

## Featured Dojo-cho, April 2002



**Dave Goldberg**

Aikido of Mission Valley, San Diego, California  
Division 3

I started my training in 1987 at Sunset Cliffs Aikido in San Diego under Senseis Bernice Tom and Satoshi Takamori. Nearly ten years earlier my older cousin shared something with me at a family Thanksgiving gathering that would later define the course of my life. He said he was learning Aikido and that he wanted to show me a movement. We both got on our knees, I grabbed his wrists as instructed, and a moment later I was looking up at him. We talked a bit more about this new training he'd been doing, and I was sold.

Unfortunately, all of high school and all of college passed by before I was in a place where Aikido was available to me. Two days after finishing college in a small Upstate New York town, I moved to San Diego and was looking into dojos. I was there for about three years, part of the time as uchi-deshi, and then decided to continue my training in Japan. I was very fortunate to have received a teaching job and a place to live before I even left. I was even more fortunate to have my former teacher and friend, Satoshi Takamori, already back in Tokyo prepared to help me with the transition. That first year in Tokyo, I "trained around" a lot. Several days per week I trained at both Asia University and Hombu Dojo with Yukimitsu Kobayashi Sensei and the present Doshu. On Wednesdays I was training with Hitohiro Saito Sensei who came down from Iwama every week. I

also started training with Nishio Sensei a bit since Satoshi-san was quite involved with that system, as well as Hitohiro-san's group. I was also uchi-deshi in Iwama for one summer during that first year. My last two-and-a-half years in Japan I spent in Kanazawa, a smaller city on the Sea of Japan. I trained mainly with a man named Kitamoto Sensei who was a senior student of Nishio Sensei. The dojo was a very small tatami room in the back of his rice shop. I believe I was the first "Gaijin" to train at his dojo. I returned to San Diego in 1994. In 1998 I began instructing the Aikido class at University of California-San Diego along with my friend, Cindy Paloma.

All of the people I've already mentioned have had great significance in my path, but I'd be remiss if I didn't add a few others that are more recent. Frank Doran Sensei has been a tremendous influence since I returned from Japan. The accessibility to him through his extensive seminar routine and personal approachability, along with his wit and common sense is forever appreciated. Most recently, Robert Nadeau Sensei and especially my primary mentor, Patrick Cassidy Sensei, have helped me to understand Aikido on an inclusive and organic level that I hadn't been able to access before. They've guided me to an understanding of how Aikido relates to all that touches my life, and how all that touches my life relates to Aikido. Thanks to all of my teachers, I'm on a clearer path in the contemplation of three age-old questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What am I doing?

Aikido of Mission Valley opened in September 2000, so it's quite a young dojo. It was started with about ten founding members from the UCSD Aikido class who shared my vision of a full time dojo. It's fresh enough that I can still taste the faith on which it was founded. Let's face it: rents in San Diego are not cheap, and we knew that only ten members was not going to cut it. However, they had faith in me and I was prepared to put my money where my mouth was. A year-and-a-half later, we have about forty adult members. We just started a kids' program that has only five members, but hey...it's on its way. There are presently thirteen classes per week over a six day period. Since it's such a young dojo, I'm pretty busy with teaching the vast majority of the classes, as well as continuing to instruct the UCSD class.

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

I have many memorable Aikido experiences. And I have no misgivings in claiming that not all of them were so positive at the time. Like life itself, there is great joy, and sometimes some pain as well. Over time, though, all of my notable experiences in Aikido have served me well. The one that has touched me the most was on September 15, 2000. With the founding members, my loving and

supportive wife, and friends of the dojo lined up and ready to bow in for the first time, I couldn't help but take in the pride and togetherness that all of us felt, and the trust that they all placed in me. On that day, the dojo was nothing more than a box with a mat that had been installed just hours earlier. There was nothing on the walls but white paint and a simple picture of O-Sensei. It will always serve as a reminder to me of the simple things that are most important at the dojo and in life: trust, loyalty, gratitude, and inclusion.

The facility now has come a long way, and we're hopefully getting a larger space in September. But I'll never forget the roots that have taken Aikido of Mission Valley to where it is now, and I'll always be grateful to those that helped make it happen.