

## Featured Dojo-cho, March 2008



### **Durward Burrell**

Aikido Vevey, Vevey, Switzerland  
Division 3

I became interested in Aikido around the age of 23 when I decided to get back in to the martial arts. I had been practicing many martial arts off and on since the age of five. Aikido was one of the martial arts I was still interested in that I had not tried. I had some slight idea of a spiritual foundation of Aikido, which also attracted me to the art. It was a beginning of a life change for me.

I started training by trying many different Aikido dojos in the Houston area, where I was born. I realized that it took a larger commitment than what I had thought and I was also not very clear as to what direction I was heading in life. One particular moment when I was meditating on a beach, a very large perspective opened to me and my direction became clear; I wanted to dive deeply into a search for a

greater Self, and Aikido was the path. I went home that day and researched Aikido schools with uchideshi programs. I was quickly drawn to a few and then spent some time to visit them.

One of the teachers I found was Patrick Cassidy Sensei, who was in Fresno, California at the time. I went to visit him at Aikido of Fresno in the summer of 1999. Within the first thirty minutes of meeting him, I knew he was the right teacher. The perspectives he shared were exactly what I was looking for, as well as the training he offered in Aikido and Yoga. I began my study as an uchideshi under Cassidy Sensei, which lasted about two years before he moved to Switzerland. After Cassidy Sensei moved from the United States, I stayed at Aikido of Fresno approximately three more years to lead the Yoga program and help Florian Tan Sensei as an assistant instructor of Aikido.

One late night in April 2004, I received a call from Cassidy Sensei in Switzerland. He proposed to me to come visit and help him teach at his new dojo in Montreux; I instantly agreed. After some time visiting in Switzerland, I fell in love and got married; so the opportunity arose to stay and create a dojo in my new home town, Vevey.

Aikido Vevey started as an extension of Aikido Montreux as early as 2006 with one class a week and now exists as its own group with four classes offered each week. Aikido Vevey and Aikido Montreux work closely together creating a larger community to help people discover "awakened" perspectives. Aikido Vevey currently has about 15 children Aikido students, 10 adult Aikido students and 10 yoga students.

### ***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

Since the beginning of my period as uchideshi with Patrick Cassidy Sensei, one moment I had with him returns to me as an inspiration in my teachings. We spent one sunny afternoon having tea at his house in Fresno. In that relaxed moment before all of my further adventures in Aikido and after letting go of my acquisitions of the past, I expressed to Cassidy Sensei my feeling of freedom in that moment. He said to me then, "This 'space' you are in now **is** the goal." I realized then that the essence of Aikido was not only about the practice, but about an actual transformation of perspective; this perspective of "harmonious freedom" was available to anyone, even a beginner.

This essential change in perspective of an awakened freedom is the basis of what I teach in my Aikido classes. The form then flows from

this perspective, and the community in the dojo helps support this change in perspective.