



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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世の為、
人の為
合気道

The Aiki Dojo

Direct Affiliation: Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
Los Angeles Sword and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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In This Issue...

- Message From the Teacher**
by David ItoPage 1
- Changing the World**
by David ItoPage 2
- Letter**
by Santiago AlmarazPage 3
- Memorial Seminar**Page 4 & 5
- Just Do It**
by Ken WatanabePage 6
- There is No Enlightenment**
by Rev. Kensho FuruyaPage 7
- Class Schedule**Page 8
- Dojo Map**Page 8



Morihei Ueshiba
December 14, 1883 – April 26, 1969

Upcoming Events

- April 6th:**
New Weapons class starts
Thursdays at 6:30 PM
- April 26th:**
O'Sensei memorial service
- April 29th:**
Intensive seminar
- May 17-29th:**
Hiro Tateno visits the dojo
from Tokyo, Japan
- May 27th:**
Intensive seminar
- May 29th:**
Dojo closed: Memorial Day
- June 24th:**
Intensive seminar

Message From the Teacher by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

On ko chi shin (温故知新) – To learn something new by studying something old.

This year we celebrate the 48th anniversary of O'Sensei's passing. Pondering this, I wondered, "What is tradition?"

One year, Furuya Sensei wrote this about the passing of O'Sensei and tradition:

We have come a long ways in Aikido since the days of O'Sensei. Much of it, we have evolved ourselves and much has evolved through time, tide and circumstances. To a great part, it has taken on the character of the people who practice today. What we have forgotten in Aikido, I believe, is that in grasping for what is tomorrow and what is new, we have, to some degree, discarded the past. Yes, it is important to leave the past and move into the future. But it is also important to preserve what we have learned

from the past as well. This is called "tradition." And we must preserve its wisdom and knowledge – not as something old or obsolete – but as a thin string of energy which keeps us always connected to O'Sensei and our Aikido roots. Please honor O'Sensei and remember him on his day.

With Sensei's assertion, tradition is then something which influences change in the future while still maintaining and honoring the past.

Remembering O'Sensei on the day of his passing is a form of *on ko chi shin*. Year after year, it becomes harder and harder to remember O'Sensei and it becomes easier and easier to forget. Thus, the process of having a memorial service becomes a part of our training and thus a form of *on ko chi shin*.

This year, as with every year, we honor the passing of O'Sensei not just to say, "Thank you," but also to keep the connection to his teachings and help us maintain our traditions.

Changing the World

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

The gold standard for competitive runners is to be able to run a mile in under four minutes. Runners have been trying to break this “four-minute barrier” since as early as the 1700s. Up until 1954, the world record for running a mile was 4 minutes and 13 seconds. Runners have continually tried to run a mile in less than four minutes, but it was commonly thought to be a physiologically impossible feat. Then in May of 1954, a 25-year-old medical student name Roger Bannister broke the “four-minute barrier” with a time of 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds. At the moment Roger Bannister broke the “four-minute barrier”, the world experienced a shift in perspective.

People believed that the “four-minute barrier” was so real that they erected an insurmountable barrier around four minutes in their minds. As soon as Roger Bannister broke the barrier, the world experienced a “shift” in consciousness in not only what they believe was possible, but what they believed they could do too. Since Roger Bannister’s fateful day, the mile has been continually run by many runners in under four minutes and the world record now stands at 3 minutes and 43 seconds.

It can be easy to become entrenched in one’s beliefs as to what is possible or impossible. When we believe something to be true or false then our minds tend to create parameters. It naturally does this to pare down information in order to minimize the anxiety that comes along with making a plan with too many choices.

In order to have an awakening or some type of shift, one has to witness something so compelling that one’s mind can no longer see things the same way or go back to the same way of doing afterwards. In a sense their usual way of thinking becomes changed. Whenever we have a different opinion on a matter than previously thought, we usually say that we “Changed our minds” or in metaphysics, it is referred to as a “Shift in consciousness.” Regardless, we are so profoundly altered in a way that we are no longer able to see something the same and what we think is even possible might be transformed as well.

This year marks the 48th year since O’Sensei passed away. O’Sensei was one of those groundbreaking pioneers who totally revolutionized the way the world thought about martial arts. Previously to O’Sensei’s generation, *budo* or the martial arts were solely approached as a means to cultivate one’s physical body and to inculcate it with the techniques of fighting and war. Within the context or situation in that period of time, the need for violence is understandable and even necessary for survival. In line with that thinking, the current research supports the popular sport adage that “Violence is

in our DNA.” Research actually supports this quip but what it also supports is that with a modern society comes a 200 percent decrease in violent deaths which supports O’Sensei’s philosophy that with training and personal development, we can rise above ourselves.



O’Sensei teaching at Hombu Dojo in the 1960s.

At the inception of Aikido is where O’Sensei reached the pinnacle of his own martial arts training and it was at this point that he realized what he came believe was the true essence of *budo* – the concept of non-violence. Non-violence in Indian religious philosophy is called *ahimsa*. The main teaching of *ahimsa* is that one should strive to do no harm in action, speech or thought. Whether or not O’Sensei was directly influenced by Indian philosophy, he came to understand the concept of *ahimsa* and applied it to the philosophy and training of Aikido.

Aikido’s direction is towards attaining *ahimsa* and O’Sensei believed that training was the vehicle that could carry us to this liberation. Training in Aikido is what Buddhist call *jiriki* (自力) or that martial arts practice was an avenue toward spiritual enlightenment. In order to get to the place of practicing non-violence, one needed training. O’Sensei ushered in this idea that training was *shugyo* or ascetic in which it is almost spiritual in that it was designed as a discipline to improve one’s inner self as well as develop one’s outer self.

This where we can pinpoint the ground-breaking difference between other martial arts and Aikido where one focuses purely on technical mastery in order to fell an opponent or *jutsu* (術) to something deeper or more spiritually meaningful like Aikido which is a *do* (道) or a way of life. Aikido is more than a means to fell one’s opponent or destroy the world. Aikido, as Moriteru Ueshiba wrote is “A way to absolute self-accomplishment.”

Today, Aikido is practiced in over 130 countries world-wide by millions of people. O’Sensei’s greatness was not in what he could do, but in what he showed us was possible to attain. He showed us that a better version of ourselves is waiting only to be uncovered by constant and diligent training.

O’Sensei changed the world with the creation of Aikido. He was the flint that sparked true change and enabled us to rise above ourselves. It is humbling to think about how hard and thanklessly O’Sensei worked for our benefit. We are forever in his debt which can never be repaid, but by remembering him on the day of his passing, we can show our gratitude and appreciation for all that O’Sensei has given us. I can honestly say that I am grateful for all that Aikido, through O’Sensei’s inception, has brought me in my life. Thank you very much O’Sensei



Almaraz Sensei's first visit to the dojo in June of 1997.



Almaraz Sensei's 20th visit to the dojo this year.

Dear Ito Sensei,

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all you do.

I cannot believe that it has been 20 years since the first time I came to Los Angeles. It seems like yesterday. It is also even more astonishing that my dojo celebrates its 20th year anniversary next year. This year is extremely special to me because it is also the 10th anniversary of Furuya Sensei's passing.

So this year, I return to Los Angeles with a heavy heart to share these auspicious occasions with you, my students and my friends and teachers at the Aikido Center of Los Angeles.

It is a testament to Sensei that so many of his former students traveled from all over the world to pay their respects to him and participate in his memorial service and seminar. It is definitely a reflection of how important Sensei and the dojo are for all of us. It gives me great pride to see how we all remember Sensei and how we all keep him alive in each of our hearts and in our classes.

Much was said about how much effort it must have taken me to keep coming to Los Angeles over these past 20 years, but I am sure it pales in comparison to what it must have taken to keep the Aikido Center of Los Angeles open after Sensei's passing.

All this would not be possible if someone was not behind it all. That person is you. Most of the work you do is hidden in the shadows to most of your students, friends and on-lookers but it is only with your hard work that after 10 years many of Sensei's students come together again and there is a dojo to come back to. That is why I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you for all your hard work and dedication on behalf of all of my students at Aikido Kodokai.

I am sure that keeping the dojo going after Sensei's passing was not an easy task and not everyone would be prepared to take on that type of responsibility. Keeping Sensei's memory alive is no easy task either and probably one of the most difficult things you had to do especially after 10 years.

Over the years, many people fell by the wayside and quite a few others preferred to go their own way but you held firm despite all the criticisms, comparisons to Sensei, and other outside pressures. To weather a storm of that magnitude could have been truly crushing and that is a testament to you as a person. Most of what you do must be shouldered alone but you do it with a sense of purpose and firmness that I am sure would make Sensei proud.

In these past 10 years, I have been able to see how you have grown and evolved not only technically but in all aspects in your capacity as a teacher. Ito Sensei, your faithfulness to the teachings and ideals of Furuya Sensei make me proud and I know that the Aikido Center of Los Angeles is in good hands.

I am deeply grateful to you, Watanabe Sensei, Doi Sensei and all the students at the Aikido Center of Los Angeles for all they do to keep Sensei's memory alive and the dojo in good health.

Thank you all so very much.

Santiago Almaraz Garcia
Chief Instructor
Aikido Kodokai
Salamanca, Spain



**Reverend Kensho Furuya's
10th Memorial Service and Seminar**



Just Do It

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

One of the greatest and most enlightened Aikido masters, Kisaburo Osawa Sensei, said “Just do good Aikido.” Our teacher, Rev. Ken-sho Furuya who trained under Ozawa Sensei when he trained at Hombu Dojo in 1969 adopted this maxim as well. However, students can interpret “doing good Aikido” many ways. Some peoples’ idea of doing “good Aikido” means becoming invincible and winning at all costs. An inspiring instructor might believe that getting tons of students; building a big, powerful organization; charging lots of money, and becoming popular might be the benchmark of what one might deem “good Aikido”.

It’s easy to lose the essence of “Just do good Aikido”. When we think of a martial artist, we think of a powerfully-built barrel-chested fighter with an imposing glare. Ozawa Sensei appeared to be small, frail looking man whose technique looked very smooth and soft, yet he was one of those martial artists who had the reputation of being “untouchable”. It’s easy to think, “I know better,” and concentrate on our expectations and our own self-centered ideas instead of doing what is essential. Like a chef who prepares pretty food that doesn’t taste good, or a ninja school that advertises on a billboard – it is easy to lose something’s meaning.

Aikido is known as the “non-fighting” martial art, yet students often find themselves struggling during practice, resisting their partner, and mistaking those moments for “good Aikido”. Instead of trying to understand the meaning of a “non-fighting” martial art, they practice Aikido with their own idea of what a martial art is supposed to be; strength, speed, or devastating techniques. Their idea of good is that lots of effort needs to be expended and this kind of straining is what’s mistaken as “good Aikido.”

Some people join Aikido thinking, “What we can I get out of it?” As human beings, we like putting ourselves first. After all, who doesn’t like a return on their investment? We train in Aikido to become strong, learn how to protect ourselves, maybe get some confidence, or wish for some other benefit we might get from the training. Who just “does” Aikido, right?

There is a story that when Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China, he was summoned to the capitol by Emperor Wu who was also an ardent Buddhist as well as a major supporter of the religion.

Legend has it that during their meeting, the Emperor told Bodhidharma about all the support he’d given the Buddhist religion, like building temples and donating money, then he asked, “What merit gave I gained?” to this question, the Zen patriarch answered, “No merit whatsoever!”

The Emperor was confused. Didn’t he do so much to help the Buddhist religion? Didn’t he earn that merit?

Bodhidharma knew that the Emperor’s actions weren’t made in the spirit of altruism, but instead, made for self-serving reasons. The Emperor forgot about the essence of giving and although his actions were correct the spirit in which they were made was not. Bodhidharma knew this and that’s why he gave the Emperor that answer.

Sometimes when we practice, when we throw and pin our partner strongly and it makes us feel that we are doing “good Aikido.” Aikido is, first and foremost a martial art so there is an element of subduing our opponent, but when we are attacked or are in danger, our training enables us to emerge from conflict unharmed. When we struggle against our opponent’s strength and finally overpower it, we feel we are doing “good Aikido.” Instead of trying to learn the technique correctly, we may try all kinds of things in order to throw our partner down.



As with Emperor Wu’s donations, there is no merit to this kind of self-centered practice; throwing our partner down any

which way we can. The *correct* practice of Aikido itself is merit; throwing someone down to show everyone how good we are, as beautiful as the technique may be, is not.

Approaching any endeavor with ego-driven expectations can only invite disappointment. Some are attracted to the non-fighting aspect and its message of harmony and peace, while others want to experience Japanese culture. We might join Aikido for various reasons; to get strong, to learn for self-defense, or to get into shape. Aikido is good for all of these reasons, and much more, but a student who practices to one day expect a magical transformation misses the point of traditional training.

Zen meditation teaches that when assuming the same posture and mental state as the Buddha you become the Buddha. The meditation is not something to be used as a means to an end result. There are no “meditation points” to accumulate like saving coins in a piggy bank. The meditation itself *is* the end result. In Aikido, the proper practice itself is harmony. To understand the philosophy of Aikido we don’t try to understand it with our intellects, but we simply practice it and learn it with our bodies.

A beginner might only understand strength and power when throwing or pinning, but an experienced student knows that in a proper Aikido technique the movements and energy of both the attacker and the defender become indistinguishable. The attacker’s power influencing the movements of the thrower, or *nage*, and in turn controlling the attacker’s power. Doing “good Aikido” is more than doing it well, but also practicing it with the right spirit. Doing “good Aikido is also more than simply doing a strong, effective technique with your arms, legs, and body, but wholeheartedly practicing it with the correct spirit. Simply doing that is the most difficult teaching of all. The important thing is to not dwell on good or bad the way your ego might view it, but to – like the saying goes – “cut off your head and place it next to the door” when entering the dojo and simply do “good Aikido.”

There is No Enlightenment

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

I think many people get confused when we talk about the so-called “spiritual aspects” of the martial arts and think that the main goal and perhaps the only goal is to gain enlightenment such as in Zen training. Oddly, what a Zen master usually tells the student is that, “there is no enlightenment at all!” Maybe this sounds confusing but it is true. I think that maybe it is like going to Heaven. Of course, this is our ultimate goal but, most people, I think, do not think about it every day or every minute of the day but just go on with their lives. It is something that is only stuck in the back of our minds. I think we can think of enlightenment in the same way – it is only a distant goal in the back of our heads. If we think about it constantly, we will go crazy, indeed, it is better to think, “It will never happen!”

I think many people do not understand the “method” of instruction in the Japanese traditional martial arts. Many times, the teacher will say something to get them to think or to look at something in a certain way, knowing that by taking a particular perspective, they might understand the art a little bit better.

Today, we only think in terms of receiving information and processing it ourselves in our own heads. In traditional martial arts, we know that without the proper perspective or “take” on the matter, we will not catch on no matter how much info we accumulate on the topic.

This is an ancient form of teaching going back thousands of years. In ancient India, it is referred to as “*upaya*” and in Japanese it is called *houben* (方便). The words *upaya* and *houben* mean “skillful means” or the methods we use to teach the student in the best way. Many times these methods are very unconventional and so a great deal of respect and trust is needed between the teacher and student.

Sometimes a teacher teaches something which doesn’t quite make sense but we practice it anyways. Usually, we say, “Hmm, I like it (or, I don’t like it!)” and then decide to do it or not. Of course, this is a smart and clever way. Yet, it is also very hard to learn this way as well. As they say in Japanese, “To trust someone means that we must become stupid.” We say this in Japanese, but I think it is hard to understand it correctly in this day and age, but this is how people learned many years ago.

When we were building the difficult stairway to the third floor in the dojo, I had the help of an old Japanese professor of modern art who used to be a traditional Japanese temple carpenter. His father used to repair the complex wooden structures of old Japanese tem-



ples. As we started, he nailed a post right in the middle of nowhere and I was so surprised. “Why does that post go there?” I asked but he didn’t say anything and kept on working. This really made me upset because there was no reason I could see why this post needed to be there. As he kept working however, it all became very clear. He was already ten steps ahead in the planning of the staircase and knew that the post at that point would be an important structural element. Of course, I know nothing of carpentry, yet I still had my opinions! When I realized it, I was so ashamed.

Many times, teaching is like this. Some students ask, “Why, why?” But it is too much to explain or for them to understand. Eventually, if they keep practicing, they will understand. Often, like this carpenter, when I am teaching, I feel like I am setting up posts in places that none of my students can understand.

Where did *upaya* come from? Once long ago, a house caught on fire. The fire was so big that none could approach the blazing flames. Inside the house, several children were playing so everyone shouted to them, “Come out, come out, the house is on fire or you will be burned to death!”

However, the children kept on playing. They did not understand the words, danger, fire, or death so they did not understand why they needed to stop their games. Finally the Buddha said,

“Children, I have some nice candy for you, please come out and have some with me!” And the children all came racing out of the burning house. In Japanese, there is a saying, “*Usu mo hoben*” which means “Even the Buddha will lie, if he can teach the students properly or save a life.”

Of course, there is enlightenment and of course, we should enlighten ourselves. But the best way to teach the student is to say, “There is no enlightenment at all.” Can you understand?

To say “I am good” and believe in one’s own perfection in everything is the negative or self-destructive way to say, “I am good!”

Of course, we should think to ourselves and believe, “I am good! I am good!” However, in everything we do, if we only focus on “I am good!” then life becomes very hard and it becomes very hard to do, learn or accept anything from someone else. Sometimes, as a method of learning, we have to say, “I am not so good” meaning of course, “I must try harder!” This is the positive way to say, “I am not so good.”

Editor’s Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his Daily Message board on January 16, 2005.

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

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals
 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

Thursdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals
 6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

Fridays

6:30-7:30 AM Fundamentals
 6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

6:30-8:00 AM Intensive Seminar* †
 9:30-10:30 AM Open
 10:45-11:45 AM Open

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.
 † Intensive seminar is offered the last Saturday of every month by invitation only.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

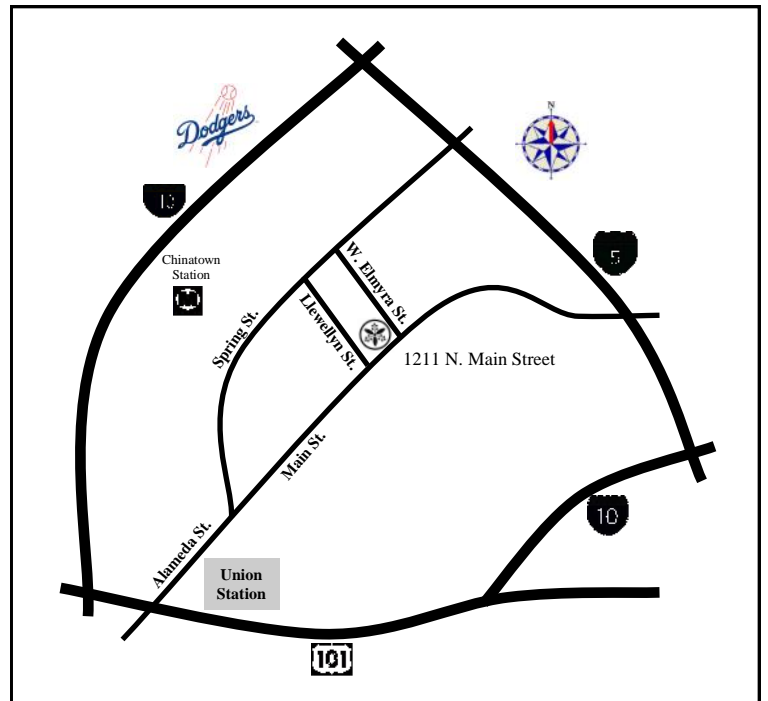
Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM Open

Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM Open
 6:30-7:30 PM Weapons

No weekend classes on the last weekend of the month.



The Aikido Center of Los Angeles has been awarded
**Official Hombu Recognition by the
 AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

公益財団法人 合気会

**Aikikai Foundation – Aikido World Headquarters
 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.



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 will also dedicate yourself to your training and enjoy all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido have to offer.

Editor-in-Chief and Publisher: David Ito



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.