

Featured Dojocho, March 2018



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Division 1

I came across aikido as a teenager in 1972 in my home town in Finland. At that time there were only a handful of aikido clubs in the country. I trained regularly for a little more than a year and after that only occasionally. Leaving the town for university studies also meant taking a break from aikido. The break turned out to be almost 13 years. I found my way back in 1986 and by then I had moved several times. At the time I was, and still am, living in Gothenburg, Sweden.

My most influential teachers are Patrick Johnsen Sensei and Pat Hendricks Sensei both students of Morihiro Saito Sensei and bearers of his lineage. Patrick Sensei is the one leading me on to my path in aikido, teaching me integrity and humility, without words, only by example. He invited Pat Sensei to our dojo for a seminar in 1999 and that is when I first met her. I will never forget that first seminar with Pat Sensei not only because she was a high ranked female aikidoka and a great teacher, but also because she, to me, seemed like a smaller version of Saito Sensei.

I've had no personal relation to Saito Sensei though he also has been of great importance to me by being my teachers' sensei. I attended several of his seminars in Scandinavia and Europe. But, being the mother of two young children I never had the opportunity to go to Iwama for intense training under him.

Aikido Dojo Gamlestaden was founded in 1989 by my teacher Patrick Sensei together with eight other aikidoka, seven yudansha and myself who at the time was only kyu graded. Working together as a group was of great importance to get the dojo started and after almost 30 years it is still the dojo members working together that keeps it running.

My Most Memorable Aikido Experience

There have been so many memorable Aikido experiences. If I have to choose one it has to be when in 1990 Aikido Dojo Gamlestaden had been running for one year. Together with Patrick Sensei and one of the dojo sempai I travelled to Stockholm for a seminar with Saito Sensei. The week after, before leaving for Japan, Saito Sensei came to visit our dojo and taught a class. This must have been the greatest honor he could show his student, my teacher. I don't remember much of the class though, because I had a mission – to hand over a present after class and I was pretty nervous about doing it right and not to disgrace my teacher. But, I did well.