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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles LLC

忘れられた心を探す合気道　合気道場

The Aiki Dojo

Affiliation: The Aikido World Headquarters, 17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Rev. Kensho Furuya Foundation
Los Angeles Sword & Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
Nanka Yamanashi Kenjin Kai Southern California Yamanashi Prefectural Association
Los Angeles Police Department Martial Artist Advisory Panel

$3.95 Donation

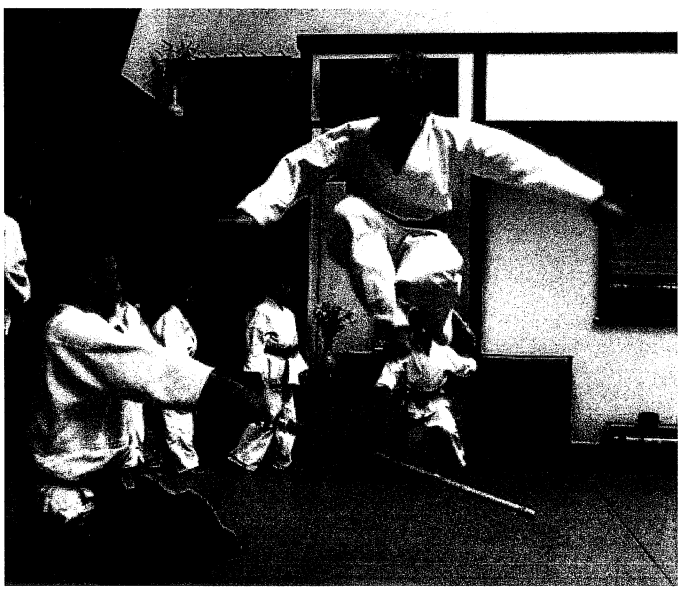
September 1, 2004 Volume XXIII. Number 9.

64th Nisei Week Aikido & Iaido Demonstration

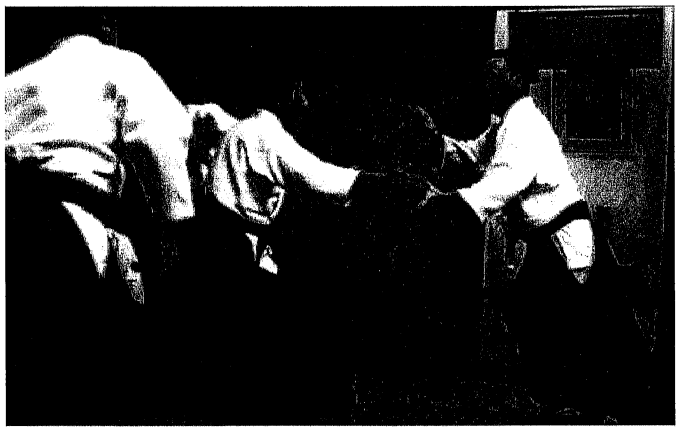
On August 8, we celebrated a wonderful Nisei Week demonstration this year with a full house and many students participating. This year, our Children's Class also helped out under the direction of Ken Watanabe. Due to the number of people attending, a few guests could not get in but we were surprised at the numbers because of the new early time of the demonstration this year at 10:00am. We thank all of our guests for attending our event.

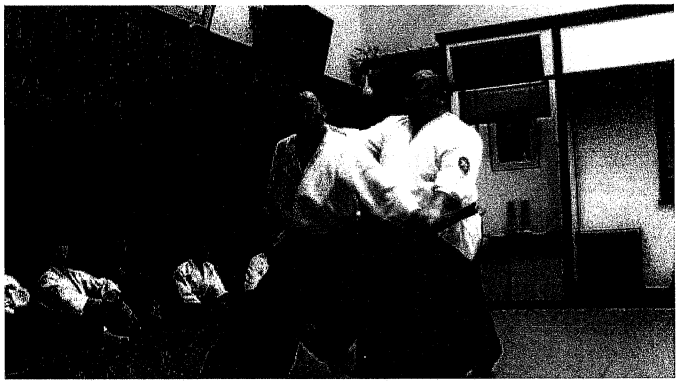
Participants were James Doi, Ken Watanabe, Gary Myers, Tom Williams, Larry Armstrong, David Ito, Mark Ty, Maria Murakawa, Steve Shaw, Michael Vance, Bill Allen, and Jim Bassett. From the Children's Class were Dominick Hammerstein, Derek Okuno, Tomi Ai Okuno, MacKenzie Dowling, Justin Angaco, and Judy May Angaco.

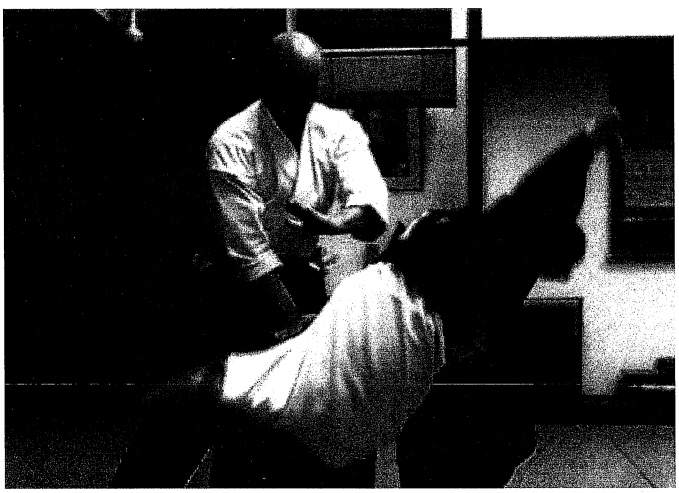
Ken Watanabe and Mark Ty demonstrating Aikiken Kumitachi during Nisei Week Demonstration.

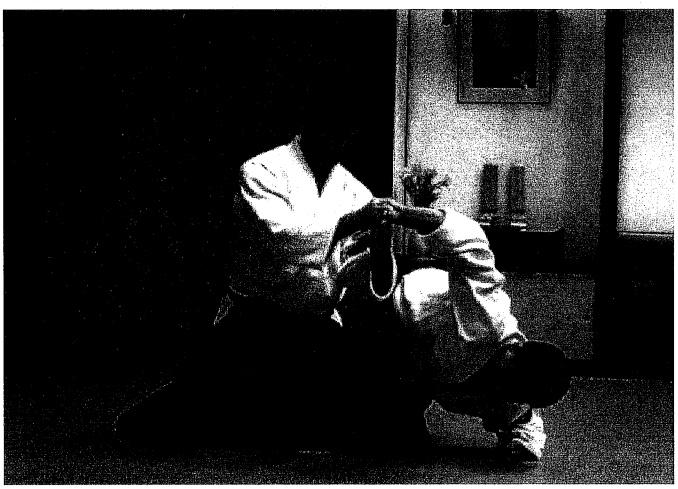


Special Interview With Sensei:
This Issue features a special interview with Sensei by Budovideos.com on the premiere of Sensei's DVD format Aikido series.









Budovideos.com Interview With Sensei (Unedited Original Draft):

How long have you been involved with Aikido and Iaido?

I remember that I started Kendo when I was around 8 years old and Aikido sometime soon after when I was about 10 years old or so. I do remember that I bought my first real sword at 10 years old in order to practice Iaido more intensely at the time. I was very enthusiastic at that early age much to the chagrin of my parents. I have been doing martial arts all of my life, maybe due to the influence of my grandparents very early on. My grandfather first introduced me to Kendo through his old friend from the old country. He was a Kendo 9th Dan and master of Itto Ryu and Muso Shinden Ryu iaido. Although my parents wanted me to be very much "all-American," I was drawn more to my grandparents influence who were very proud of their samurai heritage and lineage and loved to tell me all about Japanese culture. I think this cultivated my strong love for martial arts. I really don't know but I do remember when I first stepped onto the Aikido mats, I was very young nervous and shy - but I felt deep down inside at that moment that this is what I wanted to do for my whole life.

I remember meeting the late 2nd Doshu, Kisshomaru Ueshiba Sensei and Akira Tohei Sensei who was his uke at the time, on their first visit to the United States in 1962. I travelled to Hombu in 1969 to train under 2nd Doshu. Now, it is about 47 years now. I just celebrated the 30th anniversary of my Dojo this last April which was established in 1974.

What initially attracted you to these arts?

I can't remember what really attracted me - I have always been drawn to Aikido my entire life, as well as Kendo and iaido, and cannot remember any time when I was not practicing Aikido and I cannot remember ever thinking of doing anything else in my life. Although i have had the opportunity to study many other martial arts - all has been to enhance my own Aikido practice.

For students that don't practice the art, what would you say are the main benefits to practicing Aikido?

There are always the usual things to say - Aikido is good physical discipline, a great martial art and there is a deep spiritual background as well. Beyond this, I must honestly say that I think Aikido has had its influence in every aspect of my life. I should say that there is nothing better than a life in Aikido - with both all the tears and disappointments and moments of great happiness that it brings - I cannot think of having a more fulfilling and meaningful life outside of Aikido. I also felt I had an inner calling to the priesthood - probably from reading too much the great warriors and swordsmen of the past who devoted their lives to their art. We were so desperate for knowledge in those early days and pursued anything that we thought would help our Aikido practice.. I really thought that by entering strongly into Zen, I could understand martial arts more deeply and that this would enhance my Aikido further. It is really hard for me to say, it is really hard to talk about myself like this so personally. . . . .

It was my meeting with the late Aikido great, Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei, at Hombu that helped me to find the right path in this pursuit of both Aikido and Zen. Ohsawa Sensei was also a student of Sawaki Kodo Roshi who I was later to find out - also happened to be the teacher of my Zen master, the Most Reverend Bishop Kenko Yamashita of the North American Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism and the Zenshuji Soto Mission. He never mentioned a word to me about pursuing Zen but somehow he let me know everything I needed to know. I remember I was with one of the top teachers of Aikido at Hombu observing Ohsawa Sensei's wonderful Aikido demonstration. I turned to him and asked, "How can Ohsawa Sensei move like that?" This teacher turned to me and simply said with a shrug of his shoulders, "Well afteral - Ohsawa Sensei is enlightened!" Along with Doshu's many personal instructions to me, this was one of the great turning points in my life.

Later, I finally met my Zen teacher, the Bishop Kenko Yamashita, who was also a Kendo 5th Dan under Nakayama Hakudo Sensei whose lineage I was also following. It was in 1988, almost 20 years later, that I was ordained as a Zen monk in the Soto-shu lineage. Many strange events such as this all connected themselves in my life through Aikido. Still, I do not understand such mysterious relationships and connections and how they occur and just happen as they do to me - maybe it is just karma through Aikido. I cannot recall all of the other things which have happened to me because of Aikido. I think it is hard to say how much of my inner strength came from my training in Zen or from Aikido and my pursuit to understand it. In many, many ways, Aikido can be so fulfilling - it is almost trivial for me to try to put all of this into words and only use this one tiny episode about my Aikido and Zen to illustrate how such wonderful and mysterious things open up to you in your training and in this path of discovery. I think it is up to each individual to enter this Aikido path and achieve his own understanding and enlightenment. The first step is to step onto the mat for practice and all at once a whole new world will open up to you. I truly believe this.

How do Zen and Iaido training compliment your Aikido?

As much as I have a bad habit to speak too much about Zen, in practice, I an not trying to promulgate Zen or solicit practitioners to Zen. In the Dojo. those interested in Zen are recommended to attend Zen meditation classes at my temple under more experience priests and the Iaido class in the Dojo is separate from the Aikido. As much as possible I keep each class separate without mix and matching the two. Iaido is taught as pure Iaido and Aikido is taught as pure Aikido. For Zen, they must go to the temple and seek out pure Zen.

As for myself, I think within the students too, it will all come together somehow naturally and with their own understanding and enlightenment. The teacher must plant the seed by teaching the student with a strong emphasis on the fundamentals but it is up to the student himself how he himself grows, matures and in what direction he takes his art. In practice, the first step is the most important, however, - the first step to master the correct fundamentals, so the teacher is very important in this respect. It is important for the teacher to keep in mind his role in the student's upbringing.

My interest in Zen came from my own inner feelings of a "calling" to the religious life ever since as was a small child. I do not understand this myself because there was not the strong emphasis in religion in my upbringing. I think my interest in Zen became very strong with my meeting with the late Kisaburo Ohsawa Sensei at Hombu and finally meeting my Zen master, the late Bishop Kenko Yamashita. Iaido, as I have mentioned before, is something I started when I was just a small child so it has been with me all my life as well as my

Aikido practice.

Zen and Iaido is very obviously related, philosophically and historically. The relationship between Aikido and Zen is more distant and only in this respect that Aikido's roots are in traditional Japanese Budo.

In my own mind, Zen, Iaido and Aikido are very compatible and for my own personal training, I myself do not see how one can do without the other. However, in class, I do not particularly try to emphasize this point and try to give purity of the arts to my students.

In Aikido, as everyone knows, it is important for the movement to flow and create a strong connection with the opponent's movement. However, in actual practice, it is easy to get stuck or jam one's self against the opponent's strong attack. Sometimes, we miss the timing, sometimes our spacing is off, or we get intimidated by the opponent's power and this flowing process stops or gets blocked. This continuous, flowing movement in Aikido seems very similar, in my own mind, to the concept of "muju-shin" in Zen - or the idea of the "non-residing" mind. In Zen, the idea is to allow the mind to flow freely without residing anywhere or to get stuck or obsessed at any one point. This Zen idea of a free moving mind which never gets stuck on anything seems quite similar to me with Aikido's idea for flowing movement in which we can connect or blend with the opponent's attack. As an example, in shomenuchi irimi-nage, it is easy to get stuck against the strong overhead attack of the opponent. We often get stuck against his arm and this prevents us from moving in (irimi) and completing the technique. If we think in terms of Zen, in this case, the idea is not to get "taken in" by the opponent's attack or strength, but allow our minds' to flow freely without getting "stuck" anywhere. In another case such as morote-dori kokyu-ho. we are often stuck against the two-handed grip of the opponent against our own arm and it is hard to move if he is very strong. Many times we are not stuck or stopped by his strength, we are stuck on the "idea" of this strength or we are intimidated by his attack. The idea, in my view, to create this flow of movement, is to refine the mind of not getting stuck anywhere as taught in Zen.

These are simple examples of how Zen ideas can be applied into practice. In addition, Zen has a strong precept against killing and violence - the idea that all living, sentient beings are enlightened Buddhas cultivates a strong sense of the inner worth of each individual and in this I see a great connection to Aikido's idea that we are all "one family of man" as O'Sensei often spoke about. Finally, I see the peaceful meditative state which Zen cultivates in sitting compatible with Aikido's mental state of always being well centered and balanced, yet maintain the ability of moving freely and without inhibition or jamming one's self.

In Aikido, I believe there is a strong sense of "form" (technique) but this idea is very subtle and sophisticated in outward appearance. Actuality Aikido is the "form of no-form." In Iaido, the form is very obvious and Iaido teaches how correct form and technique generates proper application of power. In addition, Iaido, like Aikido, is strongly based in timing and spacing, ma-ai, rather than strength and collision power. In this, I feel that Iaido and Aikido are very similar in spirit, although quite different in outward appearance and practice.

These are just my personal views thru my years of study and practice in these arts. I don't know if they make sense to others, but I find these arts all help me to do my job of teaching my students and encourage me to continue to refine my understanding in practice.

Thank you for sharing your ideas on training with us. I'd like to ask you now about the various levels of Aikido training. We all know that the basics are very important but how do you teach your students to go beyond the basics?

My primary concern with my students is that they get a good, solid foundation in the basics of Aikido - not anything more than this really - I am not such a great teacher to teach them anything fancy or mysterious. I think teaching them the fundamentals is the most important duty to my students. Like a small seedling, it needs help to be planted in the right soil, cared for, keeping the weeds away, etc., watered and well nourished until a strong, healthy plant begins to sprout. Once the young plant has a good, healthy beginning, it can grow in its own direction depending on how it wants to capture the light of the sun, according to its own nature. Once my students get a good foundation in the basics, both in the physical technique and in the proper understanding of the spirit of Aikido, they will continue to mature in their own way according to their own nature and the unique circumstances and experiences of their own lives. I am just the farmer who plants the seed and gives it a little water and occasionally keeps some of the weeds away.

In martial arts, there is an instruction of the "rudder in the waves." The rudder steers the boat and keeps it from tipping over, but it constantly needs a slight pressure to the left and to the right according to the currents to keep it in proper balance and on its true course. It is up to the student to develop this sense in his training but it is also the lifelong task of the teacher to help his student keep this "rudder" of his practice and his life on true course as well. Although growth is much according to one's own nature, there is also a consideration of "mindfulness" - it is not all random and willful impulse but there is this continual "awareness" as we go along - just as one must constantly keep his hand and eye on the rudder to keep the boat in equilibrium and on true course.

On a more down-to-earth level, once students do well and show good skill, I try to give them the opportunity and experience to teach other students. They start with helping out in the children's class because this is the hardest skill to develop. Young kids are very perceptive, open and honest so it is very necessary for the new teacher to be equally forthright and open. If he doesn't know what he is doing, the kids will sense it immediately. Adults are more forgiving in this respect, I think. I believe in my own training, that teaching is giving, not receiving. There is really no authority or prize or prestige, - just the hard, endless and devoted work of getting the students to practice Aikido properly.

In traditional Japanese arts, in respect to the teacher, there is the idea of Bosatsu-gyo. This means the "training" of a Bodhisattva or "near-Buddha" - although a rather Buddhist idea, it has filtered down into and become vitally characteristic of many areas of the traditional Japanese arts. The "near-Buddha" is one who about to enter the final stage of enlightenment but takes a vow to stay behind until all other sentient beings in the world are saved before himself. This is called Bosatsu-gyo or Buddha-training. In my own thinking, this seems to apply very well to Aikido. A teacher is there for his students, often the rewards are very small and many times there is only disappoint-

ment and frustration, but, all the same, the teacher is there for his students and puts his students ahead of his own welfare, more often than not in real practice. I am very concerned about their welfare and like to see my students, as they advance in Aikido, understand and appreciate how Aikido can bring fulfillment and happiness into their own lives. Maybe this is the only reward in teaching. . . . It is a lesson which I hope my students learn and pass on to their students.

To advance in Aikido beyond the basics, does not simply mean to be stronger in technique or develop one's authority, prestige or popularity but to find one's own self which will lead himself and all others around him, at the same time, towards a fulfilling life. I say, "all others around him" because I do not think one can achieve happiness all by himself. I teach my students as they advance that happiness must be shared by all - we are all happy together, not one person is happy all by himself. In the dojo, all practice and advance together, not one person only thinks of himself but must continually see to the well-being of all others around himself. In the dojo, it is often the hardest lesson to learn to get along with each and work together in harmony.

Finally, in addition to what personal development a student achieves in his training, I would always hope that they will help to develop Aikido and maybe help in the task of running the dojo and maintaining a high level of practice and instruction. Nowadays, I find that many of my seniors are becoming fine teachers - I sometimes think that they are much better than me. I am too much of the old-school and my methods are old-fashioned and out-dated. I see my students with younger and fresher outlooks on life and therefore can convey themselves much more easily to the newer students. . . I like this very much.

In teaching at a higher level, I would hope my students would begin to understand to two essential aspects to developing into a fine Aikidoist and martial artist. First is the "free mind" - this is not the mind which is obsessed with personal agendas or self-centeredness. This is the mind which can move freely without inhibition and attachment in the most natural way. A mind which does not cling to any one idea but can be open and honest in all aspects of their lives. I often see students get stuck on an idea or notion and then become blind to all other suggestions. This obsessive attachment is not good in encountering the opponent or in dealing with one's own practice on the mats.

The second is the "caring mind. " The mind which is thoughtful and caring of others and shows compassion to others, not only in practice on the mats but in their lives as well. I think we all like to think of ourselves as caring people but often, without being aware of it ourselves, we can become thoughtless. A caring mind notices everything and such caring can only come from a mind which is totally aware and in the moment. Especially in Aikido, I feel this "caring" mind to be an ideal we should all strive for.

As far as you see it, what stages does the typical Aikido practitioner go through?

In traditional martial arts, there are three stages called Shu, Ha, Ri. "Shu" means "Protection" and refers to the initial stage of training where he must learn all of the rules and master all of the techniques. It is often like a chick still within the hard confines of the eggshell. "Ha" means "breaking" and it is the next stage where the little chick begins to peck its way or break out of the shell. At this stage, the student has mastered the fundamentals and begins to broaden the scope of his training and knowledge. It does not mean to break the rules or discard them, it really means to expand and broaden them beyond the initial stage of hard-fast rules. The third stage is "Ri" which means "Separation," like the little chick finally freeing itself from the shell. This does not mean that the student flies away from the nest, it means that he can go beyond mere rules and regulations, having mastered them and now transcending them as something which is now an integral part of his life and life perspective.

In addition to this, I think, as the Aikido student matures, he needs to ask himself many serious questions and begin to think how to apply these Aikido principles into his own life in a reasonable way. As an example, what does it mean "not to fight?" We think we understand this intellectually and by our reason, but in real life, we fight continually with each other every day. . . . What does it mean to be centered and balanced? It is not simply a way to be strong in throwing or pinning someone to the ground, I think it goes beyond this point to where we are centered and balanced in all aspects of our lives in facing all emergencies and encounters that life offers us. I think that when we hear terms like "harmony," "love," "blending," "ki," we immediately that we understand what such words means. However, our ideas are often in contrast to the "reality" of life and the moment to moment situations we encounter each day in our lives. When we become quiet and think about these ideas with a great deal of seriousness, we find, I think, that we really do not understand them at all. Daily practice is always the constant refinement and deepening of this understanding.

Finally, in O'Sensei's teaching there is this deep, almost divine, reverence for life - how do we understand this for ourselves and bring it into our own lives? I think part of the advancement of my students is to meet, think about, practice and begin to resolve such matters for themselves in their own lives and in their own thinking. This is one of the meanings of training throughout one's life.

Your nine-part video series has just been released on DVD. How much of your Aikido curriculum do you show in these videos?

When I was asked to do this video series, it was repeatedly emphasized that they wanted an "instructional" video and not a "demonstration" video. In much of these videos, the techniques are demonstrated much in the way, almost to the letter, as I teach my regular classes. In addition, they asked for a video series which people could watch and learn from. In the videos, many of the techniques are executed repeatedly and common pitfalls and errors are explained as well as hints to improve one's technique. I also included short talks to help and encourage the student in his practice, just as I do in class. Most of the areas covered in this video series is what I think any beginning student of Aikido should know as a good foundation for his practice. In addition to these nine volumes, there was planned for another three hours of videos to cover advanced techniques and bokken and jo beyond the basic introduction in the present set. Unfortunately, my busy schedule never allowed this.

I have received a great deal of compliments from all over the world and after many years, the publisher reports that it is still doing very well. There is really nothing fancy in the videos but I think it does cover many of the basic aspects of Hombu Aikido. In many of the explanations and presentations of the techniques, I explain them just as they were explained to me by my own teachers. The late Sadateru

Arikawa Sensei of Hombu Dojo viewed my tapes when they first came out and I was surprised that he was so complimentary to me. He has always been an excellent, but stern critic and I have always looked up to him with great respect and awe.

Over the years, much as I teach in my dojo is still the same as I teach in the videos. As I say, much of the videos contain all of the Aikido fundamentals and these do not change so much. Nowadays, if there is any change at all, I like to emphasize more connecting the movements and techniques together. I find that students today unconsciously view Aikido technique as a kind of leisure exercise or solely from the standpoint of movement or exercise. I often think that we do not emphasize Aikido as a viable, extremely effective martial art. In other words, i see that we are gradually losing this awareness of Aikido. In this sense, we lose our sense of ma-ai, spacing and timing. In practice, we allow the opponent or partner to move in too close into our space, essentially making us vulnerable and open to counter attacks. Because many practice with a weak or uncommitted attack in normal practice, we lose our sense of timing. Against a weak attack, for example, we may be free to move as we like because there is no threat or anything really to collide with. If the attack by the partner is strong and committed and focused on the target of the attack, then we must move more critically with a high sense of timing and spacing - or we collide or get jammed. This type of training really needs to be under the supervision of a competent instructor so it is not emphasized strongly in the videos. Ultimately, we can only develop good technique against a strong, committed attack. Practice with weak attacks which do not have any energy or not committed to the target, is often the root of many bad habits and with losing our sense of critical timing and spacing, the essence of all Aikido technique.

The publishers informed me that out of an inventory of over 350 videos series which they have produced over the years, this Aikido series was their first choice to convert into DVD. I was very happy to hear this. I was told that video become "stale" after three to four years but this Art of Aikido still seems to be doing very well. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all of the wonderful letters and emails regarding the video series and I am glad that it is helping many students around the world in their practice.

In the new DVD series, they are added an extensive index and many more new chapter headings so it is easy to find a specific technique just by clicking on the heading. I like this new innovation very much and I think it makes the DVD series much more convenient to use than the original videos.

What are you working on in terms of your personal training?

Personal training? The continual job of trying to make myself a better person and teacher - an often hopeless, discouraging and sometimes dispairing job! Haha!

At the moment and for some years now, I have working hard to develop my senior students as instructors and gradually supervising their training as future teachers. We now have about 18 branch dojos all over the world and this has increased my workload and responsibilities tremendously. I still continue to write a great deal, publishing a monthly newsletter and answering correspondence each day from all over the world. I have several books in the works which I would like to finally finish if I can squeeze in the time. One is an Aikido technique book for which we have over 5,500 photos of Aikido techniques which need to be arranged and captioned.

I have lost much of the ambitions I had when I was younger, I suppose, and this has caused me to think more of the development and advancement of my students than for myself. Personally, I am trying to understand Aikido as it pervades one's whole life from one moment to the next in my daily life. Although I left the temple when my teacher passed away, i still try to lead a priestly life and prefer a quiet, solitary life. Recently, however, three of my young students have just had three new daughters, two students have just had two granddaughters - all within the last several months, so I have become quite envious of them and rather long for the "family" life which I gave up in my younger days in order to pursue Aikido as I wanted

As we get older, I think, we move a little slower and our bones creak a little more, I try to see Aikido more from the standpoint of a sharper sense of timing, than from the speed and strength of my youth - many years ago. Also, as I mentioned elsewhere in this interview, I am interested to resolve and understand the principles of Aikido in my life and how they work in how we think and act.

At the same time, I think students today are busier with their lives and have less time and energy to devote to their training. i am studying how to transmit Aikido to today's students without sacrificing its vital essence as a martial arts. i often get the impression that Aikido is moving away from its original mandate as a martial art.

In addition, in today's rapidly changing world, I see a lot of Aikido's ideals changing and, to some degree, getting lost in our highly complex, complicated world of today and despite the fact the it is not the popular trend, and so in many ways, I want to keep Aikido as much as it was in the early days of my training for my students.

Nowadays, I find myself introducing elements from my personal style of Aikido, rather than adhering strictly to very orthodox Aikido technique as I normally do for my students. In Aikido sword training, I have gone back to very basic sword fundamentals and have strongly emphasized more attention to proper grip and footwork and a much stronger cut more like the cut of a live blade. With a stronger cut more aimed at making contact, I have noticed that the timing and spacing of the techniques are naturally changed to more effectively get out of the way of an unstoppable cut.

Over the years, the general public is more educated in martial arts than thirty years ago. In the early days, martial arts was an exotic, mysterious thing from the inscrutable East - we knew a little of Judo and have seen Karate but Kung Fu was still a kind of mystery but all of this has changed and there are all commonplace terms which most people are quit familiar with. In this respect, in my intermediate and advanced classes, we practice against a wider range of tsuki, other than the normal "tsuki" we use in Aikido training. It is a very interesting training to execute Aikido techniques against upper cuts, hooks, jabs, double and triple punch combinations and counters against lutiple strike and punch combinations. This has opened up a wide area of study for me in my own practice.

Outside of this, much is the same for me as before. I hope I have rambled on too much here. . . . .

Thank you for sharing your ideas on training with us. I'd like to ask you now about the various levels of Aikido training. We all know that the basics are very important but how do you teach your students to go beyond the basics?

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In martial arts, there is an instruction of the "rudder in the waves." The rudder steers the boat and keeps it from tipping over, but it constantly needs a slight pressure to the left and to the right according to the currents to keep it in proper balance and on its true course. It is up to the student to develop this sense in his training but it is also the lifelong task of the teacher to help his student keep this "rudder" of his practice and his life on true course as well. Although growth is much according to one's own nature, there is also a consideration of "mindfulness" - it is not all random and willful impulse but there is this continual "awareness" as we go along - just as one must constantly keep his hand and eye on the rudder to keep the boat in equilibrium and on true course.

On a more down-to-earth level, once students do well and show good skill, I try to give them the opportunity and experience to teach other students. They start with helping out in the children's class because this is the hardest skill to develop. Young kids are very perceptive, open and honest so it is very necessary for the new teacher to be equally forthright and open. If he doesn't know what he is doing, the kids will sense it immediately. Adults are more forgiving in this respect, I think. I believe in my own training, that teaching is giving, not receiving. There is really no authority or prize or prestige, - just the hard, endless and devoted work of getting the students to practice Aikido properly.

In traditional Japanese arts, in respect to the teacher, there is the idea of Bosatsu-gyo. This means the "training" of a Bodhisattva or "near-Buddha" - although a rather Buddhist idea, it has filtered down into and become vitally characteristic of many areas of the traditional Japanese arts. The "near-Buddha" is one who about to enter the final stage of enlightenment but takes a vow to stay behind until all other sentient beings in the world are saved before himself. This is called Bosatsu-gyo or Buddha-training. In my own thinking, this seems to apply very well to Aikido. A teacher is there for his students, often the rewards are very small and many times there is only disappointment and frustration, but, all the same, the teacher is there for his students and puts his students ahead of his own welfare, more often than not in real practice. I am very concerned about their welfare and like to see my students, as they advance in Aikido, understand and appreciate how Aikido can bring fulfillment and happiness into their own lives. Maybe this is the only reward in teaching. . . . It is a lesson which I hope my students learn and pass on to their students.

To advance in Aikido beyond the basics, does not simply mean to be stronger in technique or develop one's authority, prestige or popularity but to find one's own self which will lead himself and all others around him, at the same time, towards a fulfilling life. I say, "all others around him" because I do not think one can achieve happiness all by himself. I teach my students as they advance that happiness must be shared by all - we are all happy together, not one person is happy all by himself. In the dojo, all practice and advance together, not one person only thinks of himself but must continually see to the well-being of all others around himself. In the dojo, it is often the hardest lesson to learn to get along with each and work together in harmony.

Finally, in addition to what personal development a student achieves in his training, I would always hope that they will help to develop Aikido and maybe help in the task of running the dojo and maintaining a high level of practice and instruction. Nowadays, I find that many of my seniors are becoming fine teachers - I sometimes think that they are much better than me. I am too much of the old-school and my methods are old-fashioned and out-dated. I see my students with younger and fresher outlooks on life and therefore can convey themselves much more easily to the newer students. . . I like this very much.

In teaching at a higher level, I would hope my students would begin to understand to two essential aspects to developing into a fine Aikidoist and martial artist. First is the "free mind" - this is not the mind which is obsessed with personal agendas or self-centeredness. This is the mind which can move freely without inhibition and attachment in the most natural way. A mind which does not cling to any one idea but can be open and honest in all aspects of their lives. I often see students get stuck on an idea or notion and then become blind to all other suggestions. This obsessive attachment is not good in encountering the opponent or in dealing with one's own practice on the mats.

The second is the "caring mind. " The mind which is thoughtful and caring of others and shows compassion to others, not only in practice on the mats but in their lives as well. I think we all like to think of ourselves as caring people but often, without being aware of it ourselves, we can become thoughtless. A caring mind notices everything and such caring can only come from a mind which is totally aware and in the moment. Especially in Aikido, I feel this "caring" mind to be an ideal we should all strive for.

As far as you see it, what stages does the typical Aikido practitioner go through?

In traditional martial arts, there are three stages called Shu, Ha, Ri. "Shu" means "Protection" and refers to the initial stage of training where he must learn all of the rules and master all of the techniques. It is often like a chick still within the hard confines of the eggshell. "Ha" means "breaking" and it is the next stage where the little chick begins to peck its way or break out of the shell. At this stage, the student has mastered the fundamentals and begins to broaden the scope of his training and knowledge. It does not mean to break the rules or discard them, it really means to expand and broaden them beyond the initial stage of hard-fast rules. The third stage is "Ri" which means "Separation," like the little chick finally freeing itself from the shell.

This does not mean that the student flies away from the nest, it means that he can go beyond mere rules and regulations, having mastered them and now transcending them as something which is now an integral part of his life and life perspective.

In addition to this, I think, as the Aikido student matures, he needs to ask himself many serious questions and begin to think how to apply these Aikido principles into his own life in a reasonable way. As an example, what does it mean "not to fight?" We think we understand this intellectually and by our reason, but in real life, we fight continually with each other every day. . . . What does it mean to be centered and balanced? It is not simply a way to be strong in throwing or pinning someone to the ground, I think it goes beyond this point to where we are centered and balanced in all aspects of our lives in facing all emergencies and encounters that life offers us. I think that when we hear terms like "harmony," "love," "blending," "ki," we immediately that we understand what such words means. However, our ideas are often in contrast to the "reality" of life and the moment to moment situations we encounter each day in our lives. When we become quiet and think about these ideas with a great deal of seriousness, we find, I think, that we really do not understand them at all. Daily practice is always the constant refinement and deepening of this understanding.

Finally, in O'Sensei's teaching there is this deep, almost divine, reverence for life - how do we understand this for ourselves and bring it into our own lives? I think part of the advancement of my students is to meet, think about, practice and begin to resolve such matters for themselves in their own lives and in their own thinking. This is one of the meanings of training throughout one's life.

Your nine-part video series has just been released on DVD. How much of your Aikido curriculum do you show in these videos?

When I was asked to do this video series, it was repeatedly emphasized that they wanted an "instructional" video and not a "demonstration" video. In much of these videos, the techniques are demonstrated much in the way, almost to the letter, as I teach my regular classes. In addition, they asked for a video series which people could watch and learn from. In the videos, many of the techniques are executed repeatedly and common pitfalls and errors are explained as well as hints to improve one's technique. I also included short talks to help and encourage the student in his practice, just as I do in class. Most of the areas covered in this video series is what I think any beginning student of Aikido should know as a good foundation for his practice. In addition to these nine volumes, there was planned for another three hours of videos to cover advanced techniques and bokken and jo beyond the basic introduction in the present set. Unfortunately, my busy schedule never allowed this.

I have received a great deal of compliments from all over the world and after many years, the publisher reports that it is still doing very well. There is really nothing fancy in the videos but I think it does cover many of the basic aspects of Hombu Aikido. In many of the explanations and presentations of the techniques, I explain them just as they were explained to me by my own teachers. The late Sadateru Arikawa Sensei of Hombu Dojo viewed my tapes when they first came out and I was surprised that he was so complimentary to me. He has always been an excellent, but stern critic and I have always looked up to him with great respect and awe.

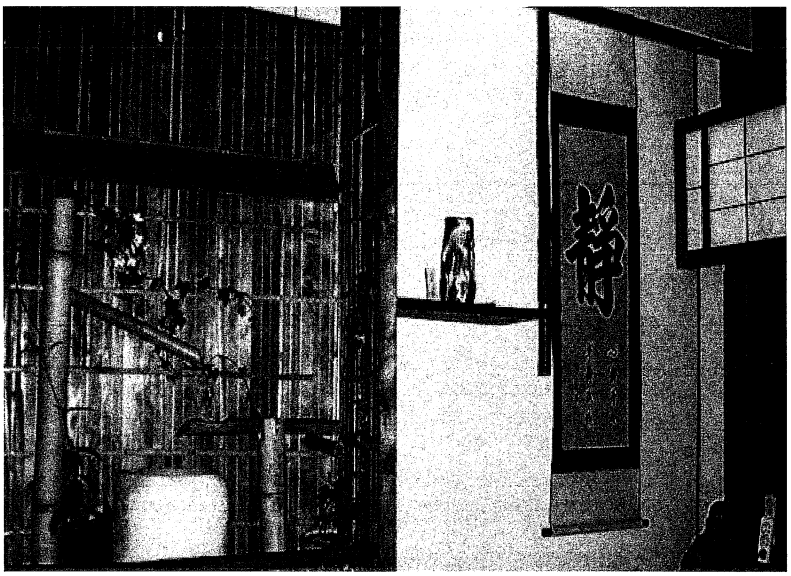
Furuya Sensei demonstrating Aikido at the 64th Annual Nisei Aikido Demonstration.

Sensei Views Our Nisei Week Demo:

Nisei Week is one of the main events of the Little Tokyo community and now we are in our 64th year. Times have changed however, and Nisei Week has changed greatly as well. Traditional events fall by the wayside, new ideas such as the Tofu Festival and "ninja tofu" are big hits. Last year, a beer garden was featured and the Taiko conference is another popular venue. Our Aikido and Iaido demonstration remains the same with each year and despite this it is always very popular and well-attended. This year our guests stayed and chatted with the students for almost two hours after our demonstration finished. The demo was very warmly received. Our surprise guest was Michael Berger Sensei, Shotokan Karate 5th Dan, from San Pedro, who has had an interest in Aikido and our dojo for a long time. Since the Nisei Week, he has visited the Dojo numerous times to talk with Sensei.

Our demonstration is a cultural event and our guests are introduced to Aikido as well as the beautiful aspects of Japanese culture by visitnjg our Dojo. This year, all the participants did exceptionally well and this indicates to me that training is progressing well. Our Children's Class also did an excellent job and I give a lot of credit to Ken Watanabe and Mark Ty for their excellent instruction. Next year, I hope more students will progress enough to participate. I am very satisfied with our contribution and the excellent job of the all the students.

Salamanca, Spain Kodokai's New Dojo Tokonoma:



07-28-04: Sensei I send you a picture about our new tokonoma,hope that you like, I inspired in some picture of you Dojo. Still I have to do little things until finish but in this month probably is Ok. The Dojo is fine, this August 21 my brother Carlos will get married, so he is busy with the preparations. And Oscar is in the coast of Spain for a few-days rest. And m, I am working in the Dojo. "What a summer!"

Probably this year will open a children class but still I don't know which age is most convenient to start in Aikido maybe 5 or 6 years old. What do you think?, Now I teach for kids but they are 11 or 13 years so they practice at the regular class with other students and this year was very well. . . . . Always, Santiago.

So Nice to Hear!

08-21-04: Hello Sensei, I just wanted to let you know that I am very excited about training in your dojo. I have been to four classes so far, and I am thoroughly impressed with the individual attention and excellent teaching that has been given by yourself and your students. I haven't been to class in a couple of days, and I will likely not be returning until Tuesday or Wednesday, however, because it seems that I have hurt my shoulder a bit. Also, my body is just becoming accustomed to these new moves, and I need more rest now than I will as I become more comfortable with everything. I just wanted to assure you that I am very serious, dedicated and excited about the training and I will return as soon as my shoulder heals a bit more. In the meantime, I have picked up your book "Kodo, Ancient Ways," and am enjoying absorbing your unique views. So, hopefully I will be back to class in a couple of days. Thanks again, and I hope all is well. Warm Regards, Bill DuBay

Sensei's Reply: Please take care of your shoulder, you shouldn't try to go too fast at the beginning. I am glad to hear that you are enjoying class. Please continue and keep up the good work. I will relay your message to my assistants who will also appreciate your kind words. See you in the Dojo soon.
Aikido Center of Los Angeles, Sensei

KODO Helps Another Reader:

07-30-04: This is the message: I would first like to say that I am assuming that you are the author of "Kodo: Ancient Ways", and not someone else with the same name as this author. If the latter is true I am sorry for wasting your time. I would also like to apologise if my writing comes across peculiar or error prone, as it is quite late at night here.

I am sure you must get a lot of e-mails and letters about your book "Kodo: Ancient Ways", but I would just like to add that never have I read a book which has changed my life quite as much as yours did. Granted, I am only recently 19 so I haven't read that many books, but I am very glad that I read yours. Recently I came to a point in my life where I felt I had lost everything that was close to me in the course of a very short period of time, these were all things that if someone asked "who is Aaron Parker?" I would have used these things in some form or another to describe myself. With these things gone, I became very depressed and I suppose I went through an identity crisis of sorts. I lost my confidence and my self-esteem. This carried on for maybe over half a year and things seemed to get progressively worse. Eventually there came a time when I seriously contemplated taking my own life. I tried hard to talk to someone about everything but I am an extremely shy person and! find it hard to open up to anyone and I constantly felt like I was becoming depressed over trivial matters which everyone must go through at some time. Anyway, eventually it was my nineteenth birthday and someone gave me your book - Kodo: Ancient Ways. If it wasn't for that book I really don't know where I'd be today, it really changed everything for me. I am not an Aikidoist or a martial artist of any sort, I really only have a penchant for Eastern Philosophy - but I found it to be an incredibly uplifting text. One particular story stands out in my mind about the Lord and his minister which suggested that it is not an event itself which is intrinsically good or bad but rather the individual which determines its value, that is definitely one story that I don't think I'll forget for my entire life.

So, I would like to thank you from the deepest depths of my soul. I really don't know what I would have done if it wasn't for reading your book and it is something that still concerns me even now (about a month on), but I try to think about something else you said on how there is no past or future only present which is worth concerning yourself with. I sincerely hope that these ideas are ones which stay with me for the course of my life and I am going to try my utmost to keep to them and also to explore them further. Thank you again. Aaron Parker

Sensei's Reply: Many, many thanks for your very kind letter. You are very important to me because your words encourage me and help to justify my work. Best wishes and much happiness and fulfillment in your Life. Sincerely, Sensei.

Art of Aikido Now In DVD Format:

Our video series in nine volumes, The Art of Aikido, is now in DVD format with very convenient subheadings for each technique. This makes it very easy to go to any specific technique very quickly. We hope all students will take advantage of this great teaching tool and reference to your training in the Dojo. You can order through our website or see one of Sensei's assistants to purchase or get more information. HIghly Recommended!

Health Corner: Banana Power

Submitted by Ken Watanabe:

EAT A BANANA
After reading this, you'll NEVER look at the Banana in the same way again!!

Brain Power: 200 students at a Twickenham (Middle) school were helped through their exams this year by eating bananas at breakfast, break and lunch in a bid to boost their brain power. Research has shown that the potassium packed fruit can assist learning by making pupils more alert.

Doctors - Home Remedy: If you want a quick fix for flagging energy levels there's no better snack than a banana. Containing three natural sugars-sucrose, fructose and glucose - combined with fiber a banana gives an instant, sustained and substantial boost of energy. Research has proven that just two bananas provide enough energy for a strenuous 90 minute workout. No wonder the banana is the number one fruit with the world's leading athletes. But energy isn't the only way a banana can help us keep fit. It can also help overcome or prevent a substantial number of illnesses and conditions making it a must to add to our daily diet.

Depression: According to a recent survey undertaken by MIND amongst people suffering from depression, many felt much better after eating a banana. This is because bananas contain tryptophan, a type of protein that the body converts into serotonin known to make you relax, improve your mood and generally make you feel happier.

PMS: Forget the pills - eat a banana. The vitamin B6 it contains regulates blood glucose levels, which can affect your mood. (Don't bring a rose, bring a banana.)

Anemia: High in iron, bananas can stimulate the production of hemoglobin in the blood and so helps in cases of anemia.

Blood Pressure: This unique tropical fruit is extremely high in potassium yet low in salt making it the perfect to beat blood pressure. So much so, the US Food and Drug Administration has just allowed the banana industry to make official claims for the fruit's ability to reduce the risk of blood pressure and stroke.

Hangovers: One of the quickest ways of curing a hangover is to make a banana milk shake, sweetened with honey. The banana calms the stomach and, with the help of the honey, builds up depleted blood sugar levels, while the milk soothes and re-hydrates your system.

Heart Burn: Bananas have a natural antacid effect in the body so if you suffer from heart burn, try eating a banana for soothing relief.

Morning Sickness: Snacking on bananas between meals helps to keep blood sugar levels up and avoid morning sickness.

Mosquito Bites: Before reaching for the insect bite cream, try rubbing the affected area with the inside of a banana skin. Many people find it amazingly successful at reducing swelling and irritation.

Nerves: Bananas are high in B vitamins that help calm the nervous system.

Overweight and at work: Studies at the Institute of Psychology in Austria found pressure at work leads to gorging on comfort food like chocolate and crisps. Looking at 5,000 hospital patients, researchers found the most obese were more likely to be in high-pressure jobs. The report concluded that, to avoid panic induced food cravings, we need to control our blood sugar levels by snacking on high carbohydrate foods every two hours to keep levels steady.

Ulcers: The bananas used as the dietary food against intestinal disorders because of its soft texture and smoothness. It is the only raw fruit that can be eaten without distress in chronicled cases. It also neutralizes over acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.

Temperature Control: Many other cultures see bananas as a 'cooling' fruit that can lower both the physical and emotional temperature of expectant mothers. In Thailand, for example, pregnant women eat bananas to ensure their baby is born with a cool temperature.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): Bananas can help SAD sufferers because they contain the natural mood enhancer, tryptophan.

Quit Smoking: Bananas can also help people trying to give up smoking. The B6, B12 they contain, as well as the potassium and magnesium found in them, help the body recover from the effects of nicotine withdrawal.

Stress: Potassium is a vital mineral, which helps normalize the heartbeat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates your body's water balance. When we are stressed, our metabolic rate rises, there by reducing our potassium levels. These can be rebalanced with the help of a high potassium banana snack.

Strokes: According to research in 'The New England Journal of Medicine' eating bananas as part of a regular diet can cut the risk of death by strokes by as much as 40%!

Warts: Those keen on natural alternatives swear that, if you want to kill off a wart, take a piece of banana skin and place it on the wart, with the yellow side out. Carefully hold the skin in place with a plaster or surgical tape!

So you see a banana really is a natural remedy for many ills. When you compare it to an apple, it has four times the protein, twice the carbohydrate, three times the phosphorus, five times the vitamin A and iron, and twice the other vitamins and minerals. It is also rich in potassium and is one of the best value foods around. So maybe its time to change that well known phrase so that we say, "A Banana a day keeps the doctor away!"

30th Anniversary Celebration DVD Now Available:
Please order your DVD now. $25.00 donation to the Dojo. Thank you for your support. You can mail in your remittance with your address and it will be sent to you. Overseas, please add $5.00 for additional postage.

Muso Shinden Ryu Iaido-Shoden & Chuden DVD.
Now available. $25.00 donation. $5.00 extra for overseas shipping and postage. Limited edition.. Covers all the basics for practice in the Dojo. Especially for beginning students of Iaido.

Letters:

07-03-04: From Budovideos.com:
Sensei,Yes, your videos sell well. They are probably the best English language Aikido videos on the market today. Any chance they will be put to DVD? Jake McKee, Budovideos.com

07-05-04: Hello, Reverend Furuya. I apologize for my e-mail, which is famously (rather, notoriously) unreliable. I last wrote to you in spring of 2001 in hopes of stopping by to pay my respects to you personally while I was in LA visiting my uncle.

Unhappily, my train on that trip was so badly delayed that by the time I arrived, the window of opportunity had passed, and your busy schedule demanded your attention elsewhere.

I am coming again to LA to visit my uncle, and would like again to try to arrange to stop by to thank you personally for the inestimable gift you have given to the traditional martial arts in your wonderful book, KODO. All of my students are required to read it in order to begin advancing through their belt ranks.

Because my e-mail is so unreliable, I have taken the liberty of also sending a hard copy letter by land mail. Because of the holiday on Monday (today), you may not receive it until later this week --not too late, I hope.

I will be in town on July 16, 17, 18, and 19, and, with your permission, will call to see if you have a few spare moments that would be convenient to you on any of those days. I promise not to take too much of your time.

Again, on behalf of all modern students of true bushido, thank you for the lessons you have given us --which most never would hear otherwise in the modern circus of sport "martial art," about the true responsibilities and rewards of real martial practice. Gratefully and respectfully yours, John Townsend

07-11-04: Aloha Kakahiaka and Happy Sunday Sensei! Thanks, very much, for your recent writings on koshirae, and also for your care regarding historical accuracy -- none of us should accept, uncritically, anything, and your efforts to both remind us of this and encourage us to exercise our critical thinking are, well, critical! :-) When do you think your Yagyu book will be available? Collecting leaves while walking the path, Heraldo Mon Farrington, Volcano, Hawaii

07-11-04: From Kodokai, Salamanca, Spain: Sensei, How are you?. I hope you are fine. I can read in the Aiki Dojo in how many things you are working. Here the dojo is fine, we are working to make a nice Kotonoma, I will send you a picture when is finished.

Sorry to have no many communication but those days have been many stress, I wish that in a few days everything be normal.

The Aikido and the Iaido class is fine, this summer there are more people practice as usual, so very good. Still I have not any news about your interview to Cinturon Negro. I will keep you inform about this. Always, Santiago

07-12-04: Dear Rev. Furuya, I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am writing because I would like to tell you that I am very interested in Iaido and have been for some time. I have always had an interest in some of the culture and history of Japan, including its martial arts.

Unfortunately because of money constraints and my schedule I am not able to start attending a reputable school as I believe yours to be. I did want to ask however if there was anything you do suggest that I can do to further my interest and knowledge regarding iaido and aikido?

PS- I noticed on your website that you received some of your schooling from USC. I graduated from USC in 2001 and an currently at USC working for their community relations and also going to school here again to get my Master in Public Administration. Well, thank you very much for your time and consideration,
Guillermo A. Güereque
Administrative Coordinator
USC Civic and Community Relations
Health Sciences Campus

07-15-04: Dear Sensei, Despite the personal baggage people bring to their study of martial arts, those who practice long enough, are likely to be changed by that practice. Thus, it is ultimately the art that imposes itself on the student. When people ask me what I do in my spare time, I typically say that I practice martial arts. I found your page on the difference between martial and civilian arts perplexing. "Without castles walls to guard"; causing me to ponder. Karl Friday suggest that dedicated practitioners do so in the manner of a "ascetic". Perhaps its best not to think to deeply on this matter. Thanks, Wesley

07-15-04: Hi. I am a fellow aikido returning from a 3 1/2 year hiatus (due to pregnancy, birth, breast feeding and general disorder). Am excited to be physically training again, but the mental/spiritual aspect never stopped. I am hoping by the 'kodo' in the title that there may be some discussion of kodotama, and perhaps eventually a voice chat including the sounds..... more later, for now it is just nice to have found you. bless

Sensei's Reply: No KODO is my book, kotodama is something else.

07-16-04: From Yahoo Groups: Hello Jörgen I have been reading and re-reading Kodo for some years now. I have found it an invaluable book as it has helped me to understand what martial art really means, what it means to truly devote yourself to a martial art and addresses such common issues such as focusing on getting a black belt.

Of course, because martial arts are really about life and refining one's life I have also found Kodo a wonderful resource to help keep me 'on the Way' in my life in general.

I try not to read too many books. Rather I try to read, reflect and act on what I learn from just a few. . . . .read the original text. Kind regards, Ambrose Merrell, Cambridge England

07-16-04: just me: I just want to ask you if you please sensei pray for me, I am just asking that. I read once a letter of you , that remenbers me something....

This is what I remenbered: when I got 8 or 9 or 10 , my father took me to the best store of toys in all the state, and , he told me that I could pick any toy that I want , I was surprised, then I walk and walk , and,

I took only a cheap sword. Then he asked me surprised: that jose? that is a cheap toy!!!! you could pick another thing then jose so you could get two toys, and, I said to him that was ok..... and I ask him if he could please ask someone of the store if they have a samurai sword, he laughed (smile) and then he asked someone of the store and they said no.

So my father only bought me that sword and he remenbered me that the store was an hour of distance on car, but i said to him that it was ok. so i arrived to my house and begin to practice with the sword in the nights. Everybody wanted to practice soccer and baseball and I just wanted to practice with the sword. I am writing to Rev. Furuya not Sensei Furuya. Sorry my English. Jose, 28 years old, South America.

07-18-04: Sensei, Hello sensei, I hope all is well with you now that you are finally getting the proper amount of rest. I saw your topic yesterday on kotodama and I have a follow-up question. I have also been trying to research this subject for some time but reference materials in English seem almost non-existent. I have been able to find a few sources, however, and even a rare tape of some kotodama being voiced in practice. I guess I really have two questions. First, In doing quite a bit of reading about O-Sensei and his practice, it seems as though he dedicated a lot of time to the practice of kotodama. Why do so few instructors today give kotodama much consideration? Secondly, I was wondering if you are familiar with a particular kotodama, and if so could you share your interpretation of it's meaning? The kotodama is-"Ame-no-murakumo-kuki-samuhara Ryu-O". I have been very unsuccessful at properly translating this verse. Thank you so much for any time you can spare for this question. Respectfully, Jason
P.S. I am glad to see you have found a new outlet to share your knowledge on the internet. Please take care not to have another Aiki-Web!

07-18-04: Sensei, Thank you for your response. You are right, it was inconsiderate of me not to remember that you don't like to write about religious subjects after your experience on Aiki-Web. If you are truly interested in my references please allow me some time to go through and compile them. The statement you referred to was a general feeling I have gotten from both written material and stories and conversations with different sensei. The tape I have was found for me by the people at Aikido today magazine and as far as I know is no longer in production. It is called "The secret sounds of Aikido" by John Stevens sensei. You will have to give me some time to go through my books if you are interested in other sources. I have personal interest in this subject because it is part of a larger theological thesis that I have been working on for some time. It deals with the many different religions of the world and there theories of creation. It turns out the O-Sensei's belief in the Kotodama or sound as the source of creation is the same in many cultures and religions and also in science as well. You just need to look beneath the surface and read the words. I don't mean to bore you with this I just wanted you to know a little bit about why I am interested in this subject. The basic point of my research is to find a commonality between some of these different faiths to try and break down some of prejudices we have towards one another. Anyway, please forgive me for putting you on the spot with my question but you know I respect your input and when I saw someone bring it up I guess I couldn't resist. Thank you anyway for your response, Jason

07-18-04: Sensei, Of course, you are right, the kotodama is not a religion. I'm sorry if what I wrote made it sound that way. My however, and won't discuss this with you any further. Thanks for the insight. Respectfully, Jason

07-19-04: Good Day. I am writing to you for two reasons, the first is because I wish to talk to you about possibilities for training. The second is the fact that I am trying to get access to live in America from Britain and the first step to doing this is to get myself in the country on a tourist visa. To do this I must be enrolled on some form of course which will last between 3-6 months in the U.S.A.

I must stress though that I not trying to use your club as a backdoor into the country, I have been interested in Martial Arts and their practice for many years. I have a smatering of experience in Wing-Chun, Kempo-Jujitsu and Judo, however my interest in Aikido is sincere. I have done a great deal of research over the years into the nature of Martial Arts and their different practices and ideals. Based on this research I feel I would be hard pressed to find a practice which in terms of it's philosophy and ideals is more suited to my mindset.

I have also personally seen some frankly mind-blowing examples of resisting superior force and redirection of an opponents energy. I have also recently read 'Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere', a book which has clarified many points about the art which I wasn't sure about (and making me realize what a difficult road I have if I am to properly study this art). Finally it must also be said that the idea of training with a 3rd generation teacher is attractive. It is my intention to one day travel to China and Japan and learn from the source as it were, but for my time in America I can not think of a better Dojo to go to.

I hope you will consider my request, as I said it may seem that I am simply trying to use your Dojo as an entry point to the country. This is not the case, and if you are happy to take me on you will gain a dedicated and attentive pupil. I look forward to hearing from you, though I humbly request that if you can you answer as fast as is possible as time is of the essence. I will be more then happy to answer any questions you might have regarding my motivation for coming to both America, your Dojo or in fact almost any subject you would like details about. Yours Faithfully, Dominic Sewell.

Sensei's Reply: I think you should begin Aikido training in a local dojo and gain some experience first before you think of travelling so far to enter a dojo. I am also sorry but we do not handle any matters regarding immigration and visa, it is important that you at least make it to the entrance of our Dojo by your own power.

07-21-04: Practicing Alone: Sensei- Although it is now a top priority for me to attend class at the dojo, some days I will not make it at class time, but find I have other time to myself that day. You once wrote to practice by ourselves when a partner is not available, but I am afraid of practicing bad habits without guidance. I know that I must learn how to see my own mistakes, and I do sometimes. But my question: at such an early stage in my training, is it best to at least practice what I do know when I do not get to the dojo? Thank you for your time, Sensei. Kevin

Sensei's Reply: At the beginning stages, especially, you should practice only under the supervision of a teacher. Secondly, how do you really know what you know and what you don't know?? I think it is better for you in keep an open mind and try to attend classes more regularly. Stop looking for loopholes all of the time. . . . . My Best!

07-22-04: Don't Touch It!!!! Furuya Sensei, I have studied budo for almost 20 years. I find that as the years pass my perspective changes and with it old lessons take on entirely different meaning. Most recently one of my colleges asked me to clean a World War II NCO shin-Gunto that his father had given to him. At first I declined. This may sound strange but I felt that the sword was above me. Nevertheless, after his persistence I accepted the task. I explained that with a sword such as this one I had heard that if it was cleaned in a "incorrect" manner he may loose dollar value. Not that I care about money but it was in fact his sword. I explained that I am not an expert at the task he had "Appointed" me to undertake. He explained he was more interested in making the sword clean than loosing any dollar value to it. He placed the old soul in to my care. I took it home and placed it on my table. Now, to the point. I am trying to consider if what I felt was genuine or if I was just too excited about being able to care for it. I felt like there was a presence in my home. It was like having a guest over. A friend came over a day or two later and when he saw it he began to speak as if it were just a piece of military equipment. I realize then that either I am just over romanticizing it or I really did feel something. I like to think I am a practical person. I am curious, have you ever had such an experience. I have read you appraise many "old souls". I was over joyed to clean this sword. I hope that its original owner would be pleased that his belongings in this world are still respected even after he has passed, if he is passed! respectfully, Tora Tokonara, Wichita, Kansas

Sensei's Reply: Please don't try to clean the sword, you are not an expert and are in danger of ruining the blade. I am interested to know what kind of name is Tora Tokonara, please. . . . .

07-28-04: Dojo Plans? Dear Rev Furuya I love your books and articles. I do not have access to any traditional teachers. I have studied Karate and jujutsu with people off and on over the years but i cannot endure the modern attitudes of students and instructors in this area. I wish to expand my knowledge of bujutsu and the Japanese culture. Can you please send me or refer me someone who can provide information on Traditional dojo: floor plan, decorations, etiquette, clothing. I have learned bits and pieces, but some of the exact details are unclear. I know you are very busy but i would love to correspond with you. Thank you, Mario Lupica "OS"

Sensei's Reply: You really have to study the whole spectrum of Japanese culture and history in order to understand even one aspect of Japanese arts such as architecture.As far as building dojos, it is all in my head.

07-30-04: Sword Appraisal (Refer To Daily Message) Dear Sensei, Why did you eliminate judging a sword by its use; perhaps in kata or combat? I can only think that as the subject is appraisal, judging by use falls under personal value. Thanks, Wesley

Sensei's Reply: Sword appraisal only applies to the blade itself as a work of art. "Use" has to do with the user of the blade. I am speaking of formal sword appraisal here.

07-30-04: Joining the Dojo: Hi, I am interested in beginning Aikido training, and I would like to know what would be a good time to come observe a beginners' class, and have a chance to ask the instructors questions? Allen

Sensei's Reply: Everyone is welcome to view class and join our practice. You do not need to call to make an appointment, just check our Training Schedule and Daily Message for current schedule listings or changes. Welcome!

08-01-04: Hello Sensei Furuya, My name is David Benus. A few weeks ago, I saw the show "Way of the Warrior" on Discovery Channel, with a section on you and your dojo. Your eloquence and beautiful technique further piqued my interest in Aikido (I am a fan of early Steven Seagal, and I know that he is/was a legitimate Aikido practitioner). After doing some searching on the subject, I came upon your comments in the threads on Aikiweb (written back in September of last year) where you so gracefully and articulately responded to attacks on your art and your physique.

I am also a man of middle age (46), a good bit overweight, with all the stress and frustrations that life (especially now - at this time and in this country) can bring, and with a need to return to martial arts - both for my mental and physical health; as a teenager, I studied Tae Kwon Do. One of the people joining in the Aikiweb discussion made a point that rang true and got me thinking: If a man in less-than-optimal physical condition can show such wonderful control over opponents, doesn't this show that Aikido is a martial art more appropriate than most for those of advancing years and in less than optimal physical condition? In addition, the concentration of Aikido in the spiritual part of life is also interesting and different from the focus of most other martial arts. More research seems to bear out these points as valid.

So - I am writing to congratulate you and thank you for doing the show (even though you say you are hardly ever pleased with the results of these interviews) and for responding to jerks like the one who attacked you in the Aikiweb posts (but then interestingly became quiet and respectful because of the manner in which you replied to him), and to ask for your help...

I am going this week to observe a class in a local New Jersey Aikido school, and if my research and thoughts turn out to be correct, I think I will soon become a beginning practitioner; all this due to the convergence of my needing to fill a void in my life and seeing you and your dojo and reading your comments.

If I may, I would like to ask you a question: Do you know of a Sensei Richard Stikles of Aikido Schools of New Jersey in Roselle Park, NJ? http://www.aikidoschoolsnj.com/ He does appear a few times on the Net, and he and his school seem reputable, but I would appreciate any feedback you could give me on this as I prepare to meet this sensei and see his school.

Again, thanks for accepting the interview for that program and for responding to your detractors on Aikiweb. You may have changed my life without my ever having met you. Sincerely, David Benus
92 West 49th Street, 2nd Floor, Bayonne, New Jersey 07002 USA
Tel. (201) 437-3797, E-mail - dbenus@agoron.net
Website - www.tatianamusic.com

08-02-04: Sensei, Thanks for your response. I appreciate your taking the time to answer me on your site.

I hope that you will get a good rest now that you know that you need it, and I will give your regards to Sensei Shikles when I meet him on Thursday

Continued: night. I'm very happy that you know him, that he is in your eyes reputable and good teacher, and I look forward to meeting him and seeing his school.

Again, I wish you the best in your health and your life - a life well spent in the pursuit of dedication and excellence in a martial art that requires all of that and more. I hope we can talk again. Sincerely, David Benus

08-02-04: (Reviewing Draft of Helen Hsu's New Book) Helen: After reading these accounts, I just want to say how proud and honored I am to know you. I am always discouraged when I see people today with so much and they waste and do so little with their lives. . . . . Sometimes, I think the mainstream of our society is more needy than those who escape from prison camps and have nothing and are so mistreated. . . . . I am very proud and happy, very proud, indeed! My best, Sensei

Hi Sensei- thank you so much for your kind thoughts and super-rapid reading review!

I am sure the book committee will be thrilled to get such quick feedback, and your points are helpful. "cultural competency" is a big term in our field but I had forgotten it is not used among laypeople.

I feel very invested in this project because the life stories of our clients and staff are truly inspiring. People ask me why it isn't depressing to work with troubled people and the reason is that human resilience can be so amazing, and I get to witness and be a part of that. The rich life stories of the people here are so humbling and beautiful despite the pain and trauma and how far they we have all traveled to arrive here together. I was the one who interviewed "Nalisa" for the book and it was so powerful to hear her story. You would never know by looking at her now that she has such incredible inner strength and has suffered so indescribably! It's amazing. She looks healthy and good and has accomplished so much.

it was sad to hear how often one's own community members are not supportive, and can sometimes be actively discouraging! so I share a lot of your feelings about how immature and shallow society has become,the worry about our culture and future...I don't buy into most of this pop culture crap and it renders me a lot older than my peers in many ways!

well, I will be sure to send you a mini-book in the Fall and you are more than welcome to share that with your students! And at that point we will have pre-order forms for the full edition in 2005.

Thanks again-hope to see you very soon! Dr. Helen Hsu

08-05-04: A Page From KODO: Hello Sensei! It has been quite some time since I have written and do hope that as usual, this finds you well and in good spirits. While I normally have a question for you, I thought today I would take the time to thank you for your continued generosity of your daily message. Having just graduated from University and making my way into the real world, I find myself short on money and big on selfish feelings. Yes indeed, the question of what we need to make us happy is ever present is it not? I have decided to take a page from your book and pour my heart into something I have always wanted to do. I am going to open my own used bookstore and if needed, sleep on the floor if thats what it takes! For too long now, I have made excuses and talked myself into believing that I cannot do something instead of knowing I can. I guess in the end, life is like the gas pedal in a car, ya know, the one on the right! I guess we should all step on it now and then! Many thanks Sensei! Always, Michael C.

Sensei's Reply: You WILL make it! Best wishes always,

08-06-04: Good morning Sensei, I have been practicing Tae Kwon Do for about 8 years now. I read your daily message (08-05-04) about book stores and finding select books. Do you have a recommended reading list (or favorites) that would suit the general martial artist? What books would you consider to be "Classic" martial arts books?

My students and I really enjoy reading your Daily Messages. (and your book) It is rare to find someone like you who freely shares their experience, life lessons and teachings (for all the world to see). Keep up the good work. You exemplify what it means to be a martial artist. Thank you. Perseverance Don

08-06-04: More About Trogawa Rinpoche: Hi I thought you might like to know that Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche visits London,England quite regularly to give teachings and empowerments, and also medical consultations.He is coming to London on Thursday 16th and Friday 17th September to give teachings on Vajrasattva.

I was searching the net to find out if he would be available for consultations this time,in the hopes of booking one while there are still some available(they get taken fast)and came across two messages from your site regarding your appreciation of Dr.Trogawa. He is indeed a very special teacher.To be with him is a joy and a privilege.Anyone who makes a connection with him is truly blessed.

Should you have the opportunity to come to London the venue is the Rigpa Centre,330 Caledonian Road,London N1,and the times are from 7 - 9 p.m. on the dates given.You can get further details from the Drukpa Trust,at http://www.drukpa.org.uk Hope this helps. With every good wish Jennie

08-06-04: Dear Reverend Furuya, I saw an excellent television special tonight (actually twice), in which you demonstrated your approach to the instruction and practice of Aikido.

Just prior to moving to Boston for graduate school, I attended an introductory Aikido class held in a small dojo in the Philadelphia area. The hour that I had spent with six black belts, despite the many falls I took, opened my eyes to the Art, and I have started reading Gozo Shioda's "Total Aikido."

I have no formal martial arts training but would like to begin classes soon. I have found two programs in the area, Shobu Aikido of Boston (http://www.shobu.org/) and Harvard Aikido Club (http://hcs.harvard.edu/~aikido/index.shtml), but I humbly request any recommendations that you may have regarding any other potential dojos to consider in this area. Thank you in advance for your insights. Best Regards, Kris Natarajan

Sensei's Reply: The Shobu Dojo is run by Gleason Sensei and he is very competent. The Harvard Aikido Club is under the leadership of the late Kanai Mitsunari Sensei who was an excellent teacher.

Friend & Actor, Russell Wong Honeymoons In China & Tibet

07-31-04: Sensei, Really nice to see you the other day. This is a picture I took of Zhouge Rinpoche in Tibet. I will send a few more photos I took . Hope they don't take too long to download. Look forward to having a meal with you soon. All the Best. Russell

Actor Russell Wong with Rinpoche during his trip to Tibet and China. Russell starred in the well-known Joy Luck Club as well as Romeo Must Die with Jet Li.

Tibetan woman with yak. Photos taken by Russell Wong.

Letters Continued:

08-08-04: Dear Sensei, I learn much by reading your daily messages. Thank you very much for caring enough to take such trouble. There is so much I wish to discuss with you, but I'll limit it to one thought. But first, here's a bit of background on me:

I practiced judo from about age six to about fifteen, then for a few months a few years ago when I was in my late 30s. I didn't stick with it that time mostly because I didn't find what I was looking for. Then a few months after I quit, I saw you on the Discovery Channel documentary on martial arts. Since then, I've studied many books in Aikido (including Kodo) and it illuminated many things about judo that my judo senseis never talked about. Since judo and Aikido share some common heritage, much of the lessons in the Aikido books quickly made sense to me.

Despite the value I've gained from studying Aikido (at least intellectually), I haven't joined an Aikido dojo because I know I cannot devote the time and mental energy required. I have a very demanding job at Microsoft. In fact, another reason I quit judo that last time is because my Microsoft job taxes my mind so much that by the time I arrived at class in the evening, I was so mentally drained that I'd make many mistakes tied to my inability to concentrate, resulting in injuries to myself and others.

Anyway, my thought relates to a workshop on a very complex, new topic that I delivered to a very high quality audience. By high-quality, I mean these are among the best computer programmers in the world. I developed the concept for the workshop and the material. This was the first time I developed a course on a topic I barely mastered myself and delivered myself. It really made me understand the need for senior students to participate in teaching. It seemed that my final exam was to teach the subject. The act of preparing the material that must be correct and delivering the material really cemented my grasp of it. In the future, when I'm a sempai again, I'll never again think the sensei may be taking advantage of me as free labor.

Lastly, I'm curious about something you mention in Kodo. You mention an item that is not on the menu of a Japanese restaurant you frequent. You say that there is an unseen ingredient that makes it so special. I'm betting you're talking about butterfish (black cod) misoyaki.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email. I certainly would

Continued: love to visit your dojo when I'm in Los Angeles. Sincerely, Eugene Asahara

08-08-04: (Please refer to Daily Message) Hello Sensei, Thank you for the response to my email this morning (via your Web site). Actually, I'm fortunate enough to live very near Frank Doran's dojo, Aikido West. I will take advantage of that while I'm here! I believe I have worked myself into a position where I can make the time for Aikido and in fact the payoffs from randori will be great in the normal course of my day :) Also, thank you for the interesting information on ume. Sincerely, Eugene Asahara

08-09-04: Nisei Week Demonstration: Furuya Sensei ;Thank you so much for having me today at your demonstration. I enjoyed it tremendously, although I am sorry that I missed the IAIDO portion of the program , due to the fact that several of us were waiting outside because your event was such a great success.... !

It was an honor and a privilege meeting you . I have wanted to meet you for quite some time. Your dojo epitomizes what a DOJO (place of THE WAY) should be, and you and your students truly embody BUDO . You truly exemplify BUDO what I am striving to teach my students.... that is , KEN ZEN ICHI (by the way, Nakayama Sensei's favorite KOTOWAZA that he wrote to to me , together with his handwritten MUSHIN , hence the name of my dojo) O-Sensei would be very proud . .... AIKIDO and ZEN (especially SHIKANTAZA) is THE WAY. I am sorry for this long message, but you have inspired me deeply. Michael (Berger, Shotokan Karate, 5th Dan, San Pedro, Ca.)

08-09-04: KODO Helps Again: Dear Furuya Sensei, My teacher who is also my partner has been studying Shotokan Karate for almost 30 years. He started training in 1975 and in 1986 went to Japan to study and train at several universities and the J.K.A. Among the universities were Takudai, Keio dai, Taisho dai and Kokushikan. I myself began training 15 years ago.

The reason I am writing to you, is to thank you for letting me know I am not going insane. Most of what you write about in your book Kodo has happened to me and my teacher. He has practiced day after day never stopping. Even through 10 close bereavements and other extreme hardships. But the main thing that is hardest to understand is the terrible jealousy we have towards us. Please believe me, I thought I was going insane with the continual back stabbing and people trying to stop him teaching on a professional basis. Even to the point of students being envious of his ability, though still obviously wanting his instruction.

Our situation reminded me of F.B.I. movies where you don't know who to trust. The one real lesson this has taught me is that the word Sensei means far more than I ever imagined and true Sensei are rare. I am a lucky student to have a teacher who is sincere honest & dedicated to the art of Karate and the Way. I will continue reading your book as this has given me strength and inspiration to continue on a journey that is so wonderful and fulfilling in every aspect of my life, I thank you once again for your efforts in explaining these confusing phenomena. Yours faithfully, Linda Barnes.

Sensei's Reply: Yes, I too am sometimes discouraged by what I see students can do in the dojo by the acts and their attitude. Although we don't feel appreciated, we must keep moving onwards. Best Wishes!

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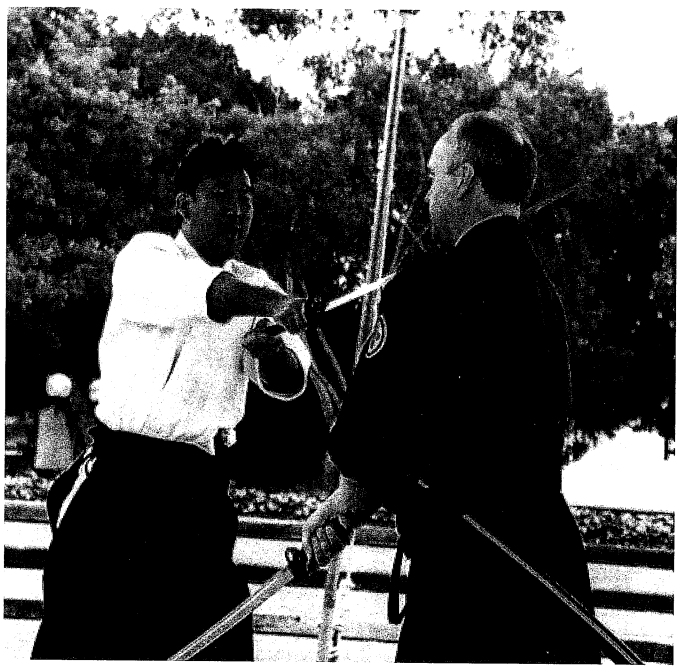

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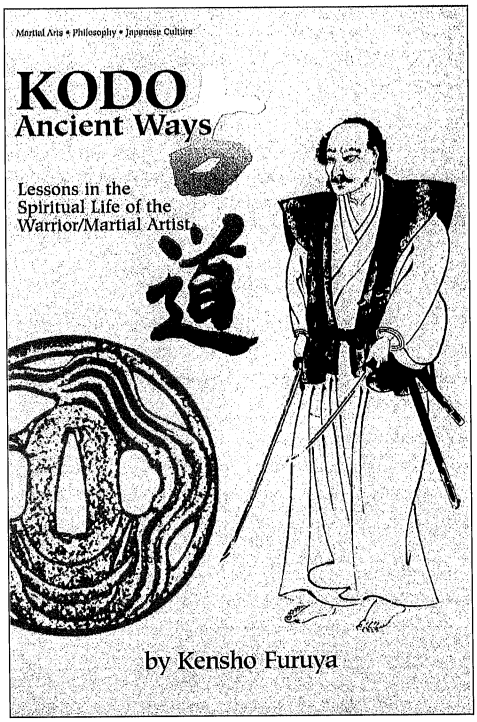

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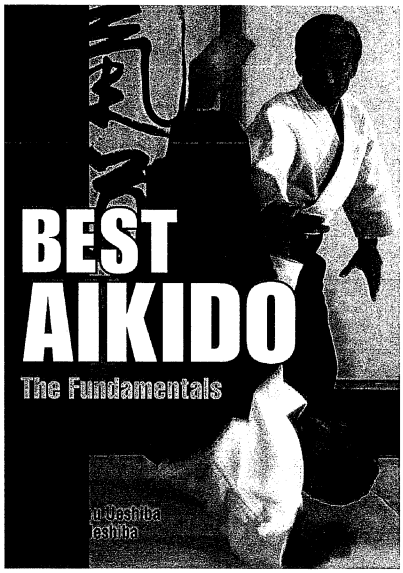

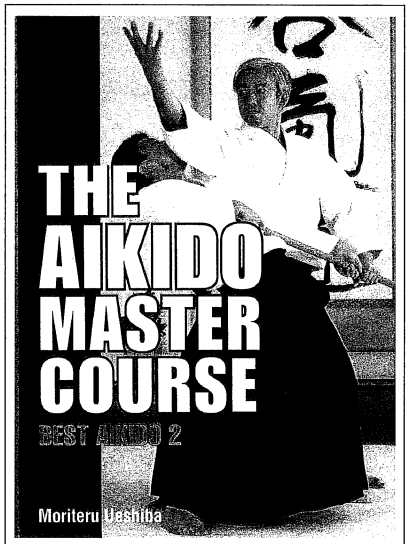

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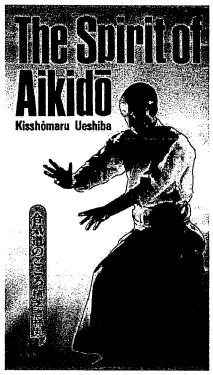

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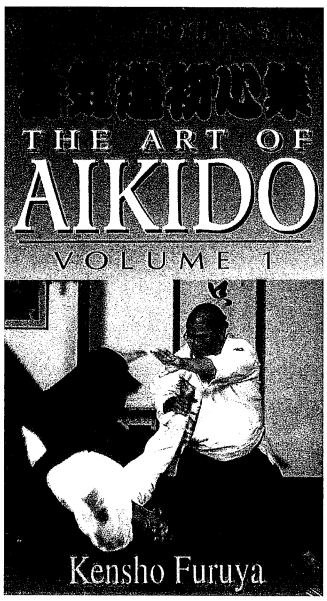
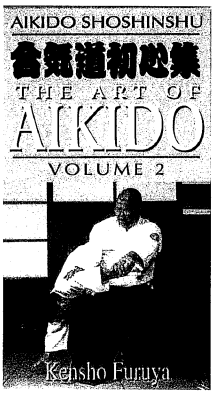
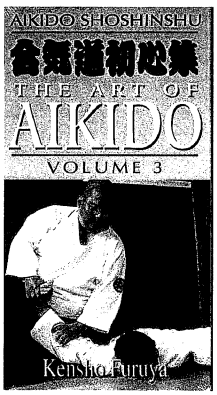
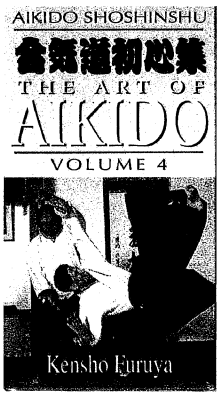




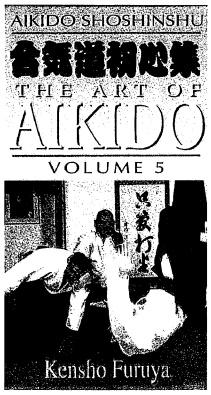
Basic Techniques
Throwing & Joint Techniques, Ikkyo, Nikyo, Sankyo, Yonkyo & Gokyo



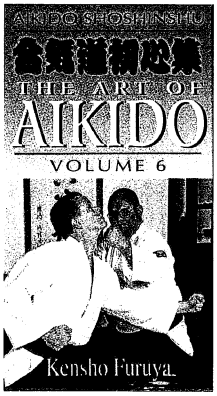
Ukemi-Breakfalling
Basics Continued
Free Style Techniques
Tenshin. Ki. Breathing.



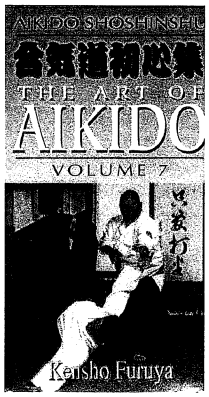
Katatetori Ryotemochi:
Ryotetori: 2-hand.
Reigi-saho: Etiquette.
Koshinage-Hip throws.



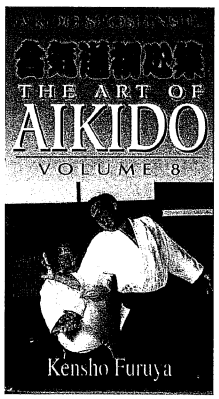
Suwari-waza. Gokyo.
Hanmi-handachi. Kokyu-dosa. Katatori: Shoulder.
Multiple attackers.
Five-man Freestyle.



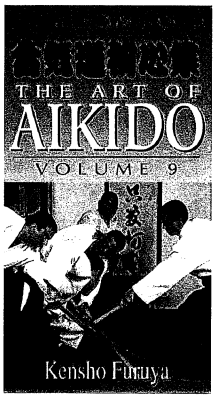
Tsuki: Strikes & Punches
Yokomenuchi: Strikes to the side of the head & neck.



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



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



Jo: Basic long staff
Fundamentals.

Complete 1st Degree
Black Belt Examination

Aikido Center of Los Angeles
www.aikidocenterla.com

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

AIKIDO for ADULTS

Sundays: Children's Class: 9:00-10:00am
Open Beginning: 10:15-11:15am

Mondays: Open Beginning: 5:15-6:15pm & 6:30-7:30pm.

Tuesdays: Open Beginning: 5:15-6:15pm
Intermediate 4th & Up: 6:30-7:30pm.

Wednesdays: Open Beginning: 5:15 6:15pm & 6:30-7:30pm.

Thursdays: Open Beginning: 6:30-7:30pm
Beginning Weapons, Bring Bokken & Jo: 7:45-8:45pm, 4th Kyu & up.

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

Saturdays: Open Beginning: 9:30-10:30am.
Open Beginning: 10:30-11:30pm.
Every 4th Saturday: Intensive Aikido: 6:30-8:00am. 3rd Kyu & up only.

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

7- 16 yrs old

Sunday Mornings 9:00 -l0:00am

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 and the present Moriteru Ueshiba Doshu.

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Los Angeles, CA 90012
Tel: (213) 687-3673
Email: aclafuruya@earthlink.net
www.aikidocenterla.com

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Sunday Mornings: 7:45am-8:45am

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

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

No Classes on the last weekend of the month.

Intensive Iaido Seminar

Every 2nd Saturday of the month.
6:30am-8:00am

Private Classes Available.

Finding Our Dojo:

We are endeavoring to maintain the highest standards of training while preserving the True Spirit of Aikido. We hope you will appreciate our efforts and undertake your training with devoted and committed energy. Your efforts, we believe, will be greatly rewarded. We welcome you to an ancient and profound art. We welcome you to our Dojo. Everyone, beginners and active Aikido students alike, are cordially welcome to join our training. Thank you.

We are convenient to most major freeways. Enter private lane at Vignes and 2nd Streets. We are one block west of Santa Fe Ave. and several blocks east of Alameda in Little Tokyo. The **Easiest Way:** From Alameda go east on 1st St and make right turn at Vignes. Do not turn on 2nd St. but go straight into the private lane. Look for the garden.