



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 and Swordsmanship Society Kenshinkai
The Furuya Foundation

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Photo courtesy of Louis Lee

O Sensei memorial service officiated by Reverend Kojima of Zenshuji Temple

Upcoming Events

May 27-28th:
Ito Sensei teaches at Akkan Dojo in Fresno, CA

May 30th:
Memorial Day - Dojo Closed

June 4th:
Meditation class taught by Jake La Botz
12:00 PM

June 25th:
Instructor's Intensive

July 4th:
Independence Day - Dojo Closed

July 30th:
Instructor's Intensive

Letter From the Editor
by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

April saw lots happening at the dojo, not least of which was our annual O Sensei Memorial Seminar. Thank you very much to everyone, especially Kei Izawa Sensei and our other guest instructors, for helping to make this weekend event a fun and memorable training event. It felt very special to revisit with old friends and make new ones as well.

Speaking of training, the dojo has sharpened its focus on the basics of late, partly to help welcome our newest students to Aikido, partly to strengthen and refine all of our fundamental skills. Ito Sensei and Ken Watanabe have made weeknights at ACLA into a powerful learning experience, and I encourage everyone – our black belt candidates in particular – to make the most of these two teachers and attend as many classes as you can during the week to round out your practice.

In this same vein, in this issue of *The Aiki Dojo* our two chief instructors discuss different aspects of good training, and I think the lessons they share can benefit all of our read-

ers as we continue our daily journey towards leading lives of distinction, not only as students but as human beings.

One of our students has enjoyed great success in this area. I won't spoil the surprise, but read on to learn more about how one of our black belts, who has done so much for us over the years, has recently been honored for consistently making a difference in her community. I know you all will join me in extending heartiest congratulations to her for her service and another job well done. (This award is only the latest in a long series of honors for her generosity and leadership.)

Finally, give the events calendar on this page a look, because over the next month or so, we'll have some rare offerings for you: one involves an ACLA alumnus returning to share his expertise with us, and another entails Ito Sensei visiting another dojo at their request to teach for a weekend. Try to join in on the fun if you can; you'll thank me later.

All in all, signs point to this summer keeping things interesting. As always, feel free to reach out to me with any submissions or feedback. I hope to see you on the mat soon!

What Does It Mean to Be Well Trained?

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

This year our seminar was a huge success. I want to thank Izawa Sensei for supporting us and teaching some wonderful classes. The seminar went very well and I think all of our guests had a great time. Great job everyone!

For the last four years during our annual O Sensei memorial seminar, I have taken a group of instructors and students to Sensei's grave site. We have our routine down to a science with maps, incense, flowers, and other accouterments for remembering Sensei. This year, the person driving us got lost on the way to the grave site. He got lost because of his ego. Was his ego driving? No. Was his ego reading the map wrong? No. His ego was clouding his judgment about his abilities and inhibiting his preparations. He was offered a map but turned it down. He was asked by someone if he knew the way and he replied, rather condescendingly, that he did. So how in the age of cell phones, GPS, Google maps, and a printed map did this person get lost? He got lost because his ego blocked his way. He showed that he wasn't well trained. He put his need to feel superior to the task first before the needs of others.



I had a similar thing happen to me 15 or so years ago when Sensei and I went to KI International in West Los Angeles to pick up some *tatami*. After I loaded my truck with 20 of these mats, we headed back to the dojo. As soon as we started out for home, Sensei quickly fell asleep. I instantly started to panic because I didn't know the way back and I was scared Sensei would wake up and get mad at me. I have a terrible sense of direction and wasn't paying attention on the drive to the store, nor did I make a map. I tried my best to remember landmarks or street names but was drawing a blank. (This was before the age of cell phones or Google maps and I didn't have a Thomas Guide.) The 40 minutes it took us to putter along down Pico Boulevard felt to my frantic mind like four hours. I was sweating profusely and I looked as if I had just run a marathon. Then miraculously when we were just approaching Spring Street, Sensei woke up and I told him I didn't know the way home and he said, "Turn left here!" in a rather bothered tone. When we arrived at the dojo, Sensei said, "You have to pay attention!" and went inside. During the ride to KI International, I spent so much time talking and listening to Sensei talk that I was forgetting about the task at hand. It showed that I wasn't well trained. Since that day, I always make a map of where I am going and how to get back, and I always try to memorize street signs and landmarks to guide me home.

A student recently asked me, "What does it mean to be well trained?" My answer was doing the right thing at the right time without thinking. This is easier to say than it is to do. In the beginning it's our parents who train us, and later some of us come to the dojo to begin our training in Aikido. With proper guidance and

some trial and error, anyone can be considered well-trained. A good teacher can always tell what's truly in your heart and can tell when you are "faking it". Our actions, in the end, quite simply represent our spirit; it's not something we can fake. I've seen hordes of students with seemingly earnest hearts get kicked out because they were disingenuous. In the martial arts the "fake it until you make it" mentality doesn't work.

I recently watched a documentary about the Eighth Dan test for Kendo promotion in Japan. During the first two stages, the judges are looking for the body-mind mastery of Kendo. This technical mastery looks like a movement, which is completely natural and devoid of any thought. The judges, all Kendo teachers holding at least Eighth Dan or higher for at least 15 years, can detect whether you make your movement with or without any thought. They believe the movement is an extension of the spirit, and to their trained eyes the required execution looks different than doing it by rote muscle memory. If you can move freely, devoid of any thought, you have gained body-mind mastery of Kendo.

Being a well-trained student is the same as the movement the Kendo judges were looking for. Are you moving, not with your mind, but with your spirit? Are you doing the right thing at the right time without thinking? Are you thinking about reward or praise? You cannot be well trained while being caught up in your ego, nor can a swordsman cut with ego. With ego there is thought; where there is thought, there is no mastery. Last month in Ken Watanabe's article, he referenced Master Hsu's suggestion that we have to perform movements millions and millions of times in order to gain mastery. Etiquette or being well trained is the same. You have to do it so many times that eventually you can do it without thought, whether it is opening a door for someone or picking up an errant piece of paper on the floor. The moment you have to think, the opportunity has passed. One saying that Sensei was fond of when he was admonishing someone was, "The moment has passed." The trained eye of a good teacher can see who is and who is not well-trained and can see into your heart and tell what is contrived or what is earnest.

Tea master Sen Soshitsu defined the Japanese word for human, *ningen*, as two characters consisting of *nin* (for "man") and *gen* (for "interval"); he suggested that people could only become truly human based on their interactions with others. This is why we develop ourselves, and this is why we strive to do the right thing at the right time without thought: to become better human beings. Decorum dictates that we conduct ourselves with dignity and honor, putting forth the same spirit we go into battle with that we do performing our daily tasks. Training in Aikido is about developing ourselves into better human beings who can benefit mankind, not destroy it. This is what O Sensei referred to as *masakatsu agatsu* or victory over the self. Please continue to work hard to develop yourselves in this way.

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Timing is Everything

by Gary Myers, Iaido Chief Instructor

We often use the phrase “timing is everything”. Typically, it is in reference to financial transactions or a fortunate confluence of events. When it comes to swordsmanship and Iaido, in particular, the term is very applicable. This year we have emphasized the importance of timing, not only in Muso Shinden Ryu but also in all the forms we study. Why the emphasis on timing?

Obviously everything involves time; even when we don’t do anything time continues on. We usually have an idea of how long

things take will to accomplish. This article, for example, will probably take longer than it should to complete, because I am a terrible typist. We have been indoctrinated to believe that quicker is better, so the more we jam into an interval of time, the better it is. Major marketing campaigns have been developed around the concept of time-saving devices that supposedly buy us more time. Multi-tasking, quicker downloads and data streaming; all those marketing buzzwords entice us to buy those quicker devices, so we can find out what clothes the celebrity du jour wore into court that day. Don’t worry, this is not a rant on technology, our pop culture, or how you spend your free time: what we are discussing is that sometimes, faster is not better and may make things worse. We should understand when to go fast and when to go slower.

Sensei would often talk about our perception of speed and how it has changed over time. In Japan prior to the 19th Century, the fastest someone could travel would be on a galloping horse, approximately 30 miles per hour. Only the privileged few, however, could have horses, the majority would be relegated to foot power. Of course, now we travel in vehicles that are the equivalent of 300-horse power and we are typically traveling at two and a half times that speed. So our perception of speed is far different than our ancestors. Those differences certainly change our perspective of how fast or slow traditional techniques were done.

Merihari

Imagine a piece of music that was played with the same fast tempo, all the parts played at the same speed. Most of us would probably say it lacked depth or feeling, was too monotonous, too mechanical. The Japanese word *merihari*, in the modern sense, literally means modularity in vocals, variations in pitch, tones, notes and speed. But *merihari* is also applicable to swordsmanship and represents the overall pace of the movement. You can see *merihari* in the levels of Muso Shinden Ryu. We all know that *shoden* level is done slower than *chuden* level, and that it is slower still than *okuden* level. But there is *merihari* in each individual technique within those levels. There are slow and fast movements, there are hard and soft movements. There is cautiousness and decisiveness, contraction and expansion. Each technique has its own set of these variations. Knowing when these variations occur is opening the door to go deeper into the art.

Jo-Ha-Kyu

I can still hear Sensei chastising the class, “You go fast when you should go slow and slow when you should go fast!” What Sensei was expressing, in terms he hoped we could understand, was the timing called *Jo-Ha-Kyu*. *Jo* means “slow”, it is the introduction; *ha* is the intermediate in which the movement quickens; and *kyu* is the fast, abrupt action, ending quickly. This term has often been used to describe the pacing of literary works in Japan, with *jo* being the slow introduction of characters and relationships, *ha* being the somewhat quicker narrative of the story, and *kyu* the sudden climax of the story. In Iaido, the best and prime example of *Jo-Ha-Kyu* is the beginning of *shohatto*, from its first movement, to *nukitsuke*, the first horizontal cut. Almost everyone goes too fast in the beginning because they interpret an attack as needing a quick response. Unfortunately, they hurry in the beginning to the point of being ineffective in the cut, which is the ultimate purpose for the prior movements. Typically, this hurried movement in the beginning results in bad posture as they get up from *seiza*, grabbing for the sword handle and the *saya*, then doing nothing, resulting in no *saya-biki*, an improper *hasuji*, because there is no power in the cut since there was no movement in the *monouchi*. Most try to compensate the lack of cutting power by pulling the right hand back. The old Wild West analogy would be the classic showdown, with one cowboy trying to do a quick draw, firing and missing the target. “Haste makes . . .” well, you know the rest. All the prior energy was misplaced and wasted. When done properly, the beginning movements of *shohatto* will look like slow motion to most beginners. But making an effective and decisive cut at the end pays off by being deliberate in the beginning. *Jo-ha-kyu* is exhibited in every technique.

Another reason for this slower beginning is to assess the intent of your opponent. A proficient swordsman should never be surprised by an attacker. That anticipation allows one to act at the slightest hint of an attack, beginning deliberately to see if the attacker continues or backs off. The first movements, through getting to your knees, are done while assessing your opponent’s intent. That is why these actions are done more slowly and deliberately. Under those conditions, one begins to understand that life can be spared through *katsujinken*, the sword that preserves life. The projection of calm intensity may make your opponent back off and not require you to fully draw and cut. In this way you have accomplished *saya no uchi no kachi*, “to win inside the *saya*.”

How do we apply these lessons of timing to our daily lives? Almost any project requires upfront planning, especially if it is a large one. Deliberate planning done upfront usually results in a well-run project and a successful conclusion. Rushing into projects without a well-thought plan usually results in wasted and redundant efforts and a less than successful conclusion. Actions tend to be reactive instead of proactive. Using the principals of *Jo-Ha-Kyu*, the time taken upfront results in a better ending. The same can be said for our interpersonal relationships. All too often we verbally attack too quickly if we feel that another person has slighted or insulted us. Taking the time to understand the other person’s intent and assessing the reasons behind their statement rather than quickly attacking back, may save that relationship in the long run.

Carol Naomi Tanita named a “Woman of the Year” in the 29th Congressional District

At a reception in Pasadena, Representative Adam Schiff (CA-29) honored Carol Naomi Tanita of Monterey Park for her commitment and service to our community by naming her a “Woman of the Year.”

“Carol has maintained an active spirit for all her passions in life, and continues to be involved with the community as a tireless volunteer and parent,” Rep. Schiff said. “We are fortunate to have Carol as a member of our community, and we can all be inspired by her example.”

Born in the Boyle Heights region of Los Angeles, Carol grew up committed to her education. Upon graduating high school with honors, she attended the University of Southern California, where she attained her Bachelors and Masters degrees in the field of Education, and earned her Specialist Credential in Bilingual Cross-Cultural Education in Japanese.



Carol Tanita receiving her award from Representative Adam Schiff

Carol served as a member of the PTA of Brightwood and Repetto Elementary Schools for 12 years, and received numerous awards, including the title of Parent of the Year at Repetto Elementary School for her exemplary service.

In 2007, Carol was presented with the Community Service Award by the Alhambra Educational Foundation. Her continuous efforts were always appreciated, as she repeatedly received the Honorary Service Award and Continuing Service Award at Mark Keppel High School. Upon the graduation of her children, Carol continued to be active with the PTSA and the Mark Keppel Alliance. As a result of her unwavering commitment, she was awarded the Golden Oak – the highest award the California PTA gives for outstanding service to schools and communities. During 20 years of committed service, Carol has surpassed 9,000 volunteer hours.

Carol also serves the community beyond the realm of education. For two years, she served on the F.A.C.E.S.’s Board at Pacific Clinics and the Family Advisory Council at the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities. Currently, Carol dedicates her time to Parents In Community Inclusion (PICI), a group which mentors families and educators in creating an inclusive community for special needs individuals.

Carol served as a parent volunteer for the Boy Scouts of America as well, when her son Nicholas enrolled as a Cub Scout. Over the years, she served as the Parent Committee Chair, Treasurer, and now is the District Finance Chair for the Mission Amigos District of the San Gabriel Valley Council Boy Scouts of America, which serves the cities of Monterey Park, Alhambra, San Gabriel, Rosemead, El Monte and South El Monte. Most recently, she was awarded the prestigious Silver Beaver Award from the



Shodan Carol Tanita throwing James Doi

San Gabriel Valley Council Boy Scouts of America recognizing her outstanding service to the community at large and to the Boy Scout program as an invaluable adult volunteer.

Every March, during Women’s History Month, Rep. Schiff honors one outstanding woman from each of the communities in the 29th Congressional District. These women come from all walks of life and represent the thousands of women who make a positive impact in our region. While there are no specific criteria for nomination, Rep. Schiff looks for women who – through their work or volunteerism – have improved the quality of life for our community.

Rep. Schiff represents California’s 29th Congressional District, which includes the communities of Alhambra, Altadena, Burbank, Glendale, Monterey Park, Pasadena, San Gabriel, South Pasadena and Temple City. Congratulations, Carol!

O Sensei Memorial Seminar April 22-24, 2011



Andrew Blevins, 3rd dan



James Doi, 5th dan



Ken Watanabe, 5th dan



Santiago Almaraz, 4th dan



Special guest instructor Kei Izawa, 6th dan from Aikikai Tanshinjuku in Colorado



Maria Murakawa, 2nd dan



William Allen, 2nd dan



Lucas Plowiez, Shodan



Roberto Magallanes, 2nd dan



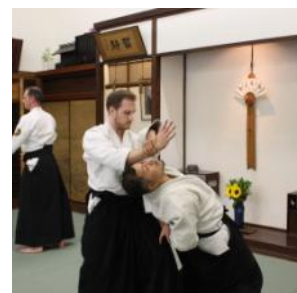
Mark Ehrlich, Shodan



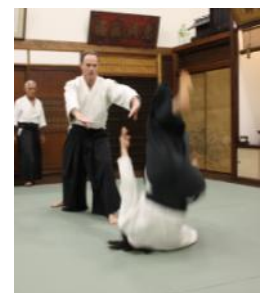
William D'Angelo, 2nd dan



Alvaro Meza, 2nd dan



Paul Major, Shodan



Michael Van Ruth, 2nd dan



日本赤十字社
Japanese Red Cross Society

Aikikai Hombu Dojo Has Started a Fund to Help Assist Earthquake/Tsunami Disaster Victims

Aikikai Hombu Dojo would like to express its deepest sympathies to those who have suffered from the recent East-Japan Earthquake. Aikikai has started a fund to help raise donations for the earthquake sufferers, and invites donations to the fund. Your kind support would be much appreciated. All the donations collected will be consigned to the Japanese Red Cross fund.

Please inform Hombu Dojo of your donation by phone or e-mail after you have sent them your contribution.

Kenzo Nagai
(Secretary of Giengin Ueshiba account)
Aikikai Foundation
Phone: 03-3203-9236
E-mail: eq.donation@aikikai.or.jp

Fund Information:

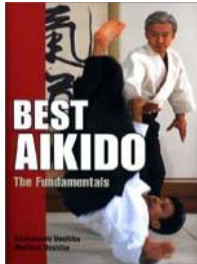
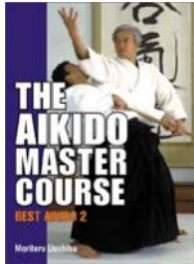
Promoter: Moriteru Ueshiba
Fund raising period: March 24th-May 31st, 2011
Please remit your contribution to the following bank account via bank transfer.
Bank name: The Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi UFJ, LTD (Shinjuku-dori Branch)
Branch Address:
3-30-18 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 160-0022, JAPAN
Account Number: 0141660 (Savings Account)
Account Name: GIENKIN UESHIBA
Swift Code: BOTKJPJT



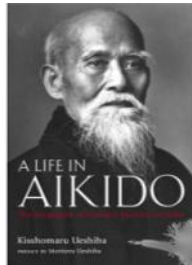
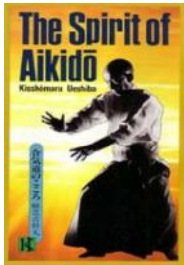
For more information about Hombu Dojo's fund: <http://www.aikikai.or.jp/eng/index.htm>

For more information on how to help: <http://www.jrc.or.jp/english/index.html>

Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru

Kotowaza: Japanese Proverb

Nasake wo shiru ga makoto no bushi



“He who knows compassion and kindness is a true warrior.”

A warrior has the skill to take life and give it. This is what O Sensei talked about when he wrote about *satsujinken*, *katsujinken* or the sword that takes life can also give life. The skilled warrior knows that it is easy to take a life, but harder to give it (compassion).

Questions/Comments?

We welcome all questions and comments. Please send us a letter or an e-mail and our team will do our best to come up with an answer. We reserve the right to edit questions and letters for clarity and length.

Please e-mail submissions to: info@aikidocenterla.com

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Finding “Yes!”

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

The other day, I went to a store to buy something and there were about a dozen different brands and styles at all prices. It was confusing so I asked the clerk, “Which one do you recommend?”

“They are all good,” she said.

“How is this one?” I asked, picking out one at random.

“That is very good!” she replied.

“What is the difference between this cheap one and this expensive one?” I asked again with persistence.

“Oh, let me see, about \$20.00,” she said.



Sensei lecturing on Japanese culture to a group of students

Why is it more expensive, how is it different from the cheaper one?” I pushed.

“I don’t know, they are both good!” she patiently replied.

This went on for a few more minutes, but finally I returned home empty-handed, not knowing what’s what and more feeling confused than ever.

It is good to be told “how right” you are, but sometimes, you need to know what is right and wrong. I am sure it is her job to sell anything to everyone so she has to reply bearing in mind the old adage, “the customer is always right.” But I am very frugal and need to know the best buy and sometimes it is very hard to find out when you are not sure which is which. If my high school teacher graded all tests as “perfect” whether the answers are right or wrong, we would not learn anything at all. Nowadays, it is popular to consider students as customers and clients rather than students. Some students expect to be told they are right. Who wants to be told they are wrong all of the time?

Aikido training has nothing to do with all of this. It is not an ego thing, it is not selling a product, it is not dealing with a customer. It is a serious and profound learning experience and we must be killingly critical, aware, honest, and sensitive, because we are

really trying to learn something very deep and mysterious. In our highly commercially oriented world today, we come to Aikido often forgetting this.

The dojo is a different world. We can break the rules in the real world and push the other guy down or trip him up if no one catches us. And there is no harm in making a quick and easy buck, if we can get away with it. In the dojo, we cannot do this; we must follow all the rules. Why such honesty? Because we are searching for our True Selves within this great art called Aikido.

Do not be hurt if you are corrected about your technique in class. It is not a personal thing. All of the instructors are devoted to helping you develop your skills. It is important to correct your hand or foot or posture, it is important for my assistants to guide you correctly. It is their training as teachers and some day you will be in the same position as teachers too. We are all learning how to help



Sensei lecturing at a Nisei week open house

and be a positive, constructive “power” or “energy” to each other. We do not “drain” the other person of his energy, we enliven him with our practice.

One of our students manages a store in Little Tokyo and she treats her customers very differently. She doesn’t mind being helpful by saying, “Oh, this is a good buy”, or, “this one is much better because. . .”, or, “this is from our latest shipment”, or “this is on sale now and a real bargain!” It makes everything so easy! If she just said, “Oh, anything and everything is good!”, who knows what to do? (It is always a risk to be helpful, I know in teaching Aikido! I went to her store to buy some things for a short trip I took and I bought some hard candy. It is was so good that I even shared it with the other passengers sitting around me and everyone liked it so they all saved the wrapper so they could buy more. One person didn’t like them, however – the security man at the airport frowned at all the tin-foil, metallic wrappers in my pocket!)

A long time ago, I studied under a teacher who was not very popular. He always said, “No, no, no!” no matter what you did on the mats. No matter what you did, it was always, “No!” Many got discouraged and left him. It is very strange that with all of the “Nos” you got, it became clearer and clearer to find, “Yes!”

Editor’s Note: Sensei originally published this essay, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on June 25, 2002.

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

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

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open
10:45-11:45 AM Weapons*

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

* These classes are not open for visitors to watch.

We are directly affiliated with: **AIKIDO WORLD HEADQUARTERS**

Aikido Hombu Dojo - Aikikai

17-18 Wakamatsu-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN

*We are committed to the study and practice of the teachings of the Founder of Aikido,
Morihei Ueshiba and his legitimate successors,
Kisshomaru Ueshiba and the present Doshu Moriteru Ueshiba.*

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



Find us on
Facebook

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

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

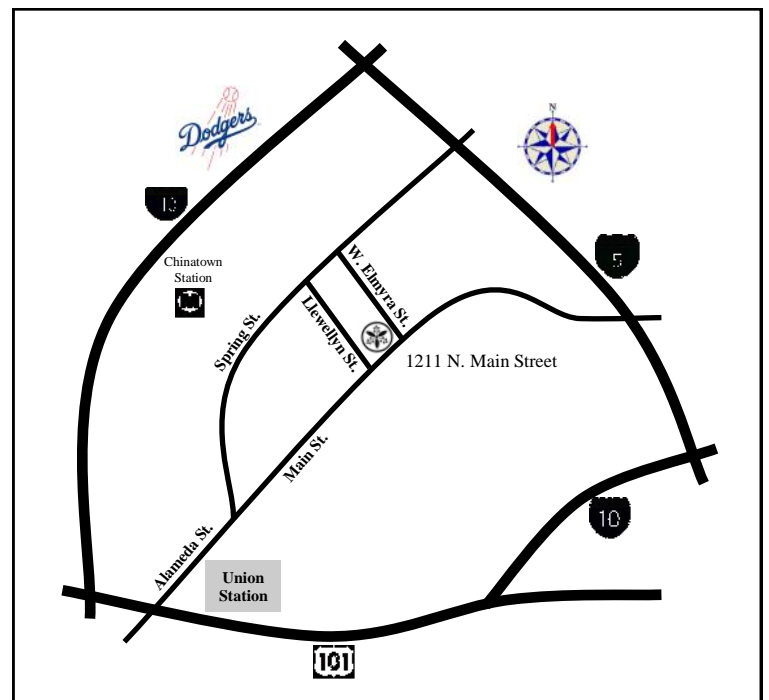
Sundays

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.



Finding Our Dojo



We are located at

1211 N. Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (323) 225-1424

E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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

The entrance is on Elmyra Street.

No appointment necessary to watch classes or join:

*You are welcome to visit us any time during any of our
Open or Fundamentals classes. Please come early.*