



Forrest Kan
Mateel Aikido, Redway, CA
Division 2

I was first introduced to Aikido when I attended a demonstration at the "Beginnings" school in Briceland, California in the summer of 1985.

Doug Knox Sensei, a senior student of Tom Read Sensei founder of Northcoast Aikido in Arcata, California had been invited by the school to give a Bo (staff) demonstration.

I was so impressed by the beauty, grace, and power of his movements with the staff that afterwards I went out and found a book so that I could find out more about the art of Aikido. What attracted me in what I read is that O' Sensei said that "Aikido is for everyone." My previous experience with martial arts had come as a wrestler in high school and some dabbling in shorinyu karate and taichi. What appealed to me about Aikido is that it provided a way for me to practice 'relationship training', i.e. engaging and resolving conflict with a partner.

Shortly after that demonstration, Doug Knox Sensei moved to the area and started teaching regular classes at the "Beginnings" school. Initially we trained on six 4x6 tumbling mats. Later we acquired some white foam mats, and these we would duct tape together before each class to create a 20x20 training surface. After a year we relocated to the Veteran's Hall in Garberville, California where we still set up and take down mats (20 years – sheesh).

It was through Knox Sensei that I was introduced to Tom Read Sensei. About a year after I started training, Read Sensei hosted a seminar with Frank Doran Sensei in Arcata. Eventually Knox Sensei left the area and Carl Tissol, another senior student of Tom Read Sensei, became the dojocho. It was through the encouragement of Tissol Sensei that I attended the annual Summer Retreat (then held at San Rafael).

From that point I started regularly driving down to the Bay Area to attend seminars conducted by various instructors. It was during this period that I also established a training relationship with Doran Sensei. I remember one evening at our dojo in Briceland, as we were getting ready to train, a pickup truck pulled up and gentleman emerged and asked "Mind if I train?" It was Frank Doran Sensei, just "passing through the neighborhood" while heading north for one of his fishing trips. Of course, he taught the class!

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

In 1990 I took my shodan test - and did not pass.

I knew I was in trouble from the start. While being reviewed by the testing board there was a feeling of disappointment. My response: *"If you don't mind, I'm not going to quit."* But, before leaving the dojo I was given a video of my test, with the suggestion that I have a few beers before watching it! Later, as I looked at the video, the aspect that stood out quite clearly wasn't a matter of technical errors, but rather a matter of attitude. The experience underscored the purpose for which I was really studying Aikido: how to harmoniously reconcile conflict both with others and with myself, both on and off the mat.

If you don't mind, I'm still not going to quit.