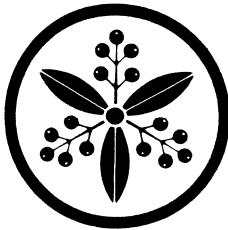


The Aikido Center of Los Angeles



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

December 2014

Volume XXXIII Number 12

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December 20th:

Osoji: Year end clean-up

December 24-26th:

Dojo Closed: Christmas

December 27th:

Instructor's intensive

December 30th:

Osame keiko last practice \

January 3rd:

Hatsu keiko

First practice of the year

January 10th:

2nd Doshu memorial service

January 11th:

Kagami Biraki – Dojo opening

Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich
Editor, The Aiki Dojo

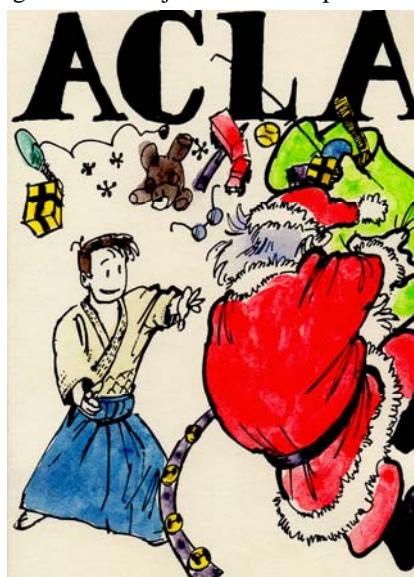
Another year has come and gone at the dojo.

On behalf of all of us at ACLA, I hope all of our readers and students accept our best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season. May safe travels and good times with loved ones help to make the season bright.

This time of year always finds me waxing nostalgic as I look back on the year and see what we've accomplished. We've grown our membership and saw many of our students keep up a regular practice. We've maintained and deepened friendships beyond the dojo. We returned to

offering public demonstrations of Aikido and Iaido. We revived the dojo's Daily Message on our Web site for the first time since Sensei's death. And the Furuya Foundation has made strides to get an infrastructure in place that will help us more effectively manage our material and intellectual property, as well as to reconnect with Little Tokyo and the surrounding community. I recall that Ito Sensei wrote about the Year of the Horse as having great momentum so many months ago; looking at our activity and efforts at the tail end of 2014, it seems he had it right. Speaking of nostalgia, I hope you enjoy this hand-drawn

and -colored illustration from an old holiday greeting card Sensei commissioned for select friends of the dojo. To me at least, it summons up feelings of good humor and good fellowship that makes not only for wonderful holidays, but for a great community. Thank you for helping so much this year to make our community of ACLA stronger.



Happy Holidays!

メリークリスマス。

Ken Watanabe

This month in *The Aiki Dojo*, we address what it takes to become stronger. Interestingly enough, *stronger*, the way we use the word, might not mean what some readers would first guess. Ito Sensei examines a very special piece of art that speaks in a singular way to the developmental paradigm we follow in Aikido. Watanabe Sensei articulates the many ways our approach to training can

help or hurt not only us, but our fellow students and the dojo as a whole. Santiago Almaraz relates the heartwarming story behind the building of his new dojo. And Sensei gives us a special story for the holidays, sharing a sweet tale about a person who, while not a martial artist, possessed what we might call a key ingredient for success in martial arts and elsewhere. Good stuff all around.

Season's greetings, everyone. I'll see you on the mat, and hopefully at the holiday party!

Coming Full Circle

by David Ito, Aikido Chief Instructor

As many of you know, Sensei was an avid admirer of art and calligraphy. One of Sensei's favorite collectables was a reproduction of a famous work done by the Zen Rinzai monk Sengai Gibon (1750-1837). In this picture we can see Sensei standing proudly alongside this piece, which presents a square, triangle, and circle done in brush ink and which now hangs on the west wall above the clock. The piece, originally untitled, eventually became known as "Universe", since many believe that the symbols sum up Sengai's view of the universe. Many scholars offer interpretations of this work; the most famous and widely accepted comes from Buddhist scholar D.T. Suzuki. He explains the piece as follows:

The circle-triangle-square is Sengai's picture of the universe. The circle represents the infinite,

and the infinite is at the basis of all beings. But the infinite in itself is formless. We humans endowed with senses and intellect demand tangible forms. Hence a triangle. The triangle is the beginning of all forms. Out of it first comes the square. A square is the triangle doubled. This doubling process goes on infinitely and we have the multitudinousness of things, which the Chinese philosopher calls 'the ten thousand things', that is, the universe.

I love Suzuki's explanation, probably because his position happens to occupy a place not so far away from my own interpretation. I'm no scholar, but viewing the square, triangle, and circle from the perspective of Aikido training, I've come to see that it symbolizes the evolution of our outer world (with our technique as metaphor) and simultaneously our inner world (our ongoing development as human beings).

When I look at Sengai's work from the practical perspective of technique, its three shapes seem to me to epitomize the state of our technique at each level of development as we labor over the movement with much repetition and sweat. At first, our movements seem like a square; our techniques lumber along and our energy flow feels somewhat constrained. After a tremendous amount of repetition (blood, sweat, and tears) and study, many of the parts begin to flow together and thus feel a little less clunky; we might represent our practice by the triangle at this point. Finally, once we begin to allow the technique to happen (rather than try to make it happen), we enter into an inner state where our energy, breathing, movement, and thinking all flow together in a circular manner without any stoppages.

This progression can also apply to our inner growth, with the

square, triangle, and circle representing how we develop as human beings. Traditional training encourages our inner development because in order to learn the techniques we have to overcome our biggest hurdle – ourselves – and that requires vigorous perseverance and constant self-reflection. (So, by studying a traditional art, all of us can become a better person!) The square represents the beginning just as it does in the physical development metaphor, where we start square-like – all harsh angles and rough edges – but through training we develop ourselves and gradually smooth down some of those edges, and a triangle appears. Through much introspection and self-reflection and a lot of perseverance the last few harsh corners smooth out thus eventually allowing the circle to emerge.



The renowned monk Takuan described this state of the circle or continual perpetuation as a place where the mind does not abide; we might therefore deduce that the highest level of *budo* resides here instead. This highest level of *budo* involves,

not the mastery of the destruction of others, but the destruction of the self. As we attain a state of internal and external fluidity, we find what O Sensei called *harmony*. According to Suzuki:

The fluidity is nonhindrance. Have the mind devoid of all fear, free from all hindrances, no inhibitions, no stoppages, no clogging. It then follows its own course like water. It is like the wind that bloweth where it listeth. It can be likened to a circle whose center is everywhere as it has no circumference.

Since Sensei passed away almost eight years ago, I feel like we have lingered in the state the square – clunky and laboring on. This past year started off pretty clunky too, but as 2014 comes to a close I believe I see some of the edges beginning to round off and I feel grateful that everyone's hard work and sacrifice has made that happen. Sensei often quipped that it takes about 15 years for a dojo to become established and I suppose by now we can all appreciate the truth of that aphorism. This next year holds the greatest opportunity to lose a corner and become the triangle (en route to circularity) but that cannot happen if we slacken our efforts.

As I think about the new year and what 2015 holds, I recall another favorite chestnut of Sensei's, "When the battle is over, tighten your helmet strap." All good martial artists possess a common trait: they never feel satisfied and therefore they must keep striving. We enjoyed a modest amount of success this year, but we can't rest on our laurels and if we want to reach the place of the circle it will take a consistent and constant effort from everyone, including me. Thank you all for everything that you did for ACLA and for your diligent support this year. Please continue to work hard in 2015, because everything feels like it will shortly come full circle.

In The Community...

Come Pound Some Mochi!



Higashi Hongwanji Temple

December 29, 2014 at 9:00 AM

For more information: <http://hhbt-la.org/>

Zenshuji Soto Mission

December 28, 2014 at 7:00 AM

For more information:
<http://www.zenshuji.org/>



Asian American Santa at JANM

December 13, 2014

12:00 - 3:00 PM

For more information: <http://www.janm.org/events/2014/12/>

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty

October 11, 2014 - April 26, 2015



The Japanese American National Museum and Sanrio present *Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty*, the world's first large-scale Hello Kitty museum retrospective.

Organized as part of the global icon's 40th-anniversary celebrations, the exhibition examines the colorful history of Hello Kitty and her influence on popular culture. *Hello!* includes an extensive product survey, with rare and unique items from the Sanrio archives, alongside a selection of innovative contemporary artworks inspired by Hello Kitty and her world.

Hello!, the first exhibition of its kind in the world, is curated by Christine Yano, Ph.D., author of *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*, and Jamie Rivadeneira, founder and owner of pop culture-inspired boutique JapanLA.

Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty will be a specially ticketed exhibition. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for ages 6-17, free for ages 5 and under. All admissions based on timed entry. Obtaining tickets in advance is strongly encouraged. Tickets on sale September 29, 2014.

For more information: <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/hellokitty/>

Samurai Armor on Display at the Resnick Pavilion at LACMA

October 19, 2014 – February 1, 2015



Travel back in time and discover remarkable objects that illuminate the life, culture, and pageantry of the *samurai*, the revered and feared warriors of Japan. The Samurai Collection of Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller, one of the finest and most comprehensive collections in the world, presents a treasure trove of battle gear made for high-ranking warriors and *daimyo* (provincial governors) of the 14th through 19th centuries. The exhibition illustrates the evolution of samurai equipment through the centuries, featuring more than 140 objects of warrior regalia, with full suits of armor, helmets and face guards, weapons, horse trappings, and other battle gear.

During the centuries covered by the exhibition, warfare evolved from combat between small bands of equestrian archers to the clash of vast armies of infantry and cavalry equipped with swords, spears, and even matchlock guns. Arms and armor were needed in unprecedented quantities, and craftsmen responded with an astonishingly varied array of armor that was both functional and visually spectacular, a celebration of the warrior's prowess. Even after 1615, when the Tokugawa military dictatorship brought an end to battle, samurai families continued to commission splendid arms and armor for ceremonial purposes. Because the social rank, income, and prestige of a samurai family were strictly determined by the battlefield valor of their ancestors, armor became ever more sumptuous as the embodiment of an elite warrior family's heritage. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with essays by some of the leading Japanese samurai armor experts.

General admission tickets go on sale now!

<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/samurai-japanese-armor-ann-and-gabriel-barbier-mueller-collection>

Training With or Without You

by Ken Watanabe, Iaido Chief Instructor

Another year is ready to end and what do we have to show for it? Have we made any progress in our training? Did we regress? Has our progress stagnated?

It's natural to think of ourselves when it comes to training. In movies we see a student practicing by herself, her punching and kicking form silhouetted against a setting crimson sun. After all, you are responsible for yourself, aren't you? Everything accomplished is due to your own efforts, right? No one else can contribute to your progress, can they?

To a certain extent, all of the above is true; we are responsible for our own progress. Ultimately, it is our own drive, desire, devotion – whatever motivates us – that gets us to the dojo, especially when training is the last thing on our mind. Yet, thinking that we can do everything by ourselves is a lesson that neither Aikido, nor the dojo, tries to impart.

Many things that go into training. As important as it may be, we cannot depend solely on our own power in order to progress. First of all, we have the teacher who, of course, teaches, passing down the art from his teacher who, in turn, received it from her teacher. Then we have the students of the dojo, without whom there will be no one with which to practice and perfect technique. Finally, we have the dojo itself, without which we would not have a safe, proper environment in which to train.

All these things come together to help us progress in the art. Likewise, we must care for all of these things in order to keep progressing. Without this sense of caring and teamwork, progress becomes impossible. Like it or not, we all depend on our teacher, our fellow students, and our dojo in order to get good.

In Aikido, students always practice with a partner. We have very few solo exercises in Aikido; this fact requires students to have a training partner in order to learn the art and improve, and why developing a sense of caring and consideration for our fellow students, our dojo, and our teacher becomes so very important.

Even in the simplest and most basic exercises, Aikido practice teaches that our opponent – or *uke*, the one receiving the technique – is not our enemy. Our practice partner is a vital part of training who needs care, consideration, and respect, instead of getting dominated, abused, or neglected. It's understandable that we compare ourselves to the other students to gauge our level; however, we must take care not to emphasize competition. In the dojo, this superficial sense of competition only serves to hinder our progress and creates an overly self-centered attitude. Ulti-



mately, progress correlates closely to how well we can work and relate with our partner in particular, and how well we work and relate to the entire dojo in general.

Strength and skill in martial arts play, of course, important roles, but how well do we work with our fellow students? Our teacher? Coworkers? A complete stranger? Most likely, if we cannot work in harmony with people in the dojo, we probably cannot do it outside the dojo, in our own life.

We may have a little bit of strength or skill, but do we create more work for people? Do we create more drama in the dojo? Do we boast about ourselves, or do we concentrate on a good practice? Do students enjoy practicing with us? Do we practice a selfish, self-satisfying kind of training, or does our practice serve to elevate the other students and the dojo itself?

The lesson ACLA tries to impart to students is not just how to throw someone down effectively or how to defend ourselves. Anyone can go off into their

own head, and in the worst case scenario, fall into that rabbit hole called "fantasy land". Working with another person is one way to prevent this from happening. For the dojo in general and for students in particular, we must learn how to work together. All facets of training, from the warm-up to cleaning the dojo, require all the students to work together. In training if everyone works together and treats each other thoughtfully, no one gets hurt and everyone gets a good practice. During cleanup, working together effectively means the difference between finishing quickly and efficiently, and ending up with an even bigger mess.

Aikido, without this sense of teamwork and harmony, ceases to be Aikido, but simply exercise; the dojo, without this sense of teamwork and harmony, ceases to be a dojo, but simply a gym. It's better to pedal a stationary bicycle, or run on a treadmill, with our earphones and music blaring, than to practice in a self-centered, self-serving manner.

Many martial arts teach how to fight opponents in order to defeat them, but aikido teaches how to work with opponents and harmonize with them. If we can harmonize with our fellow students we'll be that much closer to blending with our opponent in body, mind, and spirit. This, of course, is the hard way, but if we wanted easy, we wouldn't be practicing Aikido, would we?

It is important to keep mindful of our own training and progress, and while no one else can motivate us, harmonizing and working together with others may be one the most important basic lessons Aikido teaches. When we are alone, it is easy to get lost in our own self, thinking "I am good!" In Buddhism this is called "delusion"; in the case of training, it amounts to the idea that we don't need anybody to get good.

Continued on page 6...

New Dojo, Old Way

by Santiago Garcia Almaraz

Chief Instructor, Aikido Kodokai (Salamanca, Spain)

As many of you readers of the newsletter know, this past summer we worked hard to create a new dojo. The former dojo we called home since 1998 had grown old and needed many repairs and upgrades, so we decided to find a new space to embark on this new project. Before my trip to Los Angeles for the annual seminar last April I had more or less found the place that fit our budget and needs, and when I returned to Spain we finalized the paperwork in late May. Shortly after that, we began the work of constructing and preparing the new dojo.

We had ambitious plans and faced great challenges: we had to build a whole entire dojo basically from scratch – bathrooms, changing rooms, floors – and thanks to friends and family numbers, this project became easier and bearable for everyone. The involvement of students throughout the entire process was a must because without their help, it would have been impossible to finish on time; every day, for over three and a half months, everyone worked tirelessly to build the dojo we wanted. In my case, I guess the motivating force that drove me to work and overcome obstacles was my desire to give my students a place they would feel proud to call home and in which the values Sensei taught me would feel present in every part of the dojo.

Being able to build and create our own dojo feels like such a privilege; being able to do it this way, with my students next to me working together, makes it even more important. For me the making and creating our dojo with our own hands became something that made us connect with everything: with every part and corner of the dojo, and with each other even more, because we shared the idea of creating something unique and special. That shared dream helped us understand the appreciation and respect for the art and the teacher who taught me, beyond a series of techniques or a skill at performing them, which seems to be where other martial arts stop.

Formerly most *samurai* were skilled not only with the sword, but also most cultivated mind and spirit by refining themselves with other arts such as poetry, painting, writing, and the like. I've always thought that it's actually not so weird to develop this sense of aesthetic beauty, since sensitivity seems something that a martial artist develops naturally with the practice of the art. I do not consider myself an expert in carpentry, plumbing, and masonry, but what I found is an "expert" work ethic and a determination to give my best as if I was practicing a kind of Aikido. When I do something I try to impart my idea of martial arts, my feelings, my love for this art and the teaching of it as best as I can, in everything I do.

This year we opened the doors of a new dojo, and turned off an old road that we began in 1998, full of hope and eager to give our best. The easy part has been to create the place; now we have to build on this new foundation with hours of practice and sweat.

This year, I want to thank all those who have stood by me during these months of hard work and helped me, trusting me selflessly without expecting anything in return to build our dojo. Thank you very much and happy holidays to all.



Important Upcoming Dates



December 6: Dojo Christmas party at Smokehouse in Burbank

December 20: *Osoji* – Year end dojo cleanup 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

December 24-26: Dojo closed for Christmas

December 27: Instructor's intensive

December 30: *Osame keiko* – Last practice of the year 6:30 PM

January 3: *Hatsu keiko* – First practice of the year 9:30 AM

January 10: 2nd Doshu *meinichi* memorial service 10:45 AM

January 11: *Kagami Biraki* – Dojo opening ceremony practice and party 10:45 AM

January 31: Instructor's intensive

March 7: Sensei *meinichi* memorial service 9:30 AM

April 24-26: O Sensei memorial seminar

April 26: O Sensei *meinichi* memorial service 11:15 AM

Training With or Without You *continued from page 4...*

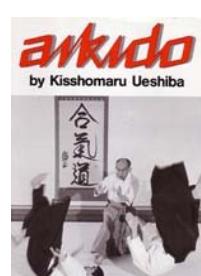
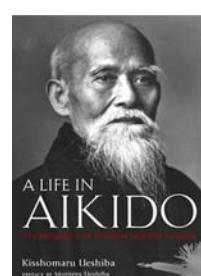
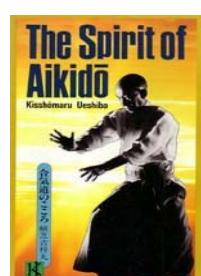
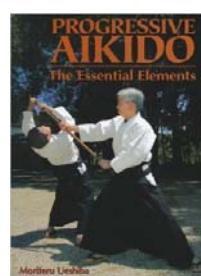
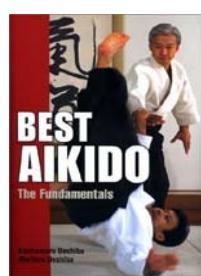
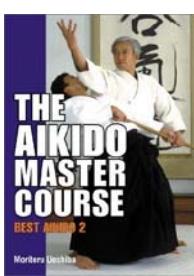
This idea of teamwork permeates all of the traditional Japanese arts. For example, in tea ceremony or classical Japanese dance, when students receive their *chamei* (tea name) or their *natori* (professional dancing name), protocol dictates that they throw a party thanking everyone – their teacher, fellow students, etc. – for helping them reach that stage in their training. This demonstrates the importance given to working harmoniously with others.

Please remember that practicing how to throw away our ego and work in harmony with our fellow students is as much a learned skill as practicing the technique. In some of us it comes naturally. In some of us it is a muscle that we need to exercise regularly. To go on and on about harmony and blending while being unable to work in harmony with others . . . there definitely seems something wrong there.

The genius and greatness of O Sensei extends far more than simply the Aikido techniques. O Sensei purposefully designed Aikido so that it's impossible to practice and master the technique alone; there are no solo forms with an imaginary opponent or attack. This gives us no other choice but to work harmoniously and effectively with another person. Without understanding how our progress is tied to the people around us, mastery will become impossible.

As we truly improve, the dojo naturally improves; as we fall, the dojo falls. As the membership grows, please continue to work together. The smooth operation of both the dojo and the practice are very important to everyone's advancement as well as the progress of the dojo. As the new year approaches, please train with this spirit in mind.

Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru

by Ueshiba Kisshomaru

Sweetness

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Today is kind of a lonely day for me, as many holidays are. No students because the dojo is closed.

It happens that my TV is broken so that I can't watch the boob-tube either. Gads! What to do?

Last night, after writing my Daily Message, I was having a bowl of cereal and suddenly I realized something and began to laugh to myself. My shredded wheat squares come conveniently coated with a little sugar so one does not even have to add sugar to the cereal, just pour in the milk and it is ready. So convenient nowadays even to think this far for us. As I ate my dinner, I began to think back to the late but very dear Bishop's wife. She was so good to me and always looked after me in the temple. I remember one day when she reflected back on her life and began to talk about how hard life was in Japan many years ago. At that time, no one had sugar; it was such a valuable luxury that no one could afford it or get it even if they had the money. Can you imagine? She began to tell me how, to get a little sugar back then, she would have to squeeze it out of potatoes and cook the juice. It was a long, hard process just to get a little sweetness. This would never occur to us today: that something so common and cheap like sugar was so hard to get and considered such a luxury!

The Bishop's wife, of course, as the wife of a priest, always kept so busy looking after all the congregation, yet she still raised three children, taking care of her family too. She was also one of the first generation of young women to enter a Western-style university in Japan and graduate with a degree – something unheard of in those days. Today we take it for granted that women can go to school and graduate from university, but not too long ago, this was something almost unheard of. Not only did she educate herself by going to school, she still had time to study the tea ceremony, calligraphy, flower arranging, poetry, and so many other fine arts.



The Furuya Foundation and The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

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.



When I think back, I feel amazed at how much she did in her life and yet, always remained the faithful and hardworking wife of the Bishop. Just to take care of the Bishop alone seems like such a tremendous task – I know this from working in the temple! When

I think back like this, I feel ashamed to say, "I am busy." My schedule seems like nothing compared to what she went through in her life.

Yet, despite this, in order to make the sweets for the tea ceremony and for young kids in the temple, she also had time to squeeze potatoes just to extract a little sweetness. I feel sure that those confections must have tasted so good, if so much work went into them.

I only tell this story so that we will honor the memory of the Bishop wife's, the wife of my Zen master. I also tell you this story so that you will know a little how life went not too long ago. She and the Bishop came from the same generation as O Sensei, so I imagine that O Sensei and his wife must have gone through the same type of hardships in those days, just when Aikido came into the world. Although not that long ago, it seems like such a different world than today. It was a world that we will never know but some-

thing we need to be aware of because this is a part of our past and our heritage.

I don't meet people who possess the same refinement as the Bishop and his wife today. Despite the hardships they endured, it was also the way they refined and cultivated themselves as human beings that made them seem so special. When we bow before O Sensei's picture before practice, we should appreciate all that he went through – more than we can imagine today. Perhaps, his wife, too, went through much hardship as well to get a little sugar to indulge O Sensei's love for sweets!

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on September 1, 2003.

Aikido TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sundays

9:00-10:00 AM Children's Class

10:15-11:15 AM Open

Mondays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Tuesdays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Open

7:45-8:45 PM Weapons*

Fridays

6:30-7:30 PM Open

Saturdays

9:30-10:30 AM Open

10:45-11:45 AM Advanced*

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

公益財団法人 合氣会

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.



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The Aiki Dojo
Official publication of
the Aikido Center of Los Angeles

We are a not-for-profit, traditional Aikido Dojo dedicated to preserving the honored values and traditions of the arts of Aikido and Iaido. With your continued understanding and support, we hope that you also will dedicate yourself to your training and to enjoying all the benefits that Aikido and Iaido can offer.

Publisher: David Ito
Editor-in-Chief: Mark Ehrlich

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

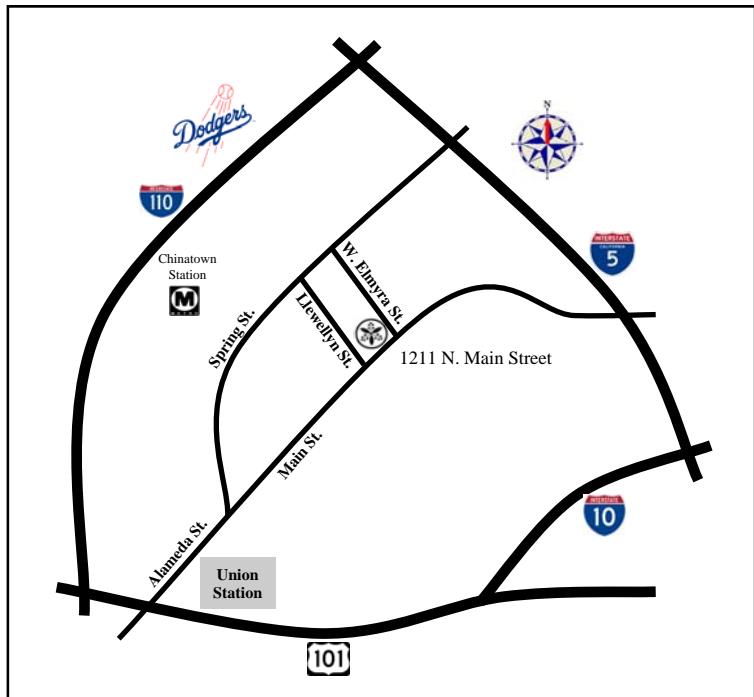
Sundays

7:45-8:45 AM

Thursdays

6:30-7:30 PM

No weekend 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.