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The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

道の為、世の為、人の為 合気道

The Aiki Dojo

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

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Evolution of Muso Shinden Ryu Part IV

by Gary Myers
Iaido Chief Instructor

Nakayama Hakudo

In the last article we discussed the Meiji period headmasters of the Tanimura and Shimomura branches of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu. In this article we focus on the 20th century sword master Nakayama Hakudo. Hakudo was born in Ishikawa Prefecture in 1872. His family were retainers for the great Maede samurai clan of that area. He left his family to live with a merchant family in Tomiyama

City at the age of eight. He became an eager student of the game of Go and was considered to be an expert by the age of 14. When he was 16, he went to Tokyo to pursue his passion for Go. At 17 he would play a game of Go that would change his life. It was with Negishi Shingoro, who was the headmaster of the Yushinkan Dojo of swordsmanship, and Hakudo became his student shortly thereafter. The Yushinkan Dojo taught the Shindo Munen Ryu form of Kendo, but no forms of Iai were taught at the school at that time. It is said that Hakudo also studied Kendo with Kendo master Terai Ichitaro of the Yamaguchi Itto Ryu.

Do You Remember?

by David Ito
Aikido Chief Instructor

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Founder's passing and the second year of Sensei's passing. As the years go by it grows easier to forget, which comes naturally because we are human; we get busy and life moves on. In Japan, memorial services are

generally held the first, third, fifth, seventh, 13th, 39th, 49th, or 50th year, and memorial services for more than one person become consolidated to Obon in July or August.



Students care for Sensei's burial plot

I have started to wonder about our grieving

Sensei's loss. Everyone has worked very hard to put the dojo together and maintain a regular practice schedule. I suspect that senior students will now begin to come up for air after holding their breaths for the past two years, and Sensei's passing will become more real to them. Everyone deals with grief differently and many different things can happen. Some of us have completed our grief, but some of us still hold our breath, waiting for our feelings to dissipate.

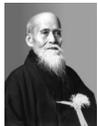
I have noticed that the grieving reactions range from feeling despair and discouragement, to becoming overly diligent, to everything in between. Personally, I find myself vacillating between these two poles.

Meditation Class

Saturdays: 12:00-1:30 PM

(This class is open to the public and is free of charge).

O'Sensei Memorial Seminar



April 24-26, 2009

Guest Instructors:
Kei Izawa
Yasumasa Itoh

Everyone is invited!

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Continued on page 7...



Letter to Sensei

*by Jose Roberto Magallanes Molina, Aikido 2nd Dan
Co-Chief Instructor, Veracruz Aikikai*

About ten years ago I read from a famous martial artist that the most difficult thing was to find a good and true martial arts teacher. My first encounter with Sensei was merely casual because I had learned about him and his dojo in my travels between Mexico and Los Angeles. I visited his dojo and was honored by his allowing me to take a class; afterwards I enjoyed a conversation with him. Immediately the thought came to my mind that I would love to join his dojo and be his student, so we started a long-distance correspondence over the Internet in which I would read his daily message, exchange e-mails, etc. And a year later I asked permission to be his student, but as I lived in Mexico I thought it was impossible. To my surprise he took me on as one of his branch dojos.

In 2004, I visited Sensei on the occasion of ACLA's 30th anniversary and was treated as a special guest, but when I came back home I wrote a letter to a sensei at Hombu and made the biggest mistake of my life by embarrassing Sensei with his friends from Japan. He was really mad at me, but once again, to my surprise he forgave me for my mistake. What a noble gesture! He told me not to be so aggressive in my actions and I started to learn more from him. Ever since then, I have attended his seminars each year. When Sensei passed away, I thought that we all have lost a true, honest, skillful man of knowledge and a good teacher. However, Sensei's senior students have showed me what a good teacher he was in the legacy of good Aikido he left with them. I want to say thank you, Sensei, because now I am still learning from you through them. Bless you!

Community

by Mark Ehrlich, 2nd Kyu

April has arrived, and soon we'll host our annual O'Sensei Memorial Seminar. This event marks a precious few days when new students and seniors, and friends from near and far, gather together at the dojo to train and enjoy some all-too-infrequent social time. I've come to think of it as a time of year when everyone trains hard, eats well, and laughs a lot. As we prepare for this year's seminar, I find myself looking back on past ones, and on daily life in the dojo in general, and thinking about the nature of the relationships I've created through Aikido.

For the longest time I thought of ACLA as a place separate from the other avenues of my life, a tiny cul-de-sac that I would visit privately and not discuss with anyone in the rest of my world. In fact, this tendency became something of a joke in my circle of friends. They developed the habit of asking and answering the same question: "What are you doing tonight? Oh, Aikido!" Yet, although I undoubtedly spend less time with them than I did before I began training, they remain my friends, which I think stands as a testament to the foundation of respect and trust we've built over the years. They know me well, and know that when it matters, and even when it doesn't, I'll stand by them.

Sensei and Training

by Leonard Manoukian, Aikido 1st Kyu

Perception is a strange thing. When someone is with us, his every word, expression and inflection registers with us. When he chides us for our failings, we are hurt. When he acknowledges our success, we are filled with pride. But when that person leaves us, those very experiences, good and bad, turn into fond memories which we share with those around us. As time goes on, even those memories fade. What is left isn't so much the details of the man, but the emotions he elicited in us, the feelings he brought on, the seeds that he planted. So it is with Sensei.

So what did the Sensei bring out in me? All my life I had known men like him. Men who had devoted a lifetime's effort to one thing, one cause. They had been Catholic priests, men who had left the comforts of family and friendship to serve their religious calling. But Sensei was different. It wasn't a religious passion that propelled him so much as a drive to refine the simplest of things: training to bring body and mind together to accomplish one goal, a moment of perfection! When balance, timing and movement blend to cause one's opponent to fly across the room with seeming effortlessness. That one moment when one is a vessel of some universal energy. But to what end? Training, of course! But to what end?! Because we are, none of us, Aikidoka! We are, all of us, becoming Aikidoka. The transformation is the goal. The process is the goal. The journey itself becomes the destination.

Of course, I would have preferred to have learned this with Sensei rather than without. But, I learned this because of him. And that is all that matters. I miss him. It is simple, painful and real. But I rather have this, all of it, than the alternative.

On the other hand, after a couple of years at the dojo, I felt hard-pressed to define how my fellow students and I related to each other. I liked everyone well enough, and in some ways I felt I knew them, yet often I'd realize how little I actually knew about them as people. Part of this, I think, stems from dojo etiquette; you come in, train hard, clean up, and go -- the daily life of a martial artist. And while you learn a lot about people from throwing them across the mat and getting thrown in your turn, you don't learn everything. I have witnessed students join the dojo, train for a time, and then leave without knowing why they left or why they enrolled in the first place.

Tom Lehrer, a comedian well-known before some of us had even come into the world, once quipped, "Life is like a sewer. What you get out of it depends on what you put into it." Our knowledge of what sewers overwhelmingly collect makes this declaration funny; our appreciation of what exactly we put into this journey makes it poignant. I think the same holds true for Aikido. Those students I mentioned may have had a consumer's sensibility of the dojo as a location where they could buy something: a supervised workout, a uniform, a patch, some kind of knowledge or skill. I imagine many of us at first began Aikido thinking along those same lines. At first.

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My Trip to Denver

*by Mike Van Ruth, Aikido 2nd Dan
Chief Instructor, Aikido Renbukai of Arizona*



Photo courtesy of Sean Hannon

It was a great opportunity to accompany Ito Sensei on his trip to Denver, Colorado to participate in the two seminars being held the weekend of March 28th. We flew into Denver airport on Friday afternoon. The city had recently been hit by a blizzard, and the snowfall had turned Denver into a winter wonderland. It looked and felt very different from what we are used to in Los Angeles and the Phoenix area!

Ito Sensei teaching at the LMS seminar

Not long after settling into our hotel room, we set off for a Friday night class at Izawa Sensei's Tanshinjuku Dojo. Class was taught by Andre Brown from Boston. Steve Shaw, a former student of ACLA now living in Colorado, was there to greet us. It was good to get a class in to have an idea of how the altitude would affect me during the seminar; it is, after all, the Mile High City. Afterward, Izawa Sensei invited us to his home for dinner. All the guests gathered around the dinner table to enjoy a wonderful rice dish prepared by Izawa Sensei's wife, Mariquita.

On Saturday we attended the Ninth Annual Colorado Aikido Summit held at Denver Buddhist Temple and on Sunday we attended the LMS Aikido Seminar held in Louisville, Colorado. I felt greatly honored to train with so many wonderful people. I got to see old friends and to meet new ones. I learned a lot from them and the instructors who taught at the seminar. Kei Izawa Sensei, Yasumasu Itoh Sensei, David Ito Sensei, and August Dragt Sensei all taught outstanding classes and shared their perspectives of the art.

I flew back into Phoenix with the feeling that I had accomplished much. My body felt the fatigue of all the great practice, my mind was filled with all the interesting conversations about Aikido and its future, and my heart was touched by the contact with so many new and old friends sharing in our common pursuit. Occasions like these make me realize that being a practitioner of Aikido makes us all part of something that is truly a wonderful fellowship.

Photo courtesy of Sean Hannon



Photo courtesy of Mariquita Izawa



LMS Aikido Seminar in Denver, Colorado

Photos by David Ito



Sensei's Memorial Services



Photos by Larry Armstrong





Evolution of Muso Shinden Ryu continued from page 1...

When he was 23, he received his first certificate of mastery and at 27 he was named a complete master. He married Shingoro's daughter and was adopted into the Negishi family. When he was 31, he had to return to the main branch of the Nakayama family, because it was having financial difficulties. In 1905, at the age of 33, he opened a dojo in Tokyo, naming it Yushinkan in honor of his teacher's dojo.

Hakudo began an exhaustive study of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu in Tosa. He studied under the Tanimura branch master Moromoto Hokushin and Hosokawa Yoshimasa of the Shimomura branch. He became of the 16th master of that branch in 1922 at the age of 49. It is said that he also mastered two other forms of Iai and studied other forms of Iaijutsu.

He had many famous students at his dojo and was the instructor for companies such as the main electric provider, as well as Mitsubishi and Mitsui. He also taught swordsmanship to the Navy, Keio University, the Keishicho police academy and the Imperial Household Guard. He was also part of an advisory board that developed the sword curriculum for the Toyama Military Academy, so he is sometimes called the developer of the Toyama Ryu forms. He also created a judging board for all master instructors throughout the country. In 1927, he was named a master of Jodo (the staff), making him the only person to hold mastery of three martial arts. He was also a good friend of O'Sensei and was a go-between in the marriage of O'Sensei's daughter and Nakakura Kiyoshi.

Nakayama Hakudo began to refine the Iai techniques and to develop his own for a style which he incorporated into the Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu. He called this form Muso Shinden Batto

Jutsu. He later changed it to Muso Shinden Ryu, although it was not formally called that until 1955. Hakudo began using the term Iaido in 1932.

He was not a big man, at 5'2" tall, but Hakudo used swords in the range of 31" to 33" in length. He wore an impressive handle-bar moustache. He would also test a number of modern swords, made by Kanetoki, who took the name Kanemichi because of Hakudo and Yoshichika. Many of these swords carry his testing stamp on them. There is a story that he cut cleanly through a bundle of rice straw with an iron rod in the middle, leaving no mark on the blade. It is also said that he could leap from a long distance and cut an adzuki bean in two without cutting anything else. Nakayama Hakudo had the honor of demonstrating both Kendo kata and Iaido in front of the emperor on three different occasions. There is film footage, which has been compiled into a DVD set, showing some of these demonstrations.



In 1946, Nakayama Hakudo was imprisoned at Yokosuga by the American forces for teaching martial arts. He left martial arts for a period but returned in the mid-1950s. There is film footage of him during this time skillfully demonstrating various Iaido techniques at the age of 83. He died in 1958 at the age of 86.

Hakudo did not name a successor, so many consider him to be the last *soke* of the Shimomura-ha, although there have been two others named to that position since his death. Most of his serious Iaido students who became teachers have passed away including: Danzaki Tomoaki, Nakakura Kiyoshi, and recently his youngest student, Mitsuzuka Takeshi, who was one of Sensei's Iaido teachers and friends. We continue our Muso Shinden Ryu tradition and lineage through that relationship.



Idyllwild Arts Academy



Iaido demonstration



Letters

Aloha Ito Sensei:

Thank you for your hospitality during my January visit to your Dojo. I enjoyed your instruction and practicing with everyone. I hope to be back in July and look forward to the chance to practice with your members again. Leslie and I have been very busy since we returned.

I received your newsletter. I enjoyed reading the articles, and information. I was very surprise to see our picture, of course it was a nice surprise. Thank you for sending me a copy.

Take Care and Mahalo,
Tod Fujioka
Hawaii Betsuin Aikido Club

Aloha Ito Sensei!

Today, on the memorial of Sensei's passing, I find myself re-inspired by you and your dojo's remarkable fortitude and your continuing success in keeping his spirit alive! Accordingly, I am not surprised that today I am finally able to re-initiate my daily zazen and my solo Aiki weapons practice, both of which Furuya Sensei helped to cultivate and mold before we even met in the physical sense. I am fortunate that I was able to meet him, train with him, and enjoy his warm company and open heart, however briefly. I cannot truly fathom how deep your sense of loss has been over these last two years. Nevertheless, I wish to encourage you and the dojo, and remind you that your Sensei's heart lives on, far beyond the shores and the mountains of the Los Angeles basin . . . Gambatte!

Your friend in Aiki,
Heraldo Farrington
Aikido of Hilo, Hawai'i

Community continued from page 2...

Nowadays, I see a different sensibility percolating throughout our student body. I see growing numbers of students on the mat, and growing numbers of past students returning to train, and I see people who have had to stop training for various reasons make the effort to visit us during social events at the dojo. Let me first disclaim: I know nothing, but nothing, about Aikido except how to spell it. Yet from where I sit in the corner, dunce cap perched on my embarrassed head, it seems to me that these students get to the heart of Aikido by their willingness to visit and help sustain the community of the dojo, just as those do who focus on daily training in the proper spirit. Training forms the cornerstone of what we do and probably shows the way most directly. But fostering a sense of community adds a warm touch to a cornerstone, and makes all the difference during those inevitable moments when I find myself wondering why I bother to pursue this path. Recognizing that more connects us than simply 50-minute intervals on tatami can help us take some first steps towards the universal harmony, the proper spirit for training and living, that I believe we all seek.

So: thank you to all those who train regularly, or at all. Thank you to those who have returned. Thank you to those who cannot train, but sustain your ties to the community of the dojo, and by your presence help all of us remember where we came from and appreciate where we are now. I hope to see everyone at the seminar; if not on the mat, at the parties and mixers we'll have. You could make our guests feel more welcome, and maybe, just maybe, you could feel the cool flicker of inspiration as you glimpse around the room, at all the faces, at the pictures of Sensei, and begin to understand the dojo as something more than the sum of its human parts. I hope we all do. See you on the mat.



O'Sensei Memorial Seminar

April 24-26, 2009

Schedule

Friday April 24th

5:15 PM: Bill Allen, Aikido 2nd Dan
6:30 PM: David Ito, Aikido 4th Dan

Saturday April 25th

8:00-9:00 AM: Gary Myers, Iaido 5th Dan
9:15-10:00 AM: David Ito, Aikido 4th Dan
10:10-11:00 AM: Yasumasa Itoh, Aikido 6th Dan
11:10 AM-12:00 PM: Kei Izawa, Aikido 5th Dan
12:00-2:00 PM: LUNCH
12:00-1:15 PM: Meditation (optional)
2:00-2:50 PM: Santiago Garcia Almaraz, Aikido 4th Dan
3:00-3:50 PM: Tom Williams, Aikido 4th Dan
6:00 PM: Welcome party in the dojo

Sunday April 26th

8:00-9:00 AM: Ken Watanabe, Aikido 5th Dan
9:15-10:00 AM: David Ito, Aikido 4th Dan
10:00-11:00 AM: O'Sensei memorial Service
11:10 AM-12:00 PM: Kei Izawa, Aikido 5th Dan
12:00-2:00 PM: LUNCH
2:00-3:00 PM: Yasumasa Itoh, Aikido 6th Dan
3:00-4:00 PM: James Doi, Aikido 5th Dan

**Schedule is subject to change without notice*

Everyone is invited!



Do You Remember? continued from page 1...

Even Sensei suffered a dampening of spirits at one time or another. He wrote about it in *Kodo*, in a chapter titled, "To be discouraged is part of training." What Sensei didn't write about was that in the late Eighties, both of Sensei's parents (and, I believe, his grandparents) died within a short span of time. Sensei nursed each one with care until, one by one, they passed away and left behind thousands of dollars of medical bills. Shortly after his last elder died, Sensei injured his back in a car accident and had to convalesce in the hospital. It was this time that he felt the most desperate; an only child, for the first time he found himself all alone in the world. Sensei and his father had built the dojo together, and returning to the dojo at last from his hospital stay must have pained Sensei tremendously.

It seems natural for Sensei to feel the need to re-examine his life at such a crossroads; although we'll never know, I imagine that he did. I do know that Sensei could have fallen apart and closed the dojo or quit Aikido altogether. However, he persevered and at this almost hopeless moment forged his commitment to his students as their teacher. He took solace in the writing of one of his heroes, Mother Teresa. Interestingly, she wrote many letters in which she expressed how at times she felt abandoned by God and wrestled with feeling faithless, empty, and lost. In the end, she surmounted her negative feelings and held fast to her commitment and thus went on to help so many.

Because Sensei lived and taught us, we must endure. I believe some people think, *The dojo is not the same and feels different*, and *The teachers are nothing like Sensei*. I know that sometimes, all of us feel like quitting. In these moments we question

our loyalty, our path, and our lives. For some, quitting Aikido feels like the best choice; for others, it never becomes a real option. In these moments, our actions define us. Sensei's death might cause us to re-examine why we practice: Did we honestly practice Aikido for Sensei, or do we practice for ourselves? When we accept that Sensei was not our savior and the dojo is not Mecca, all that remains is the training itself. In last month's issue, we reprinted an article Sensei wrote for *Aikido Today* magazine in which he pointed out that we should practice Aikido because we love it and not for any other reason.

The Japanese word for remember is *oboeru*, which means to remember or to learn. The kanji (覚) has the radical for *miru* or to see along with the radical that depicts an ornate roof. The implication is that you remember by looking inside. Alternate pronunciations of this kanji are *kaku* and *sameru*, which can mean awareness or to awaken. This chain of meanings points to other connections as well; it suggests that remembering can lead to awakening. Sensei always observed every memorial service, every year, for Second Doshu and The Founder. To me, it always seemed like so much work and hassle for him, but for Sensei it amounted to some of the most important days of the year. He used to ask, "You are so busy that you can't take one day out of the year to remember O'Sensei?" I now understand that by remembering Sensei, Second Doshu and The Founder, we shed light on ourselves. Marking their passing helps to remind us to look inward and to see if we truly have learned the lessons that they taught. Someone once asked me, "Why do we observe every memorial for O'Sensei, Second Doshu, and Sensei? Forget them and move on!" I answered that if I choose to forget them, I will not remember to look inside my own heart, and I will undoubtedly forget myself.

Branch Dojos

Hacienda La Puente Aikikai

Hacienda Heights, California
Chief Instructor: Tom Williams

Aikido Kodokai

Salamanca, Spain
Chief Instructor: Santiago Garcia Almaraz
www.kodokai.com

Veracruz Aikikai

Veracruz, Mexico
Chief Instructors:
Dr. Jose Roberto Magallanes Molina
Dr. Alvaro Rodolfo Hernandez Meza
www.veracruz-aikikai.com

Aikido Renbukai of Arizona

Surprise, Arizona
Chief Instructor: Michael Van Ruth
www.aikidorenbukai.com



**Congratulations
Sensei Raul Montolfo!**

Raul won the Gold at the 2009
Pan American games.

Raul Montolfo is the Head Instructor
at Gracie Barra Tri-County and
former ACLA student.

Upcoming Events

- April 12:** Easter - Dojo closed
- April 24-26:** O'Sensei memorial seminar
- April 26:** O'Sensei memorial service
- May 25:** Memorial Day - Dojo closed
- May 27-31:** Moriyama Sensei visit
- July 4:** Independence Day - Dojo closed



Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class
10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

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

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open
7:45-8:45 PM Fundamentals

Wednesdays

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals
6:30-7:30 PM Open
7:45-8:45 PM Weapons

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM Bokken

Fridays

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

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open
10:40-11:40 AM Open

6:30 AM Instructor's Intensive: last Saturday of the month.*

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

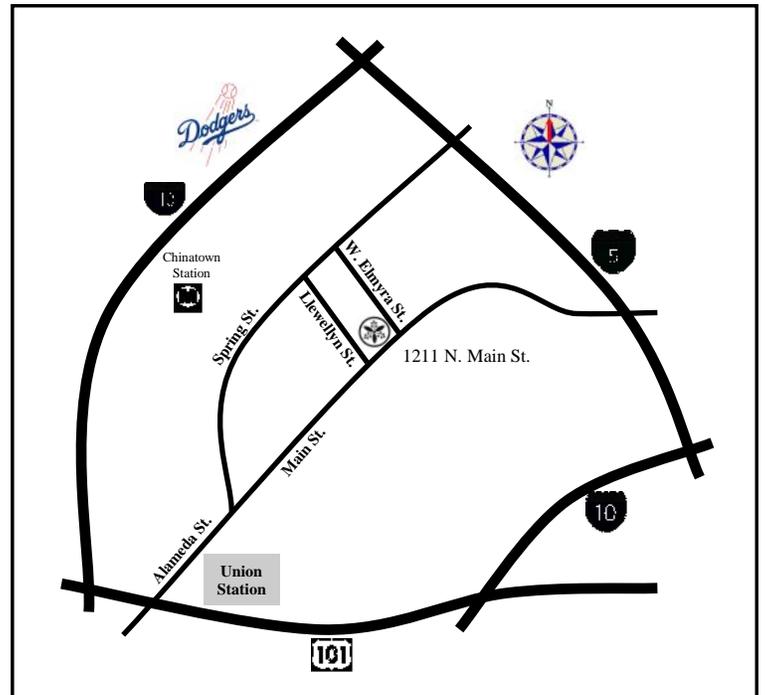
Saturdays:

7:15-8:15 AM Beginning
8:15-9:15 AM Intermediate-Advanced

Sundays: 7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays: 6:30-7:30 PM (Bokken Practice)
7:30-8:30 PM

No classes on the last weekend of the month.



Meditation Class

Saturdays: 12:00-1:30 PM

(This class is open to the public and is free of charge.)

We are directly affiliated with:

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 Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.

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



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at
1211 N. Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Tel: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:

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