

## Featured Dojo-cho, August 2002



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Division 3

I started Aikido in October of 1975 in Aix-en-Provence, France, where I had gone to study fine arts for a school year through San Jose State University. I have a very clear image of how I found out about Aikido. I went down to the university gym to sign up for a class that would give me a good workout. It was a really large facility and when I was looking around, I saw a closed door with a sign on it. The sign said 'Judo, Karate, Aikido.' Now when I was 11 or 12 years old, I had studied Judo for about a year and then about a year later I studied Tae Kwon Do for six months or so. So I was familiar with what Karate, Judo, and Tae Kwon Do were. But I had never seen this word 'Aikido' before. I was really intrigued and signed up on the spot. The first class was an hour later.

Even though it was a PE class, we lined up as in a dojo. I noticed a lot of students already had dogis and many had on hakamas which I'd never seen before. Then I walked Tamura-sensei. The room became silent immediately. He bowed to O-

Sensei, bowed to the class, warmed us up, and then immediately proceeded to throw his ukes with unbelievable power, speed, and grace. It was like magic. I was hooked. I trained as much as possible that school year with Tamura-sensei, who at that time taught all the classes, and when I returned to the States, I joined Aikido of San Jose and started training under Jack Wada-sensei and Robert Nadeau-sensei. Ken Kubo taught there as well, and I trained with him too.

Starting in 1978, I would go up to San Francisco regularly to train with the three senseis, Nadeau, Doran, and Witt at the old dojo on Turk Street while also training with Nadeau-sensei in Mountain View. By that time, Jack Wada was the main sensei in San Jose, and I trained with him constantly. Later on, I would go train with Linda Holiday-sensei in Santa Cruz whenever I had a chance. All the senseis had so much to offer; it was a banquet. You just had to keep training and meditating and soak in as much as you could. I continue to train under Jack Wada-sensei; he is amazing; he is always, in his own unique way, forging new 'trails' on the Aiki path.

As far as my own teaching, I first started teaching Aikido and self-defense to kids through the Los Gatos Recreation Department in 1980 where my good friends Jeff and Kathy Adams were teaching the adults. At that time I also became involved with the early members of a women's self-defense group which eventually incorporated as Bay Area Model Mugging. I started teaching one kids' class and ended up having four kids' classes. When Jeff Adams decided to move on from teaching Aikido in Los Gatos, he recommended me to the Recreation Department to take on the adult classes.

I formed the dojo in 1986. We meet Monday and Friday evenings.

I have 45 students in my dojo. Frank Silvey, who teaches Aikido at Apple Computers, comes by regularly to assist me in teaching. When Jeff Adams, who teaches Aikido at De Anza College, has time, he comes by and teaches as well. One of my assistant instructors, Tim Gardner, is doing an outstanding job with the kids' class, which has about 20 students. My other assistant instructors, Joe Fitch, Randy Gonzalez, Paul Heffernan, and Bob Schumacher, all do a great job with the different level of students we have. I have a dedicated cadre of kyu ranks who are there training hard and really supporting the dojo with their sincerity, integrity, and sweat. I feel really

fortunate to have all these great students.

***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

One of the most profound experiences I have had in Aikido was during a demonstration at Aikido of San Jose in 1978. Jack Wada-sensei had invited his teacher, Hikitsuchi-sensei, 10th dan, from Shingu, Japan, and he was using Wada-sensei as his uke, and at one point Hikitsuchi-sensei let out a tremendous kiai which literally raised the hair on the back of my neck. At that moment, it was like time slowed, and I could see Wada-sensei flying through the air almost in slow motion; it was as if my sense of "normal" time had been distorted. It was one of those moments when the event transcended ordinary reality.