

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles

道の為、世の為、人の為 合氣道

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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Upcoming Events

October 26th

Instructor's intensive

October 27th

Children's Class
Halloween Party

November 28-29th

Dojo Closed
Thanksgiving

November 30th

Instructor's intensive

December 7th

Dojo Christmas Party

December 21st

Osoji
Year-end cleanup

December 28th

Last intensive of the year
Last practice day of the year

December 29th

No children's class

Letter From the Editor

by Mark Ehrlich

Editor, The Aiki Dojo

Fall has arrived in Los Angeles. The days have grown shorter, and the nights cooler. The farmers markets brought out the very last of their grapes and peaches (which tasted deliciously sweet this year) and put up the first of their pumpkins and apples. And strolling around the streets of Little Tokyo, I notice many people bedecked in their Fall finery, the darker colors striking quite a contrast to the bright, warm daylight we still have here.

For me, this month marks a chance to take a last, deep breath before plunging into the last, deep pool of the year. Before we know it, another year will have come and gone, so I try to make a practice of using October to reflect on what I've done so far and observe what remains to do before the holiday season. Doing this keeps me honest. Also, I find Halloween a great time to connect with my young nieces and our children's class families, and the other children in my circle. Joining in on the fun of costumes and treats and games helps keep me feeling young at heart, even if I'm not the young fellow I once was. Giving this kind of attention to myself and to others has yielded me benefits not only in my practice but also in my relationships with others.

This month, *The Aiki Dojo* considers some perspectives on what's right. Of course, everyone has their own views, but we've taken up those principles which seem to have withstood the test of time and, to our way of thinking at least, offer a way of being consistent with the Way as we understand it. For us, Aikido means something more than throwing people down. It means practicing right relations with ourselves, other people, the natural world, and universe at large. That sounds perhaps like a challenging agenda, but

we think it amounts to something worth practicing. Hopefully we all will so we can get better and make the world a little better, day by day.

This issue, Ito Sensei discusses the importance of integrity to our practice and overall character by relating stories of those who demonstrated great integrity from the past, including one of Sensei's mentors at Hombu Dojo. Maria Murakawa weighs in with the latest food reviews, yet interestingly enough makes a realization about the fundamentals of training while doing so. And as we always do, we have Sensei step out of the archives to share his thoughts on two different topics, one of interest to our Iaido students on a particularly notable *tsuba*, and one of interest to any martial artist on how easily wrong can feel right in our training – until we finally see the light, if we get that lucky. You'll also see a few announcements appearing throughout about upcoming events at ACLA that we hope you'll want to share with us.

I hope you enjoy reading this month's newsletter. Please let us know; we always welcome your feedback and contributions.

Until next time, take care and be well, and I'll see you on the mat!



Integrity

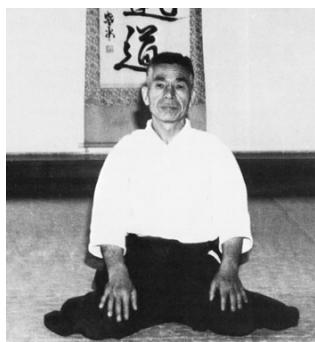
by David Ito, Chief Instructor

"The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it."

— General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

It can be said that in life our choices define us, and if we take that proposition one step further we can see how life becomes an accumulation of choices. For most, the hardest part lies in knowing which choice to make and when. Many people try to choose the direction that makes the most sense or aligns with what they want in life, while for some the path of least resis-

tance or the easiest road possible seems like a better choice. Occasionally, a few lone standouts surface who choose neither the logical nor the easy path but one that ultimately leads them down a path toward their greater selves.



Kisaburo Osawa Sensei

Shortly after O Sensei passed away, some of the instructors left to start their own schools or organizations. One of the strongest instructors who stayed was Kisaburo Osawa, who was one of Hombu Dojo's strongest Aikidoists and also one of its highest ranking. He was extremely gifted and more than one *shihan* reportedly referred to him as "enlightened". Osawa Sensei enjoyed great popularity and could have been wildly successful had he decided to strike out on his own, but instead he decided to follow O Sensei's request that everyone support his son and successor, Kisshomaru Ueshiba. In a time when Japan's economy wasn't very strong and the opportunities were minimal, one might have guessed that Osawa Sensei would think of himself first. However, he was reputed to be someone of firm conviction; therefore, to someone like him honor and loyalty weren't just terms – they were tenets by which he lived his life. I think that Sensei's character was greatly influenced by the time he spent with Osawa Sensei at Hombu Dojo and he always talked about how much he admired Osawa Sensei's loyalty and personal sacrifice. When the opportunity presented itself, Osawa Sensei chose honor over personal gain because he knew that living the Way meant that our actions – or, moreover, choices – dictate whether we truly live the Way or not.

Many talk about loyalty, but how many can really live it, especially when it comes at a cost?

During the Warring States period in Japan there lived a famous *daimyo* or feudal lord named Uesugi Kenshin who was lauded for his honor as much as his successes on the battlefield. Uesugi had a fierce rivalry that lasted for more than 14 years with the great bat-

tle tactician, Takeda Shingen. Throughout their rivalry, neither could gain the decisive upper hand in battle. Since both *daimyo* were said to be masterful military tacticians, they began to develop a mutual respect for one another and even exchanged gifts several times to show their mutual admiration for each other's skill.

There is a famous story that illustrates Uesugi's admiration

for Takeda, as well as his legendary honor. The legend goes that during the time of their rivalry Takeda was engaged in a battle with some local *daimyo* who had successfully cut off his region's supply of salt, which was crucial in the preservation of food. It was a decisive move that could have severely crippled Takeda's forces and could even have led to his demise. Uesugi believed this to be a dishonorable act and sent salt to Takeda with a letter that stated, "Wars are to be won with swords and spears, not rice and salt." In the end, Uesugi never did best Takeda, but his decision not to attack showed just how far higher individuals will go to live a life of virtue. Seizing the moment, Uesugi could have destroyed his adversary in his moment of weakness, but to him a dishonorable victory is tantamount to defeat. When the time comes, will we forgo our honor for gain?

Astronaut Neil Armstrong can be thought of as one of our greatest American heroes, but before he walked on the moon I think he numbered one of the greatest men ever to walk the earth. He was well known to be an extremely modest person, but despite his reticence the people who knew him always talked about Armstrong being a person of strong character. A little-known story during the Korean war, when Neil Armstrong served as a fighter pilot, illustrates just why many of the people who knew him described him as a "superlative" person. It was just after dawn and Armstrong was on patrol flying his F9F Panther jet over North Korea when he spotted a large group of unarmed North Korean soldiers doing their morning fitness exercises. As he flew over and surveyed the scene, he chose not to open fire on the unarmed soldiers and just flew on. When asked why, he stated, "It looked like they were having a rough enough time doing their morning exercises."

Continued on page 6





*Let's Celebrate the
New Year at the Gardena Elks Club*

Dancing for the Dojo 2

A Benefit for the
Aikido Center of Los Angeles
The Furuya Foundation
www.aikidocenterla.com







Saturday

January 25th, 2014

Doors Open: 7:30pm
Dance: 8:30pm - 12midnite

Music Performed By
Kokoro
Music with Soul

Information: Dale Okuno / daleokuno@gmail.com / 626.585.3500 x7220
Carol Tanita / cntanita@mail.com / 626.281.8894
Elks Club: 1735 W. 162nd St., Gardena

Complimentary Light
Appetizers will be served

The Furuya Foundation is a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Corp.
Public Benefit EIN# 20-0026129

Limited Reserved
Table of 10: \$350.00
Individual Tickets: \$30.00
After January 1, 2014
Table of 10: \$400.00
Individual Ticket: \$35.00

PRE-SALE ONLY
NO TICKETS SOLD
AT THE DOOR

IMPORTANT DATES

December 8th

Ceramic sale

December 24-27th

Dojo closed for Christmas

December 21st

Osoji: year end clean up

December 28th

Last intensive of the year
Last practice day of the year

December 29th

No kids class

December 29-January 3rd
Dojo closed for new years

January 4th

Dojo re-opens
Kagami biraki party

January 25th

Dojo benefit dance

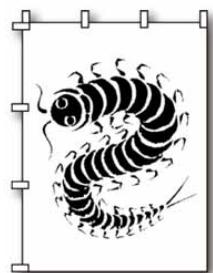


The Mysterious Shingen Tsuba
by Reverend Kensho Furuya

This type of *tsuba* is very unique with bands of alternating pieces of wire inlaid in this fashion around the border of the *tsuba*. Although there are several variations of this style, the above *tsuba* is the most typical and commonly found. This type of *tsuba* is known as Shingen *tsuba* after the well-known 16th Century warlord, Takeda Shingen of Koshu, who is said to have first designed this sword guard. Most people do not know why this is called Shingen *tsuba* or what relation this *tsuba* has to the famous warlord.

If one views the famous but rather obscure collection of the Takeda Clan in Yamanashi Prefecture, we see many examples of this *tsuba* there, and this directly links the *tsuba* with Takeda Shingen. Although some people refer to this as a "basket weave" style (which it quite resembles), actually, this is also known by its earlier name, *mukade tsuba* or "centipede *tsuba*".

The centipede is one of the banner designs of Takeda Shingen. According to an old legend, even if a centipede dies, it still remains standing because of its many legs to support its body. For warriors, it means that even after death, the brave warrior will continue to stand in fighting posture; such is the spirit Takeda Shingen taught his troops.



mukade sashimono or
centipede banner

Editor's Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on October 4, 2004.

**Marugame Monzo**

Marugame Monzo's noodles are handmade



Porcini Udon



Kake Udon



Udon Gratin



Pork Belly Udon



Tempura egg



Pumpkin tempura



Our Neighbors, Our Food
by Maria Murakawa, Aikido 3rd Dan

Simply Udon, Simply Aikido

One of my favorite Japanese dishes growing up was *udon*. I was raised on the packaged kind my mom bought from the market, and it consisted of a simple broth and thick, white, wheat noodles. From there she would drop an egg and add chopped green onions, or add *age*-fried bean curd. My favorite version was with *kitsune*, a sweetened, seasoned version of the *age*. The soothing clear broth with soft, thick noodles has always felt like pure comfort food.

With the hype over *ramen* these days, *udon* has seemed like the neglected stepchild in the LA food scene. So you can imagine my excitement when first one, then another *udon* shop opened up in Little Tokyo, both of which make fresh noodles daily. Therefore, on the first chilly autumn evening, I recently set out to compare which *udon* lived up to evoking the nostalgia of mom's cooking.

Marugame Monzo had a line out the door, competing head-to-head with **Daikokuya**, the infamous *ramen* shop next door. The draw at Monzo is definitely the *te-uchi* (or handmade) noodle makers in the back, who work behind a clear glass window at the bar seats. Each rolling pin to stretch out the dough has its owner's initials at the ends, and when unused they sit out of the way on a rack mounted on the wall, much like how we store our *jo*. Watching the noodle makers rolling and quickly cutting each noodle strand really builds one's anticipation that in a couple of minutes, those noodles will end up in your stomach. All that labor (and waiting) is worth it, as the noodles come out chewy, slippery and stretchy, but so soft they yield quite easily between your teeth. Their classic *udon*, such as the *kitsune*, are spot on. Their modern, "signature" *udon* such as the Porcini Udon (\$12.95) and Udon Gratin (\$11.95) offered a rich and different experience, but I ended up craving the traditional kind halfway through the meal. The Porcini Udon, bathed in a surprisingly light creamy broth, was like a fancy cream of mushroom soup with noodles. The Udon Gratin resembled a noodle casserole, doused in an even richer cream sauce containing chicken and topped with cheese. Both came with garnish of *aonori* (a green, flaky topping like parsley but made from a type of seaweed), which gave it that Japanese flavor – a nice touch. But it tasted almost as if such unctuous toppings diminished the handmade purity of the noodles. These noodles craved to swim in a pure, clean broth; better to order their traditional noodles with a side of *tempura* egg or pumpkin to add richness. Hold the cream sauce, please!



Marugame Monzo

329 E. 1st St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 346-9762

With that in mind, I headed over to **Tsurumaru Udon Hompo**, another *udon* establishment which also boasts noodles made fresh daily. Though they have no chef pounding noodles there, it's all automated by a "noodle maker" in the back, freshly made each day.

This is fast-food *udon*: you place your order at the counter, and then add sides such as *tempura* and rice balls at the register. It's a place to get your basic *udon* fix, a decent broth with resilient noodles you can top with seaweed, *ume* (pickled plum), beef, or *kitsune*. Prices are reasonable: each *udon* comes in regular, large and extra-large sizes, starting at \$4.00 for regular. Try a side of their *kaki age* (\$2.00) – julienne carrots, onions, sweet potato, broccoli, carrots fried in tempura batter – which comes out looking like a bird's nest. Traditionally called *ten chi kaki age* because its ingredients came from heaven (*ten*) in the form of vegetable tops from above ground, and earth (*chi*) in the form of root vegetables, I found it interesting that an Aikido technique also has a similar name (*ten chi nage* – heaven and earth throw). With that in mind, I realized while peering into my empty *udon* bowl, in the end we always come back to the basics, and that the basics always work best to give us a strong foundation. Just like Aikido. I set out to find the best *udon* in Little Tokyo. The best one surprisingly was not the novelty, fusion incarnations of the dish, but the old-fashioned, simple broth-and-noodle version which, like our dojo, and our way of practice, has stood the test of time.



tsurumaru udon's noodle description



Tsurumaru Udon Hompo
333 S. Alameda St.
3rd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 625-0441`



Tsurumaru Udon Hompo



Kitsune Udon



Make age



Niku bukkake Udon



Niku Udon

Integrity continued from page 2...



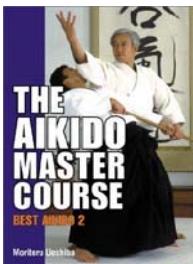
Takeda Shingen seated on the left fending off Uesugi Kenshin with his tessen or battle fan during their fourth battle of Kawanakajima

Neil Armstrong only told the story to his biographer and explicitly stated that he did not want this story put in his memoirs. When the biographer interviewed the other members of his squadron about the story, they all accepted it as true even though none of them had ever heard the story. Armstrong personified character and was one of those rare individuals who, from a martial arts standpoint, lives the Way. Sensei used to say, "Always act as if your teacher is watching," because this would guarantee that we stood a little taller and behaved a little better. People like Neil Armstrong understood that character is an all-the-time thing that we can't turn on and off as we please, which is what Sensei's admonishment tries to teach us. Who will we be and what will we do when nobody is watching?

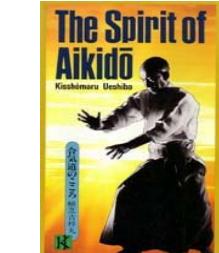
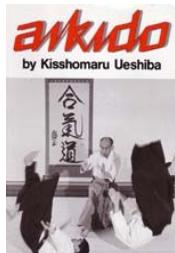
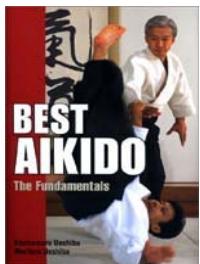
The greatest human beings, as well as martial artists, can be measured in what they don't do in as much as what they do. Collectively, each one of the people mentioned here had one thing which set them apart from most human beings – they had integrity. Integrity ensures all other positive traits and compels those who possess it to stay on their path. Osawa Sensei could have left, Uesugi Kenshin could have attacked, and Neil Armstrong could have pulled the trigger, but instead they all chose to live their lives on a higher level. Sensei equated following the Way to walking on the edge of a sword: straight, narrow, unforgiving, and sharp. When we think of these great men it is easy to forget that their character was forged long before their legendary endeavors. Character amounts to a choice and our accomplishments become the harvest we reap from the choices we have sown. We are who we are by choice. The Way, as we have seen, is hard, so please choose wisely.

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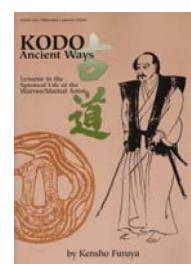
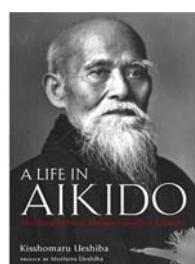
Recommended Readings:



by Ueshiba Moriteru



by Ueshiba Kisshomaru



by Kensho Furuya



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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.

1211 N. Main Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012 USA
Telephone: 323-225-1424
E-mail: info@aikidocenterla.com

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Why Wrong Feels Right (But is Still Wrong)

by Reverend Kensho Furuya

Aiki sword is always difficult to learn as much as it is difficult to teach. In most classes, it can feel frustrating. One basic reason for this is that we have not yet mastered the fundamentals of the sword. Many times, we assume that we can just pick up the *bokken* for the first time and simply do whatever the teacher says. After all, how difficult is it to swing around a wooden stick?

I agree, of course! But when we are talking about the sophisticated and complex movements of the Japanese sword, it becomes an entirely different matter. We must practice each movement – each step, each cut – over and over. We must perfect the subtle points of the *kamae* to create an invincible defense. We must cut as with a real sword, not simply waving the *bokken* about in a futile, weak, and meaningless manner. We must smoothly make each step of the foot, not bounce our hips around or walk like we are about to fall off a tight-rope. And then, with all that we must focus on – we must completely empty our mind and let it happen naturally, almost as if we let it happen on its own. This cannot be accomplished so informally and easily without a tremendous commitment of time and energy, yet we think so! Without any effort and practice, we think we can do anything so we always feel disappointed when someone says, “No, that is wrong!” We feel shocked by this!

“How can it be wrong?” we think. “I know when I am doing something wrong and I am not doing it wrong now! Don’t criticize me!”

Of course it is easy to be wrong and not even know that we are wrong, and even feel totally convinced that we are right! It was very funny to me yesterday when my student visited me in the dojo to adjust my new computer. I think I have been using the computer almost as many years as he has been around. But as soon as he sat down at my desk, he said, “Sensei, your computer is much too low, you need to raise it by two or three inches.”

I felt quite surprised at this because I have been using the computer

at that height for more than 20 years and I have found that there is nothing wrong. Besides, it sits in the most logical and common sense place, on my desk in front of me where I can easily get to it and use it! What could possibly be wrong with this?

Anyway, I found a large, old dictionary, about four or five inches thick, and propped my monitor on top. Oh my goodness! What a big difference! How stupid I am! I immediately noticed that the monitor now sits more closely at the level of my eyes so that I

don’t have to bend my neck just a few degrees downwards, but can instead look straight ahead at the screen. Suddenly all the tension in my neck began to disappear! How come I didn’t think of this? Why didn’t someone tell me this many years ago? Just those few subtle degrees the neck must bend can make such a big difference in the angle of your neck and shoulders, and eventually create a lot of tension and suffering. I never noticed it before, and always thought that there was nothing wrong until I finally tried it out! That night, I decided to teach *bokken*, and thought of that morning’s episode over and over.

In *bokken*, we can be totally wrong and off by only a few degrees in the angle and yet never realize or notice ourselves what a big difference it can make in everything, to the point that we do not think that anything is wrong with us at all and that we are even right – and be foolish enough to insist upon it!

Despite the great speed of my new computer with all of its new upgrades, no one has found effective and new upgrades to install in the most important and essential element of all – me, the operator! Ha! So despite the new speeds and ease at which I can now produce on my new toy, the ideas still keep coming out like, old, stale toothpaste . . .

P.S. – If you cannot treat the *bokken* as a real sword, and train with it as a real sword, and have the mental dexterity and focus to learn from it as a real sword, it is not real swordsmanship and you are simply wasting your time.

Editor’s Note: Sensei originally published this article, in slightly different form, to his daily message board on August 13, 2001. board on August 13, 2001.



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 Advanced*

Wednesdays

6:30-7:30 AM Open

5:15-6:15 PM Fundamentals

6:30-7:30 PM Intermediate

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.

Official Branch Dojo:



Aikido Kodokai

Salamanca, Spain

Chief Instructor: Santiago Garcia Almaraz
www.kodokai.com

The Aikido Center of Los Angeles does not recognize
or is affiliated with any other dojo, school, or entity.

Iaido TRAINING SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE IAIDO SWORDSMANSHIP

Saturdays

8:00-9:00 AM

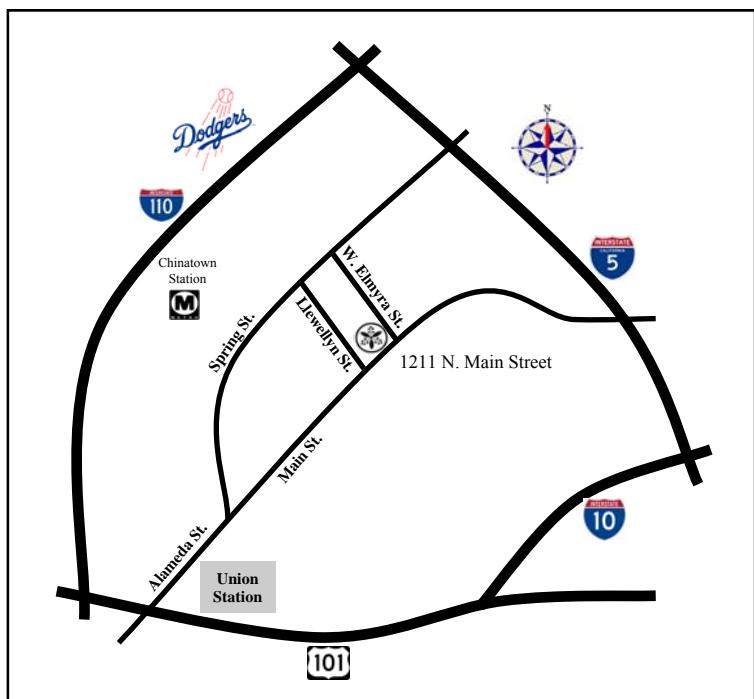
Sundays

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 Elmira 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.