *kaiseki* dinner by our good friend Hiro Tateno, along with Suichi Nakano, Toru Masubuchi, Shunichi Ito, and Shinobu Tsuruta. After dinner we walked to Ueno Park and viewed the cherry blossoms at night. If you think cherry blossoms look beautiful during the day, you should see them at night; they looked exquisite and we marveled at them while we drank and had fun.

We wish to thank all our friends who generously shared with us the photographs displayed on this page and the facing page, especially Yoshida Sensei, Tani Sensei, Keiji Igarashi, Hiro Tateno, Fujita Sensei, and the members of Sakura Dojo. This page: Doshu's Ranju Honsho medal; Ito Sensei, Watanabe Sensei, and Mark Ehrlich with friends at Keio Plaza Hotel; Ito Sensei and Mark Ehrlich enjoying Ueno Park's cherry blossoms at night with Hiro Tateno and friends. Facing page: Sakura Dojo class; dinner after training at Omiya Dojo; Ito Sensei, Watanabe Sensei, and Mark Ehrlich enjoy the afternoon with Keiji Igarashi and Teruo Miwa.

Continued on page 5...

Japan *continued from page 4...*

Very early the next morning we attended Doshu's class, which was filled way beyond capacity. I was so surprised at the number of Aikidoists who woke up that early to train. We arrived 15 minutes before class and the dojo was already overflowing with people from all over the world. It was so crowded I ended up training on the hardwood floor in the back corner with a very nice student from the Philippines. After class we took Yoshida Sensei out for breakfast to celebrate his promotion and were joined by our old friend Bill Gillespie. For dinner we went to Tokyo Base, an old standby, for some great *tonkotsu* ramen. I don't think I ever saw Watanabe Sensei smile that much at the end of a bowl of ramen.

A day later we returned to Saitama to train at the lovely Sakura Dojo with our good friend Fujita Sensei, who also came with the group from Omiya Dojo all those years ago. The training at this dojo was fun and everyone displayed a fine Aikido spirit. Afterwards we went to dinner and had some lively discussions about life and Aikido. It's funny; no matter where we go, students all ask the same questions and talk about the same things. Aikido really is one world.

Later in the week we headed off for Takayama which someone had called "the Kyoto of the North". On our way to Takayama we stopped off and saw our friends at Nosyudo and spent the afternoon talking about swords and touring the local sites. We spend time admiring the cherry blossoms, which were in full bloom and gorgeous, and we also paid a visit to the local sword museum, where they have exhibits on every aspect of the sword, its history, and how it still gets made. Takayama was really beautiful and the *ryokan* (traditional inn) where we stayed really reflected the architecture and ambiance of old Japan. The *onsen* (spa bath) felt delicious after all of our traveling and training.

Overall we had a great trip that was filled with old and new friends. As the saying goes, it's a small world, and the true greatness of Aikido is that it unites so many different people from so many different places. I will always have fond memories of this trip and our adventures. We hope to see all of our friends in Japan again soon.

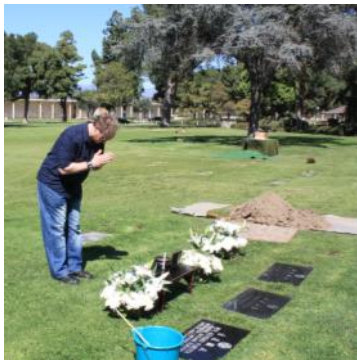




Rev. Kensho Furuya
1948-2007



Los Angeles Tsuito Hoyo



Reverend Kensho Furuya Memorial Service



Salamanca Tsuito Hoyo

You Don't Have to Laugh to Be Happy, You Don't Have to Cry to Be Sad

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

A dojo practice ideally sparks happy feelings in us but, as many people think, it doesn't mean that everyone is simply laughing all the time during practice. At the same time, it doesn't mean that we need to feel sad. People discuss this a lot, I see, but I think we can understand this easily; it is just common sense. For instance, when we go to a movie or concert and we enjoy ourselves, it doesn't necessarily mean that no one will know how happy we feel unless we laugh out loud.

Ideally, our practice feels quiet in the sense that everyone stays focused on what they are doing. Just because we do not issue loud guffaws doesn't mean that we feel unhappy. Of course, in every practice, there is always one person who is not happy. In every dojo, there are always one or two people who never seem happy whatever we do. But generally, the proper mood in the dojo registers as happy and enjoyable but not loud. Please remember that other people are practicing and trying to focus on what they are doing, and a quiet atmosphere allows everyone to practice without disturbance.

And then, there are many types of laughter, are there not? A happy laugh is not necessarily loud. Some people laugh to hide their sorrow; some laugh to hide their embarrassment or anger; some laugh simply to distract themselves from the task at hand; some laugh only because they want attention; and some laugh because they are not in the present but "somewhere" else! Some laughs are good and acceptable, some are not. . . .

Ohsawa Sensei used to make us laugh once in a while during his class, but I don't think he wanted us to laugh out loud the entire class. He only made us laugh to make sure we were paying attention to what he was saying, I think; it seemed a method of teaching. I knew another teacher who used to make everyone laugh all of the time in class: he would always try to tell the worst jokes, thinking that if we laughed, we were all happy and enjoying his class. Actually, it felt very irritating because we all wanted to practice and what he had to say had nothing to do with Aikido. Although we laughed (out of politeness), we all became very upset and distracted!

I know some students who never laugh in class during practice, but

they are not unhappy or sad; in fact, they are really enjoying themselves and doing well. I know some students who laugh all the time, but I think they are only distracting themselves and bothering others. They themselves are laughing but no one else is: everyone else is being bothered. This is not good at all. Some students like to come up to me and laugh to show me they are happy. They really do not need to laugh, and I only find such an artificial laugh very irritating. Sometimes, it is just silly!

Sometimes students tell me that they have gone to dojos where everyone laughs throughout the entire class – I have seen this type of class too, where everyone laughs and enjoys themselves, talks when they should be practicing, and walks on and off the mats at any time. Many times, they talk when the teacher is teaching. Although one hears laughter, I don't think everyone is happy here. This sounds like artificial laughter that in turn creates artificial happiness. It only tries to hide a serious problem, and such a situation is not good at all.

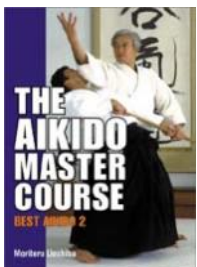
One time, a visiting instructor said to me after class: "Your class is too quiet." He meant this in a negative sense. I was concerned, and later asked my students if this was true. They replied, "He tried to make us laugh saying silly things, what a waste of time!"

Yes, a class should be quiet and in our dojo, if you laugh, someone may "shush" you. There is no law against laughing but there is a proper time to laugh. The rule in the dojo is, "Think of others first." If I happen to tell a joke and you laugh or chuckle for a few seconds, I am happy. But if you sit there and laugh for ten minutes, I will probably ask my assistants to call an ambulance for you!

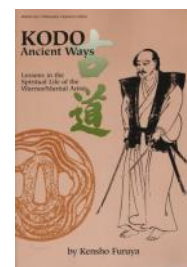
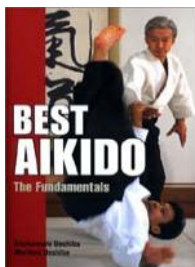
In Japanese, we say the class should be *iki iki toshite*. This means, "lively, active, dynamic, and enjoyable". We don't need to laugh to show everyone we are happy all of the time, and we don't need to cry to show that we feel sad. If we will think of others first, we will all know who among us feels happy or sad. Finally, in Aikido, don't be happy just on your face or by the sounds you make – be happy in your heart!

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on September 15, 2003.

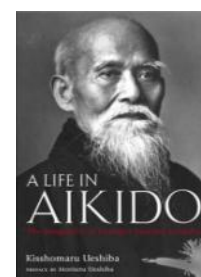
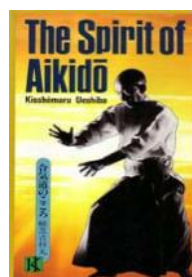
Recommended Readings:



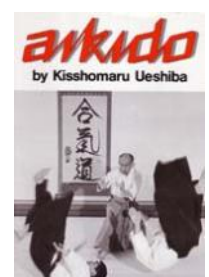
by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Kensho Furuya



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



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 Advanced*

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Intermediate

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

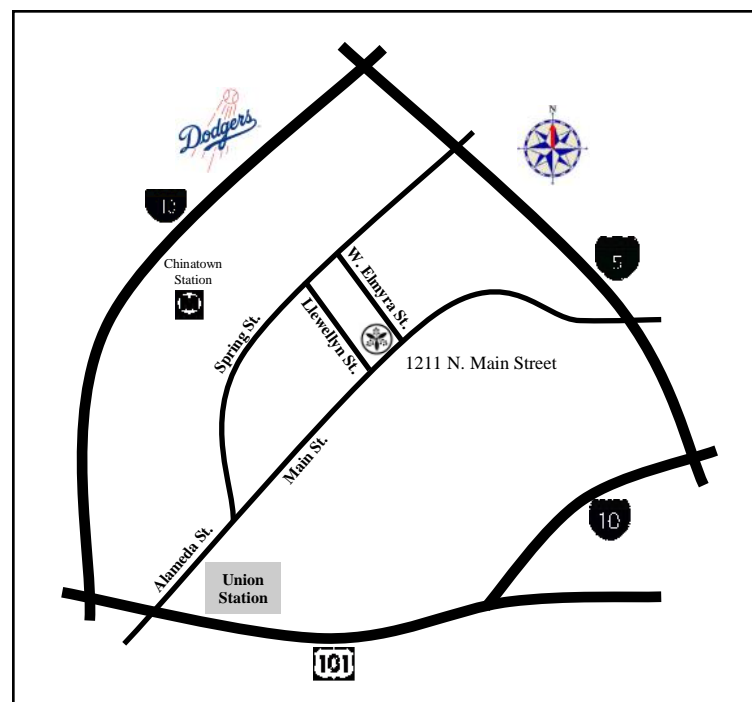
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



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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.



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The Aiki Dojo
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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.

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Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at

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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.