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Aikido Center of Los Angeles

The Aiki Dojo

Affiliation: The Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles Sword & Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai Headquarters
Office of the President: Nanka Yamanashi Kenjin Kai Southern California Yamanashi Prefectural Assoc.
Member Los Angeles Police Department Martial Artist Advisory Panel

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Congratulations

Salamanca Kodokai Celebrates 3rd Anniversary

Discovery Channel Special: On the Inside: Martial Arts Sept. 29-30.

After many shoots in the Dojo, the video taping is finally completed and the editing process begins. The Discovery Channel expects to air this special sometime in April of next year. Many thanks to all who participated in the interviews and demonstrations and a thousand apologies to all the students for several disrupted classes. We all hope it turns out well. The Special will air over three days.



Nick Nicolice, Seymour Clay, Bill D'Angelo and Adam Bennet Celebrate New Dojo & Friends.



PBS cameraman video taping warm-ups and practice.

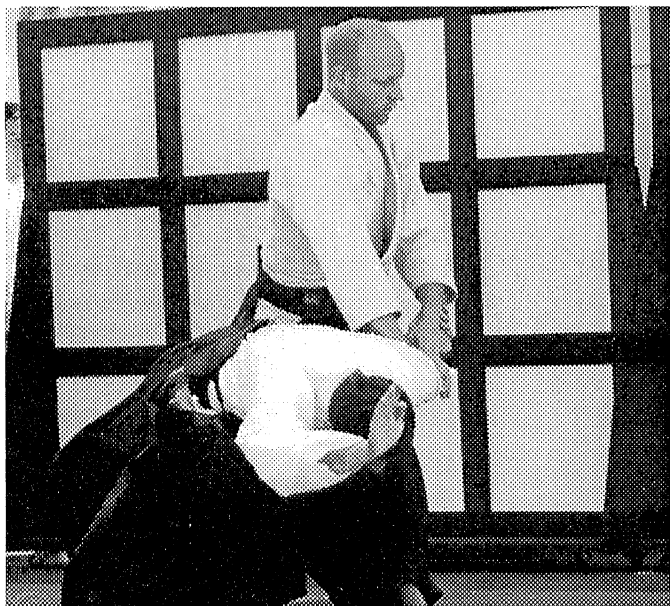
International Martial Arts Academy Established.

On November 18, the International Martial Arts Academy will celebrate its debut in Chinatown with a fund raising dinner and demonstration in which the Aikido Center of Los Angeles and Sensei will participate. Sensei was recently elected to its faculty. The new facility is located in Arcadia. Its goal is not only to unite various martial arts and martial arts leaders but to eventually create an accredited college level institution. Tickets for 350 guests are sold out. Its organizers are Sifu Wen Mei Yu of the Jian Mei Association for internal Chinese martial arts and Sifu Marvin Quon of the Draco Art-Internal and External Chinese Martial Arts.

Happy Thanksgiving Holiday!

Jim MacDonald Featured in in "Tigerland" Hit Debuting Oct. 6 In LA Theaters.

The Viet Nam War movie which opened on October 6th, features our own Dojo "Tiger," Jim MacDonald. Jim MacDonald was recently featured in the Emmy Award HBO Series, "Sex in the City," and a new series, "Three Sisters."



According to the Los Angeles Times movie review on opening day, October 6th: "Tigerland" launches a screenful of young and talented actors and wins over even those of us who frankly would rather never have to deal with the Viet Nam War on the screen ever again." The movie is receiving excellent reviews. "Although I did not go to see "Saving Private Ryan" or "The Thin Red Line," I will definitely go to see "Tigerland!" said Sensei. Congratulations!

Dojo Christmas Party Dec. 8. At the Smoke House.

This year, we will celebrate Christmas at the Smoke House in Burbank. Everyone is welcome and we wish to encourage members of the Iaido and Children's Class to come as well. Let's celebrate the Holiday Season together. Please sign up with Cheryl or Carol Tanita. Make your reservations early.

Dojo Clean-up Party Dec. 2.

Please save Saturday for our Annual Dojo Clean-up Party. We need, rags, ladders, vacuum cleaners and plenty of elbow grease for tatami, garden, wall and ceiling cleaning this year.

Our New Dojo E-Mail Express:

If you wish to be on our Dojo E-Mail Express to hear the latest Dojo news, events, last minute schedule changes, submit your e-mail address to Cheryl, and you will always be up-to-date with everything that goes on in Our Dojo.

Our Dojo Year-End Schedule

Nov. 8. General Meeting.

*Nov. 18. International Martial Arts Academy
Fund Raising Dinner and Demonstration.*

Nov. 23. Thanksgiving Holiday.

Dec. 2. Year End Clean-Up Party.

Dec. 9. Dojo Christmas Party

Dec. 13. General Meeting.

Dec. 24. Christmas Eve Practice.

Dec. 25. Christmas Holiday.

Dec. 30-31. Regular Practice.

Jan. 1. New Year's Holiday

Our New Class Schedule:

*Our Tuesday 6:30pm Class is now open to
all students.*

*Our Thursday 12noon-1:00pm Class is
doing well. Everyone is welcome to attend.*

*Our Saturday & Sunday Aikido Class is
extended from 10:15-11:30am.*

Next Issue: Featuring Salamanca Kodokai's 3rd Anniversary by Santiago Almaraz. Special Guest from Germany. Dan Grade Presentations. International Martial Arts Academy Dinner and Demonstration and more.

Holiday Gift Idea:

Sensei's *KODO: Ancient Ways* and the video tape series, *The Art of Aikido*, makes a very nice Christmas gift and, at the same time, helps to support the Dojo. Help support your Dojo during the Holiday season.

So. Calif. Yamanashi Kenjinkai Celebrates 100th Anniversary, March 2001

Next year, in March, the Southern California Yamanashi Kenjinkai, Yamanashi Prefectural Association, will celebrate its 100th Anniversary. This marks the anniversary of the first immigrants to this country from Yamanashi Prefecture. Sensei is one of the first 3rd generation Japanese-Americans to ever hold the office of the Presidency in this type of association.

Discovery Channel Special:



Discovery Channel producers and cameraman with Sensei.

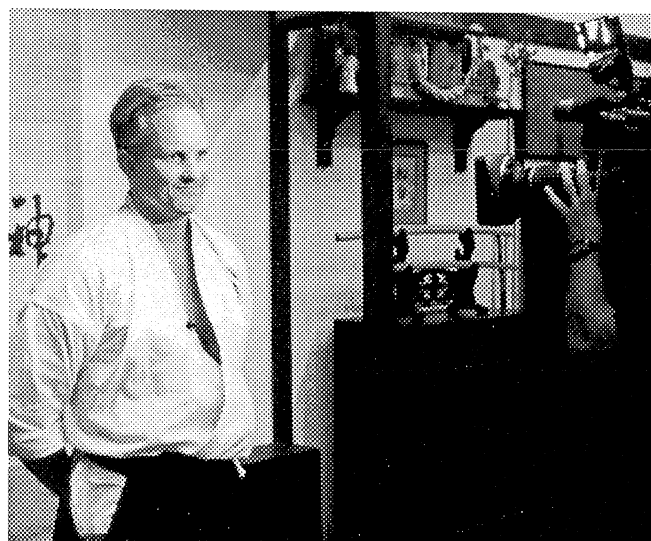
Letters:

10-11-00: Furuya Sensei: I enjoy reading your website and your daily messages.

Joe, Fairfield, Ca.

10-15-00: Dear Furuya Sensei, I am interested in studying at your school. I presently live in Seattle, but am planning to move to Los Angeles at the end of this year.

While I have basic understanding of Aikido principles, my training is in other related arts. For the last two years I have been a student at the Practical Defense Institute. According to my teachers, the principles are mostly based on Aikijitsu, 3rd-form Shaolin, and also include mind and kiai techniques for taking the opponent's balance. During my two years in this class I have learned many of the basic throws, locks, breaks, disarming, and some basic kiais and disappearing techniques. I am especially interested in the mental and psychological applications of the art -- e.g. kiai-jitsu, disappearing, stealing the opponent's balance without physical contact. Previous to this class, I studied tai chi and qigong for five years. I believe I would be a very good student in your school. For reference you may contact Grand Master Thank you very much for your consideration. Respectfully, J. S.

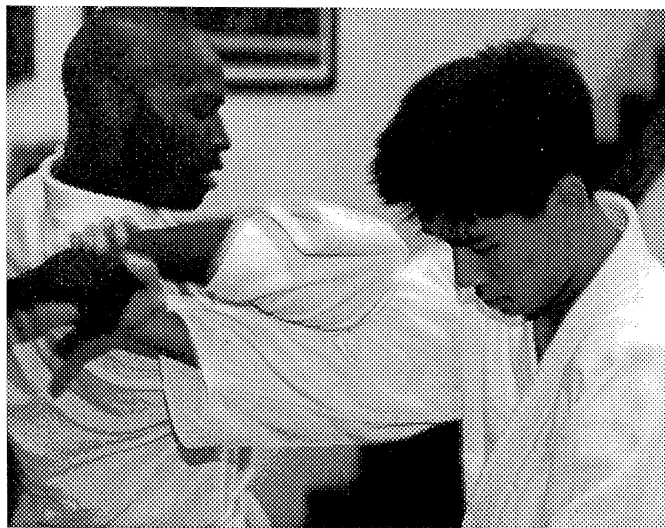


Congratulations

Dr. Jeff Johnson interviewed by the Discovery Channel.. Also Congratulations to Jeff Johnson and the Mrs. who are expecting their sixth child! Jeff is a pediatrician at USC.

Our Class Schedule:

Our Tuesday 6:30pm Class is now open to all students. Our Thursday 12noon-1:00pm Class is doing well. Everyone is welcome to attend. Our Saturday & Sunday Aikido Class is extended 10:15-11:30am.



Seymour Clay from the Bahamas and Mark Ty practicing.

LA Downtown Art Studios Tour Scheduled June, 2001

We will be scheduling our Aikido & Iaido Demonstration, including Dojo Open House, Sale and Display by Yoshino Japanese Antiques and a ceramics sale by Mike Van Ruth. Next year, they are including a "Critics Choice" bus tour so we will expect many people. This year, we had over 350 guests and it was a big success.

Sensei's Message: 10x10x10

Recently my students were interviewed for a program and each one mentioned how I make them do the basic Aikido techniques over and over again. I don't think they were complaining but, at the same time, I am not sure if they really understood my true intention. Somehow, I felt that maybe they were a little bewildered that Aikido could be so demanding and disciplined. Of course, Aikido is demanding as a martial art because IT IS a martial art! Of course, if we interpret and practice Aikido as a more leisure socially-oriented pastime, as some might do, maybe it doesn't need its edge. This is, however, not my cup of tea. Aikido may evolve with the times, but, I believe it should never lose its original character as a martial art. As a martial art, it is important and essential to practice each Aikido technique, correctly, with precision, and with an infinite number of times until you can practically, no, easily, "do it in your sleep!"

Some students have practiced for a number of years, maybe even five or ten years and more. Some have come to class two or three times a week maybe even five, six or seven days a week for a while. Maybe they have practiced one technique several thousands of times or so over the years. Maybe they are a little better than some beginners and can even teach a class or two. "Look at my black belt, everybody, look how old my hakama is," we would like to say. We all think we are very good. . . .

In the study of the Japanese sword, we record swords when we examine them by making an "oshigata." This is a "rubbing" of the signature of the maker. A piece of thin paper is placed over the signature of the sword and a soft charcoal is rubbed over the paper making an exact impression of the signature. In addition, we also use the charcoal to make a rubbing of the exact shape of the tang along with the signature. We record the width of the blade and in many cases we trace and draw in the pattern of the temper line. As good as a clear photograph of the sword can be, this is still the preferred method of recording a sword. But it is an art in itself as I found out over of the years. And, it is not that easy to do!

Many years ago, when we didn't know much about swords, I imitated this method by using common everyday tissue paper and a lead pencil. I used this crude method for years. Someone advised me that a woman's eyebrow pencil has softer lead and made better rubbings. I remember, when I was still quite young, I asked my mother to go to the store and buy me a women's eyebrow pencil she didn't understand and became very angry at me and I got scolded. Later, I managed to find one at the grocery store. I became more sophisticated when I started to use special magnets to hold the paper securely in place while making the rubbings. The Japanese use a kind of

wooden clothes pin with the clamps covered neatly with soft hand-made Japanese paper - it is important not to damage or scratch the blade while doing this. Many years, later, I became even more professional when a friend gave me very special 1st class charcoal and hand-made Japanese paper from Japan especially for sword oshigata.

For over twenty years, I have made about 4,000 to 5,000 rubbings of swords and I thought I was pretty good. I copied the techniques of experts. I thought I was clever when I saw one expert using magnets covered with deer-hide. I went home and immediately made little deer-hide covers for my magnets too. I did everything exactly like the experts and many have even complimented me on how good my rubbings are.

Over the last five or so years I have been getting pointers from a well-known polisher who is an expert at making rubbings. One day I asked him, "I am pretty good at this and I have made over four thousand rubbings and have been doing this for over thirty years, but somehow, I just can't quite get it as good as yours. What is your secret to making such good rubbings?" I expected a quick and easy answer. He replied, "Only four or five thousand rubbings? I practice daily and have made over thirty thousand rubbings! You still have a little ways to go yet!" Yes, I was surprised myself. As much as I have done and over so many years and with all my pride in what I did, I still have a long ways to practice to become really, truly good at this.

The other day, I saw the sword rubbings of another well known polisher and these rubbings are some of the very best I have ever seen. Having one of his rubbings would be like having the original sword itself! Suddenly I thought to myself, he must have made over a million rubbings to get this good!

I still practice oshigata - I practice a little harder nowadays and with much more humility and modesty than before. I think if O'Sensei were alive today, he would tell us, "You have only practiced these Aikido techniques a million times? You still have a little more ways to go yet. . . ."

Anyone can be a master (not like O'Sensei, of course), we just got all the numbers wrong.

Old Fashioned

The Zen master often said: "To lose is enlightenment." For us today, I think this is a very strange statement. Today, we are out to get as much as we can. We are known for what we have, not for what we don't have. Actually, in real life, there is much we need to lose. We have another often used phrase today, "too much baggage!" I think this is what Kodo Roshi meant. We carry much too much on our shoulders and in our heads, especially in our heads. In a world where we are grasping at everything around us; everyday, we need to simply let go. Sometimes it is just better to forget about it, instead of holding on to it and carrying with us everywhere we go. Con't.

Aikido Center of Los Angeles
NEWSLETTER

Old Fashioned continued:

There is a funny story of two young priests travelling down the road when they came across a small stream and a young girl who was afraid to cross it. "Get on my shoulders and I will carry you across," offered one priest. And the thankful girl quickly got onto his shoulders and he carried her across the stream. The two priests parted with the girl at the other side of the stream and continued on their journey. After a while the other priest simply couldn't contain himself any longer and angrily said, "How could you carry that girl on your shoulders, you broke one of our precepts of physical contact with women! Shame on you!" The other priest turned to him and calmly answered, "Are you still carrying that girl on your shoulders (in your head), I left her a long time ago at the bank of the stream."

Some of my close friends used to say that I should have been born in the Meiji Period (over one hundred years ago) or they say that I should have been born in the feudal ages of Japan. They criticize me as too old fashioned in what I do and how I think. I often argue saying that I can't help it, even my name, "Furuya," means "old" ("Furu" means "old" in Japanese). As I think about it, even my book has "old" ("Ancient") in its title. Even my dojo is old! Everything about me is old! Even I am old! Today, it is a kind of negative criticism - because no one wants to be accused of being "old fashioned." Yet, I take it as a nice compliment. In Japanese, we say, "jidai-okure" for "old fashioned," and this has a negative meaning too, but today its meaning is good. To be "old fashioned" means to be conservative, reserved, quiet, disciplined, orderly, honorable and respectful. I think these are all good qualities in a human being. Nowadays, Japanese also say, "gendai-jin" or "modern person" which refers to a young person today. "Modern person" in Japanese also has the nuance of someone who is aggressive, selfish, arrogant and egotistical. I think these are all very negative qualities for humans. Somehow, modern people today don't mind being called this. I don't understand. But when people call me "old-fashioned," I always say, "thank you for the nice compliment."

Two Head, Two Minds

Somehow, it seems like we have two ethical systems in our brains. Money, profit, success, I think of as the "ethics of the brain." Honor, loyalty, commitment, I would like to think of as the "ethics of the heart." Of course, we need both in this world. One cannot, I believe, survive just on money alone - although so many try to. At the same time, we cannot fill our stomachs on honor either. We cannot just live with just one or the other. I think we must decide in our lives, however, which is clearly the more important.

We have been the subject of several PBS and TV specials and another one is documenting our Dojo, as we speak. I think this is very interesting. They do not come to us when they are look-

ing for a "rich" dojo filled with money. They certainly do not come to us when they are looking for a "successful" or "popular" dojo with thousands of students. They say they come to us because they are looking for a "real" dojo. We are not rich, or popular or famous or politically powerful. I am certainly not a celebrity or well known star. We are hidden away in this corner of Little Tokyo, simply trying to refine our Aikido practice in the most humble way. They come looking for something, however; I hope all my students will appreciate this.

What About Me?

Sometimes you don't know until you try it. It is like sashimi (Japanese raw fish) or sushi. Many people don't like it until they try it. Nowadays, many people in Los Angeles are crazy about the stuff - more than Japanese! One of the things I could never understand about my Zen teacher was what he used to say all the time: "It is no use to explain it because no one will understand until they understand it." It sounds a little different in Japanese but this is basically the same meaning: "How can they understand it if you DON'T explain it?" I used to think to myself. But, in many, many cases he is right.

We teach many things in Aikido, but many people WILL not understand a point until they begin to understand it somehow by themselves. I don't know why this is, but it is so. Sometimes, I will say something over and over in class and no one will understand. Then, for some reason, someone will come to me and say that they now understand it. Why? I think we have a problem relating things to ourselves. Maybe we think: "Oh, that doesn't concern me." Or, "that doesn't relate to me." Then we just forget about it or ignore it. Finally, when we realize that something may be about me, we finally perk up our ears and begin to pay attention.

Maybe we need to realize that in the Dojo, although we shouldn't think about "me, me, me," everything in the Dojo about me. We should pay attention to everything and not discriminate between "this is for me, that is for them." Everyone in the Dojo is related to you and for you. You should try to learn even the tiniest point about Aikido.

It can be self-centered to think about matters that only relate to me. At the same time, it can be "reverse" self-centeredness to think that it doesn't concern me at all.

A Precious Gift To Share

Maybe it is self-indulgence but if Aikido wasn't so precious to me, I wouldn't think it is so precious for you. I have seen so much good that Aikido has done for people everywhere all my life. This is the part I would like to share with you.

Please visit our Website often for Sensei's Daily Messages at www.aikidocenterla.com.

More Thoughts: Eternal Life

I heard of an odd fable about a man who bought a magical potion for eternal life, after spending so many years searching for it, he was surprised that it was so cheap, only \$1.00. After suffering from what he thought was the "blessing" of eternal life, he went back to the magician and asked for the potion so that he could finally end this horrible curse. The price of the antidote was a million dollars!

It is the same with trust, the very first time around, it is given freely and with the heart of friendship. Don't ever betray it because the second time around, it can be very, very costly. It is so with teachers, students, and friends, and with all other people you will meet in this life.

Geisha

I get many requests for personal interviews and correspondence from all over the world. Generally, I don't do this. I would rather observe the person on the tatami in my Dojo. Getting to know him through training after a while and guiding and instructing him in the Aikido practice; as I get to know him, it is easier to eventually talk with him and knowing him a little, perhaps I can do some good. It is not so hard, as I think you know, to talk with someone you know rather well, it is very difficult to discuss something like Aikido with someone you hardly know at all. Most importantly one must appreciate that the best learning opportunities take place within the environment of the teacher-student relationship. I am not a talk-show host who says anything just to thrill or entertain the listener. Nor am I a "geisha" who will nod and smile at you and say "yes!" and "wonderful!" to anything you ask no matter how stupid it is.

Generally, people want to "discuss" the spiritual aspects of the art and "do" the physical part of Aikido. We all think that we practice Aikido techniques - physical; we talk about about its philosophy - spiritual.

Actually, from my own experience, I have found this to be completely the opposite way around. Yes, quite the contrary, indeed! Generally, students who concentrate on the so-called "physical" practice, try to overcome their own physical discomfort, tiredness, pain, wear & tear, etc. of their bodies and truly, directly approach the spiritual. In the other hand, students who want to just "talk about" or "discuss" Aikido are generally more "physically" inclined. They think very much of themselves and their own physical comfort and pleasure to do anything physical. I call this being very, very "physically" oriented and somewhat "materialistic." Maybe I am wrong, what do you think?

Letters:

09-15-00: Dear Sensei Furuya: Thank you for the wonderful inspiration your words deliver. Reading your message is an uplifting part of my day. Today's message (9/14), is especially important because as humans we tend to think that material success is the only thing that matters. We see flashy banners and fancy decor and we are immediately attracted to that. As you point out, however, what is really important is what is behind all that. More often than not, fancy is an indication of heartlessness. I hope to always have the clarity of mind and spirit to go beyond all that and let my heart be the driving force in everything I do. Thank you,WO

10-10-00: Dear Reverend Furuya, I saw a program a couple years ago profiling different martial arts. In one segment you were featured. Having contemplated taking up Aikido for many years, I was very much attracted to your philosophy and how you run your dojo. Unfortunately I live too far away to join your dojo. I live in the S.F. bay area . . . Can you recommend a good Aikido sensei in this area who may run his/her dojo with a similar philosophy?

10-13-00: Dear Sensei, Last night as I was training one of my clients (I'm a personal fitness trainer) she asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and where did I see myself in the future. I told her that I wanted to help people live better lives through health/fitness and spirituality. I believe that most of our problems are of our own creation, and that with some teaching from the "masters" or knowledgeable people we could all treat one another better and live more satisfying lives ourselves. Even though I'm Buddhist, I told her that I believe that most of the major religions have the same "basic" lessons (respect, not lying, not stealing, etc.) and that people should seek the right path for themselves. With the many problems in our world, kids having babies, drugs, guns, broken families, and just general indifference towards our fellow people, there must be some better way. She said, "You're full of ideals. The world has always been chaotic like it is and it will continue to be that way." I felt very saddened. It was as if she was saying it was better to just give up, and not to try to improve the situation. This made me think of your many writings about how you say that you are "old fashioned", and reaching back to the past.

I gain much inspiration and a "solid foundation" from your daily writings, I hope you realize how important they are. I'm still planning on joining your dojo, but my work schedule is a tricky one. I work for myself and most of my clients are early in the morning 6a-11a and then again at night 4p-8p. Sooner or later I'll figure something out. In the meantime I'll have the good fortune to read your daily words. Sincerely, S. C.

Letters are received through the mail and through our e-mail on the internet. You can also read our correspondence by visiting our website daily at www.aikidocenterla.com. Keep in touch!

Taiji: Seminar Report from Los Angeles

By Mike Hitchcock

Reprinted from Summer Sun: Journal of the Traditional Wushu Association. August 31, 2000

On Tuesday August 8th Sensei Kensho Furuya hosted Sifu Adam Hsu at Sensei's Aikido Center of Los Angeles, for a seminar on Chen style taiji quan and neigong (internal training). The following evening the Jason Tsou Kung Fu Academy also hosted him for a seminar on power issuing in kung fu and applying the power issuing in kung fu usage. Following are some of the key points touched on in the seminars.

Chen Taiji Quan

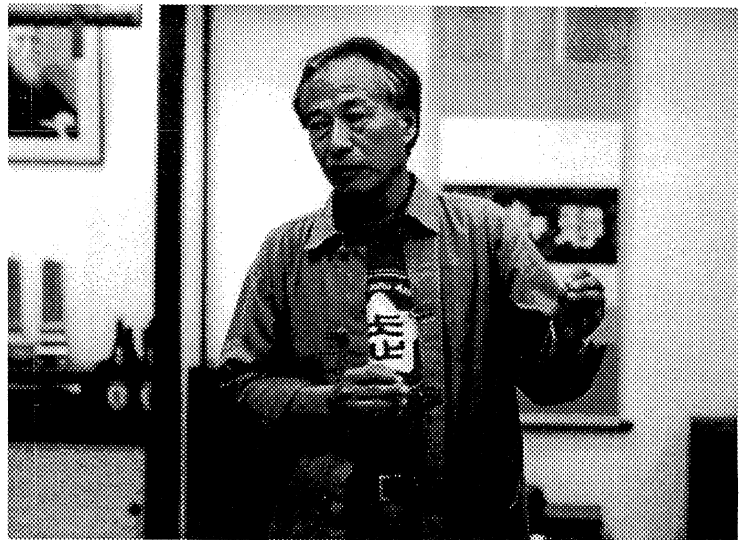
Sifu Hsu opened with a general introduction to taiji quan. He then led the class in the first few postures of the Chen family lao jia form. His instruction was very clear and easy for all to follow.

After drilling the postures several times as a group, the training shifted to the yin aspects of taiji and incorporating neigong into the taiji quan training. Each posture that had been learned was now to be held in a very relaxed manner while breathing exercises were done. On the inhaling of breath everyone would relax and then on the exhale, the mind came into focus, as the posture was mentally projected beyond the physical dimensions of the body and in the direction of the intended action of the posture. The demands of holding the postures soon became evident as the muscles began to tire. Sifu Hsu then had everyone change the internal focus to rooting on the exhale; following the inhale everyone imagined that their legs were growing into the ground like the roots of a tree on each exhale. This training lowers the qi to the dan tian and continues down into the legs, training the legs for strength and a relaxed solid foundation. A few of the students at the seminar had already trained in taiji so this presented them with additional training methods that they could take back to their own classes. For the students new to the style, it provided a good opportunity to test the water and get wet a little with what taiji quan was like.

The third exercise began like the previous two but this time on the exhale the awareness took on the mental expansion of the entire body in all directions. The time was going by very fast at this point so Sifu Hsu took a volunteer, broke down one of the postures that we had learned, and showed how it could be used in martial application. He then reviewed the seminar topics and explained how the training all supported the taiji style. He provided some very basic fundamentals that could develop very good training habits.

Power Issuing and Usage

The following evening a seminar was given at Jason Tsou's Kung Fu Academy on power issuing and its application in



kung fu usage. After a short introduction the class lined up to do the basic long fist form, tan tui. Sifu Hsu observed so that he could critique the class on important points. He discussed the importance of long fist in the foundation of the northern kung fu systems. Yes, he said it was true you could learn other systems without doing long fist first but he thought that long fist provided a very strong foundation for what was to follow. He likened long fist to water, and gave the example that if you wanted to paint you must mix the powder with water.

The power issuing began with instruction on how to punch properly from the bow and arrow stance. The rhetorical question was asked, "How many arms do you have?" The answer was "One," at least when you are punching properly. In other words the connection between the arms should be as one and the returning arm is as important as the issuing arm. After the class drilled this exercise in a relaxed manner attempting to use the tendons and not muscle, additional levels of difficulty were introduced to polish the training and take it to a higher level. He explained that one should concentrate on the first level for at least 3 months before adding in the more difficult additions so that the training could progress in an easier add-on method.

The issue of applying this power issuing to kung fu usage then took shape. The class was paired off and three different drills were practiced. The first drill involved the use of shaving and line fighting as opposed to point fighting. The second drill involved sticking technique and sensitivity, and the third training method was a combination of the previous two and how to open your opponent's gate by finding a leak. Once this was accomplished the opponent's door would be open to the power issuing.

The common thread to both workshops was the importance of good fundamental training to build on. The importance of structure in any martial art is the key to advanced level training and understanding. Thank you Sifu Hsu from all of the attendees. The workshops were a pleasure to attend.

Sushi U. (University)

If you have \$15,000, who needs an apprenticeship?

By Mark Magnier

Reprinted from the Los Angeles Times,
October 11, 2000. Food Section H.

Tokyo - The young man runs a knife down the length of a still-quivering eel as his fingers struggle to cut the tiny fins from the soft flesh. Halfway through the delicate operation, his hand slips, resulting in a jagged, unsightly slice.

"No, no," sushi master Katsuji Konakai, 81, says as he grabs the knife and makes a perfect cut with a practiced motion, "your angle is no good."

Working angles is just one of the many challenges 31 year-old Takenori Hanada and his fellow students face here at Sushi University as they struggle to absorb a lifetime of experience in a matter of months.

In exchange for \$15,000 in tuition and up to a year of their time, enrollees in the world's only institution of higher sushi studies gain a certificate of merit, the benefit of Konakai's 66 years of experience and all the sushi they can eat. Those really in a hurry can take a one-month, nine-hour-a day crash course for \$17,500.

For Japan's old guard, however, this is heresy. To really master your art, they say, you need to hone your skills over years and years - decades even - as an apprentice.

"A great deal is lost in a world of instant results," says Shigeo Mori, a fifth-generation master at Hatsune restaurant whose family traces its sushi roots back to 1872.

How you might ask, can it possibly take two decades to master the art of slapping some raw fish over a vinegar-infused rice ball when surgeons qualify to operate on the human brain in less than half that time? The answer says a lot about Japan's traditional search for perfection, its deep-seated respect for humility and hierarchy and the inevitable erosion of these standards in the modern world.

In fact, behind the debate over training is a growing split among sushi lovers. For connoisseurs, the tradition of the master craftsman preparing the finest delicacies - for meals that can cost more than \$300 per person - in elite Ginza and Kyoto establishments lives on. For more and more Japanese hit by years of recession, however, sushi is increasingly nothing more than a form of fast food.

"More and more people realize this (traditional) system of training sushi chefs is a little strange and outdated," says Jun Yokokawa, a culinary lecturer at Bunkyo University.

But those at the top ranks of Japan's most famous culinary discipline insist that real mastery goes far beyond the act of marrying rice and fish.

Not only does it involve years of experience buying and handling seafood, preparing seasonal specialties and knowing how to keep it fresh, it also requires mastering a thousand subtleties, such as which dishes call for new rice (*shinmai*) and old rice (*komai*). Or how the treatment of surf clams differs from that of horseneck clams. Or whether the top or bottom of the scallop is sweeter.

Beyond the technical details, the best sushi chefs are masters of their universe. They know how to read and entertain their customers, deal with suppliers, anticipate shortfalls and nurture apprentices to foster the next generation of masters.

That said, despite all the mystique, standards can get a bit wobbly. And when really pushed, many masters eventually fall back on some variation of "You know it when you see it."

Traditional sushi masters face no requisite licensing exam or doctoral dissertation. While there is an unevenly applied ranking system, industry stature is generally the product of peer and customer recognition.

For most students at 20-year-old Sushi University, however, pursuing a traditional apprenticeship is simply not an option. Many are in mid-career or retired. And in a world of increased social mobility, delayed gratification has become far less appealing. While most say they respect traditional Japanese craftsmanship, in the end, life's just too short.

Yoichi Mine, 60, dressed in jeans and sneakers, says he first became interested in sushi several decades ago and decided to enter Sushi U. after retiring from his corporate job. His dream is to open a small sushi restaurant in a resort town some day.

"I'm quite old," he says, "but I want to do this for the rest of my life."

Others, like Hanada, see the training as paving the way to live abroad, where sushi standards are lower anyway. Foreigners with unique skills can apply for special visa categories in the U.S. And other countries, and a Japanese sushi certificate is a plus.

He's got his sights on Las Vegas, "I love to gamble," he says. "and I hear Americans tip a lot, especially after they've won."

Despite its grand-sounding name Sushi University's "campus" consists of two rooms jammed with several refrigerators and sinks, an industrial-size-rice maker, some lockers and dozens of knives. The school is relatively well known in the sushi world, but more for its unique status than as a producer of

Aikido Center of Los Angeles
NEWSLETTER

industry greats.

"Sushi is the soul of Japan," reads a wooden board overhead, while a clock on the wall marks the time with sushi pieces for numbers and chopsticks for hands.

These days even those who follow the old apprenticeship route are spending less time at it, while the generations behind them are even less patient. Medieval-style indentured servitude, after all, is rapidly going out of style, even in Japan.

Hitoshi Hanada, 29, a junior sushi master at a branch of well-respected Sushisei Restaurant, says he did a three-year apprenticeship at the beginning of his 12-year stint in the industry. "It was quick but tough," he says. "But young people these days are less dictated and much more concerned with how much-free time they have after work." Of the 50 apprentices Sushisei takes on every year, half now drop out within three months.

Probably the epitome of the speed-'em-up mind-set in the sushi world are employees at conveyor-belt sushi restaurants. Often staffed by high school part-timers and casual labor, these chains offer sushi as inexpensive as 46 cents for two pieces on plates that circulate in front of customers. The bill is based on how many and what color plates are left at the end of the meal.

"We believe in being practical," says Hiroshi Shiraishi, the president of Genroku, which invented the revolving sushi system. "You can't learn anything until you do it, so we start beginners out making sushi on the first day."

And for some, sushi's very ability to take new forms at home and abroad guarantees the cuisine a bright and vibrant future. Sushi has only gained in popularity at a time when the traditional Japanese diet is changing, rice is ceding ground to bread and potatoes, and many cultural icons like flower arranging, the tea ceremony and even sumo struggle to attract new converts.

Among the upstarts are cream cheese and salmon "Madonna rolls" seen in Miami, peanut butter combinations sighted in New York, L.A.'s "high-food" sushi complete with bread sticks and other vertical additions, and raw horse and *foie gras* varieties appearing in Japan.

Sushi University master Konakai's own apprenticeship started when he was 15, after his father advised him to gain a skill and shipped him off to a relative's sushi shop. For the first several years, he worked every day of the year but New Year's Day and the summer obon holiday washing floors, cleaning toilets, delivering sushi and shining customers' shoes to encourage repeat business.

After three years at the bottom of the food chain, he graduated

to cleaning small fish and shellfish. Another three saw him handling sea bream and flounder. Only after two more years did he start making the japonica rice at the heart of any "real" sushi.

His first big break came two years later when he was allowed to work behind the counter, a big honor, although he could only make the most basic types of rolled sushi. Another couple of years, and he was finally allowed to make the bite-sized hand-formed sushi known as *nigiri*.

For much of the time, Konakai says, his pay was three yen a month, enough in those days to buy a meal. At night he slept in the back of the restaurant. He ran away five times but was dragged back. And when he made a mistake, the sushi master would often hit him over the head with the blunt end of the sushi knife. "Basically we were working for nothing," he says.

In this strict hierarchy, the sushi master, or *itamae*, held absolute power, in part because his skill and customer rapport determined whether a restaurant made it. "All of us small boys wanted to be an *itamae*," he says. "He was like the emperor or God."

Fellow sushi master, Mori, now the president of Japan's 20,000-member federation of sushi establishments, saw similar hardship, although he was never beaten - in part because his father owned the shop. But being the fifth generation of a sushi dynasty carried its own burden. For months before entering his apprenticeship, he anguished over whether to follow family tradition or pursue another career.

"Ultimately, the son of a sushi maker is always a sushi maker," he says.

Those who are the product of this feudal system say that some of the most valuable lessons are those you didn't realize you were getting - things like patience, perseverance, human nature, subtlety and dedication to something you love.

"At first there is just hardship," Konakai says. "But eventually understanding starts to emerge through the hardship. Young people these days, only think about their paycheck. They don't think about the pride of really doing a job well. They stop growing."

Despite this aura of tradition surrounding sushi, the hand-formed *nigiri* variety most popular today is a relatively recent innovation. "*Nigiri* is a Johnny-come-lately in sushi history," says Tadashi Uchida, who has written about sushi.

Although a salted, preserved dish of rice and cooked fish dates back to early Chinese history, the practice of using raw fish only emerged about 160 years ago, originally as a quick snack food. And Japan's unofficial national dish only
Con't.

Sushi continued:

reached many of the nation's inland areas in the 1950's as transportation and refrigeration advanced.

Konakai, with nearly seven decades of sushi experience, views himself as something of a bridge between the old world and the new, the apprentice system and the spoon-fed world of the classroom.

At 81, he doesn't have too much longer to live, he says, and in the remaining time he wants to pass on as much of Japan's sushi tradition and culture to as many people as he can, with Sushi University being about the best way he can think of to do that.

He has no illusion that he's turning out world-class sushi experts, he says. While his best students learn quickly and show genuine interest, many others seem happy to coast.

Ideally, what he hopes to do, he says, is give his students the basics in a faster, more organized form than he got it, allowing them to take this knowledge and practice it over a lifetime. "It still takes years," he says. "But you've got a running start."

"The students are very slow," he adds. "If they worked that slow at work, their boss would hit them. But they pay us here, so we can't hit them."

Hisako Ueno in the Times' Tokyo bureau contributed to this report.

Visit Our Website Often!

Be sure to visit our website often for the latest Dojo news and upcoming events. Also see Sensei's Forum for letters and correspondence from all over the world to our Dojo. Also, a special feature is Sensei's Message. Tell your family and friends!

www.aikidocenterla.com

New Dues Policy

Monthly dues are due at the first of the month. If you cannot be in the Dojo by the 1st, please mail in your dues directly to the Dojo.

Monthly Dues: 1st of the Month.

Late Fees:

If not paid by the 5th: \$20.00

If one month dues are missed:

First & Last Month's Dues required to rejoin Dojo.

Leave of Absence:

Leave of Absence notice is required for absences more than one week. This is strictly required for Black Belts. For Black Belts: Months counted as late will NOT be counted as attendance towards their Dan promotion. No exceptions. Attendance at monthly seminars, meetings, events and Budo Study Classes will also be counted towards your promotion.

Dojo News

Roger Herman, Artist

A former student, Roger Herman, was mentioned in the Los Angeles Times, Architecture Review Section, on September 27, 2000, mentioning his home which was built by famous architect, Frederick Fischer. The home was built in the Elysium Park area near the Dodger Stadium and downtown Los Angeles. A very simple and unusual home, totally square and completely covered by large, unfinished planks of plywood. The inside is very severe made to resemble a large artists' loft. The home was completed in 1986 when Roger was still practicing Aikido at the Dojo. He wanted an artists' loft but he didn't want to live directly in the downtown area which was not well developed at the time. He found a piece of land very reasonably in the Stadium area just outside of downtown near Chinatown. Roger is one of the important post-modern German artists in this country and his works hang in art museums all around the world. His works can be seen locally in La Serenata de Garibaldi Restaurant in Boyle Heights and at the Mandarette in West Hollywood. Sensei enjoyed dinner at his new home and met his interesting German friends, one from Transylvania, and the husband of singer, Bette Midler.

Naoji Karita Featured on TV Morning News. Oct. 6.

Well known sword polisher Naoji Karita was featured on the NHK Japanese morning news which aired on October 6 in Los Angeles. Karita Sensei lives in Tachikawa and visits the Dojo often, about three times a year on his trips to the U.S.

New! Dojo Email Express:

Join our new Dojo Email Express and get all the latest news in the Dojo. Just email to Sensei at aclafuruya@earthlink.net. Daily News!

Affiliated Branch Dojos

Kodokai Salamanca

Santiago Garcia Almaraz, 2nd Dan

Hacienda La Puente Aikikai

Tom Williams, 3rd Dan

Wyoming Aikikai

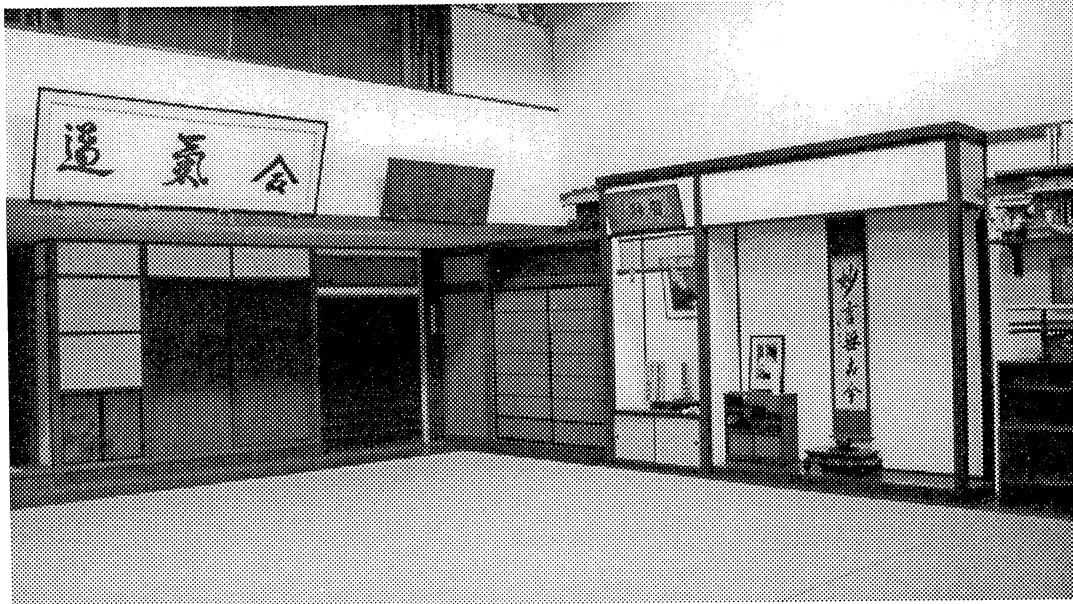
Tom McIntrye, 2nd Dan

Bahamas Aikikai

Seymour Clay

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NEWSLETTER

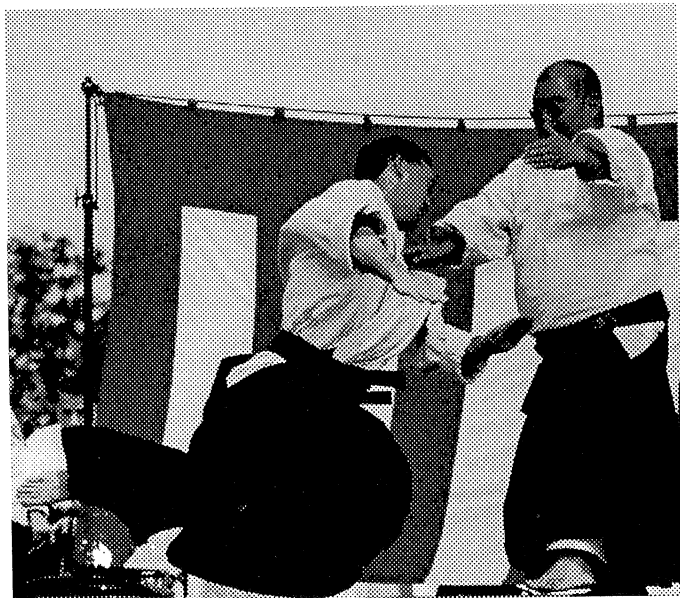
Welcome To The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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25th Year
Anniversary
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Reverend Kensho Furuya, 6th Dan

Dojo Supplies

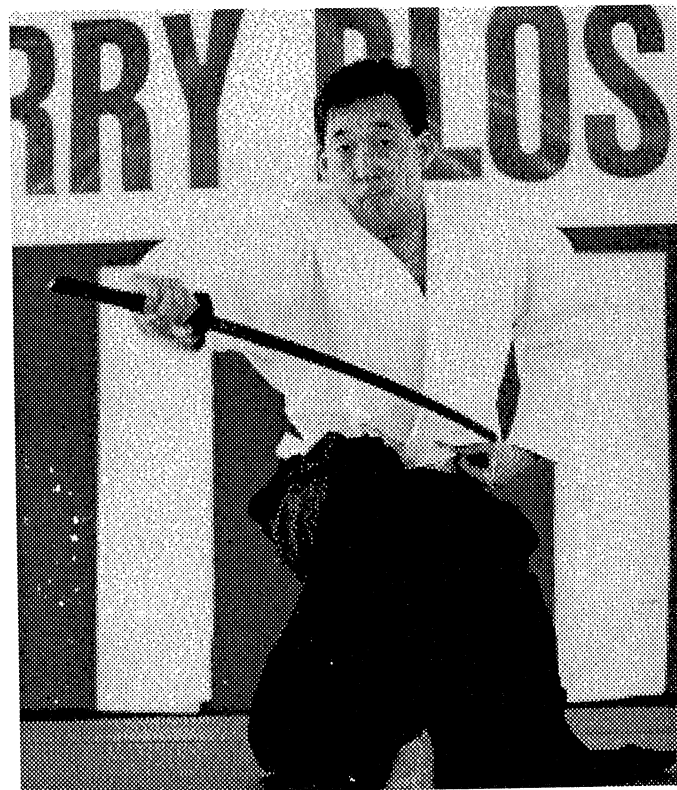
Official Dojo Jackets

Now available on a custom order basis. Designed by Land's End, nylon in bright yellow with the embroidered Dojo logo. They are very comfortable and great to wear for demonstrations. \$55.00 each.
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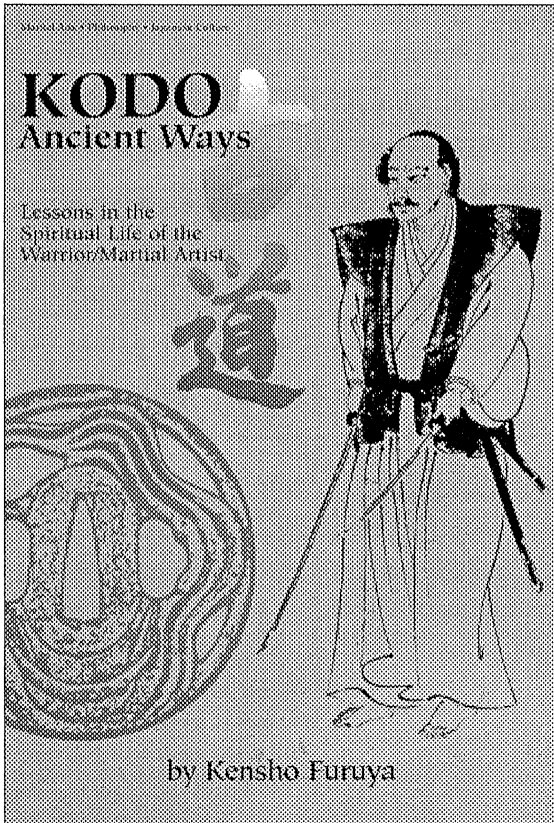
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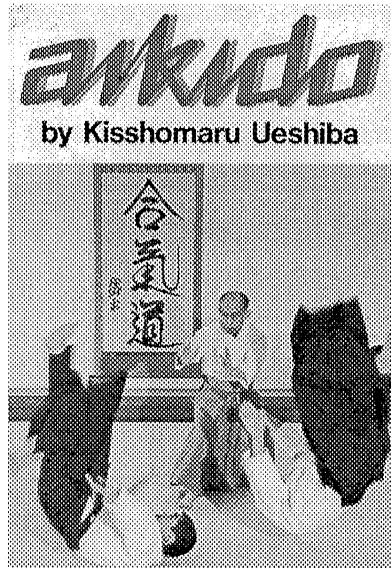
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Highly Recommended Reading:
AIKIDO

By Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

Doshu's book is one of the best books available today on Aikido technique. Strongly recommended.



ACLA DOJO NEWSLETTER

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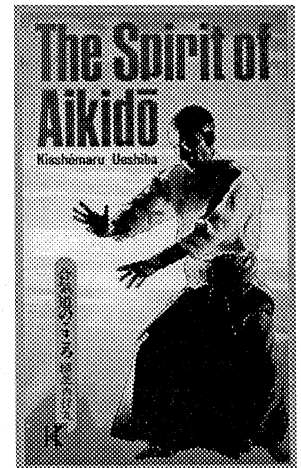
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KIHAN AIKIDO

Fundamental of Aikido

By Doshu & Dojocho Moriteru Ueshiba
The latest reference book on Hombu Aikido by 2nd & 3rd Doshu with excellent photos on all of the basic techniques. Referred to as the "Aikido Bible."



THE SPIRIT OF AIKIDO

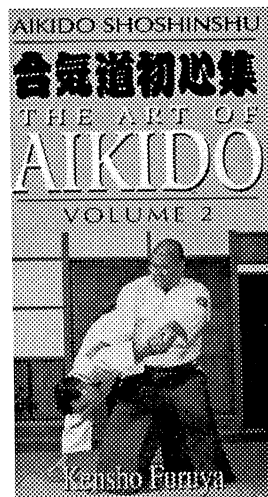
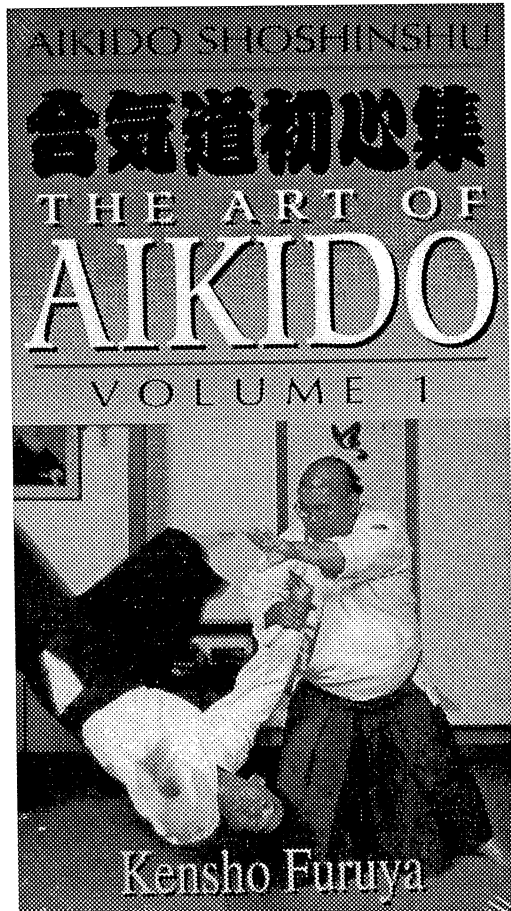
By Doshu Kisshomaru Ueshiba

An important book on the philosophy and historical background of Aikido's development. Translated from the Japanese - *Aikido no Kokoro*. Difficult but an important source on Hombu Aikido.

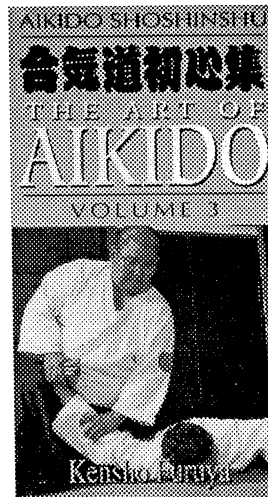
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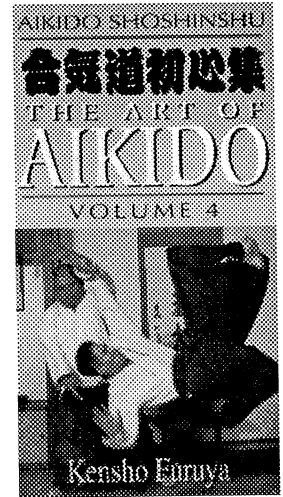
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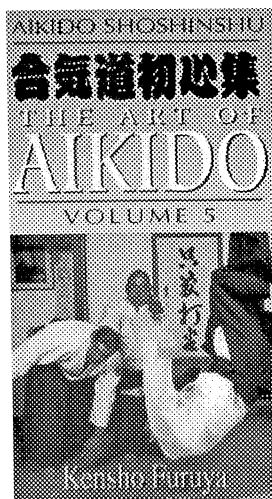
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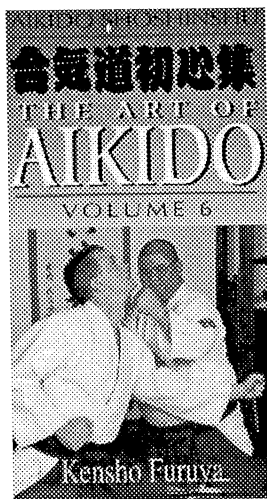
Ukemi-Breakfalling
Basics Continued
Free Style Techniques
Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



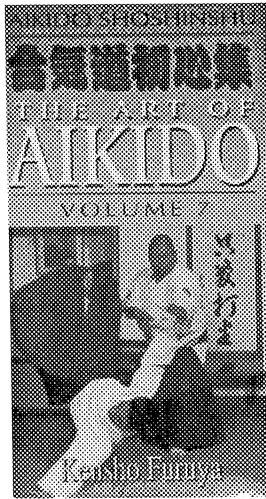
Katatetori Ryotemochi:
Ryotetori: 2-hand.
Reigi-saho: Etiquette.
Koshinage-Hip throws.



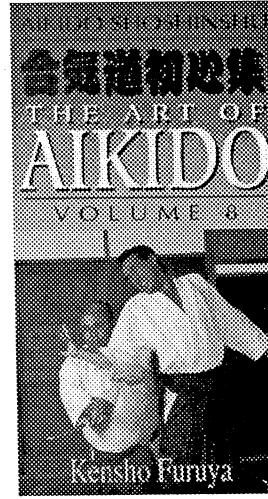
Suwari-waza. Gokyo.
Hanmi-handachi. Kokyu-dosa.
Katatori: Shoulder.
Multiple attackers.
Five-man Freestyle.



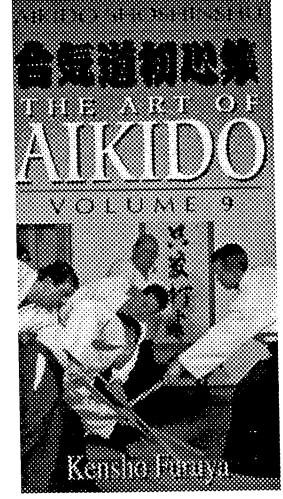
Tsuki: Strikes & Punches
Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side
of the head & neck.



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



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



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

Aikido

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Adult

BEGINNING & OPEN

Monday thru Friday Evenings

6:30pm-7:30pm

Saturday & Sunday Mornings

10:15am-11:15am

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

5 - 16 yrs old

Sunday Mornings:

9:00am-10:00am

AIKIDO & BUDO

DISCUSSION GROUP

Every 1st Wednesday of the month.

7:45pm-9:00pm

Group Study & Discussion

Aikido philosophy, Japanese art & culture, martial arts, & Japanese sword appreciation. Everyone is welcome.

Affiliation

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 Doshu and the current Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu. All Dojo members are members of Hombu Dojo Aikikai.

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Iaido

TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO

SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturday Mornings

8:00am-9:00am

Sunday Mornings

7:45am-8:45am

2nd, 3rd, & 4th Wednesdays

7:45pm-8:45pm

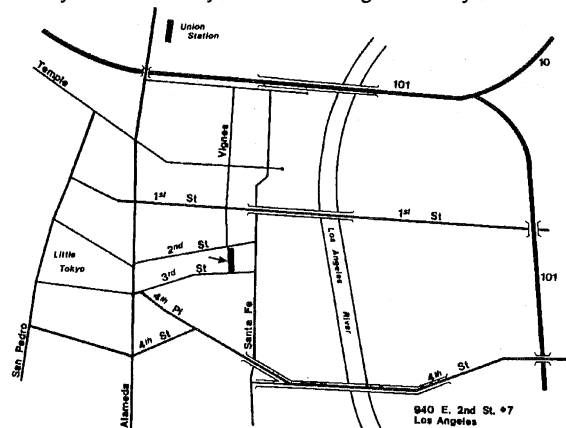
IAIDO INTENSIVE SEMINAR

Every 2nd Saturday of the month.

6:30am-8:30am

About the 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.