

Featured Dojo-cho, August 2009



Art Vawter

State of Jefferson Aikido, Cave Junction, Oregon
Division 2

In January 1974 in the Bubble at Hampshire College, I first started my aikido training. The classes were taught by Marion Taylor Sensei, a martial artist in various arts including Aikido. There I was introduced to my first shihonage and kotegaishi as well as Ki exercises. While doing one of the Ki exercises I became convinced of Aikido's efficacy. I was able to use my arm/body to move others much heavier than myself which I was unable to do with muscle power alone.

My aikido training became a key factor in my rehabilitation and healing after a severe motor cycle accident in which I broke my back and suffered internal injury.

I returned to formal aikido training in May 1984 in Salt Lake City under Veera Kasicharernvat Sensei. I trained at the University of Utah Aikido Club and Aikido of Salt Lake City. There I was introduced to Kazuo Chiba Sensei, Hiroshi Ikeda Sensei, Ichiro Shibata Sensei, Rob Bryner Sensei, Roderick T. Kobayashi Sensei, and others.

I moved to Cave Junction in 1995 and began training with Michael Friedl Sensei in Ashland (100 mile commute). There I've had the good fortune to train with Frank Duran Sensei, Clyde Takeguchi Sensei, and Hiroshi Ikeda Sensei. In other seminars I've been deeply influenced by Motomichi Anno Sensei, Seichiro Endo Sensei, Robert Nadeau Sensei, Randy Scoville Sensei, and Mary Heiny Sensei. Also needing special mention is my sempai at

Aikido of Ashland, Andrew Kim, student of Rob Bryner Sensei, who in turn was a student of Shoji Nishio Sensei.

In 2007 I was asked to teach Aikido at the Grants Pass YMCA, hence the founding of the State of Jefferson Aikido. Currently I have a small dojo in a barn on my ranch in Southwestern Oregon.

My most Memorable Aikido Experiences

One of my most memorable aikido experiences happened at the 2006 Aiki Summer Retreat. Clyde Takeguchi Sensei was teaching the evening class. But, after six days of training my old knees were swollen and stiff. It was with trepidation that I attended class that night. Clyde Takeguchi Sensei started with a simple exercise that no one seemed to quite get. Our difficulty was obvious so sensei explained he would teach an “energy” class. He went on to demonstrate just two techniques; the second I remember was a Koshinage. The most remarkable thing was that after class my knees had recovered fully. No more stiffness or congestion and I was in a state of euphoria.

Another memorable experience was the 2007 Santa Cruz Summer Camp with Motomichi Anno Sensei. It seems to me he worked/played at the edge of connection with uke. I experienced a new awakening not only in my aikido, but also in my personal life. Because of the Retreat experience, I’ve been more open to new possibilities than ever before.