

Dear Michael Friedl Sensei,

I completed my Nidan demonstration on June 26th, 2022.

The following is reflection on Aikido and what it means to me on and off the mat:

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In one of the first beginning classes I took almost two decades ago my instructor introduced us to the “unbendable arm” exercise. I knew then and there that Aikido was for me. How could a mere change in how we look upon a situation so profoundly change its physical characteristics?

This, most of all, is what kept me with Aikido all these years: The training to remain calm and relaxed, yet present, when encountering a conflict. This change of mind has served me well on the mat as well as off the mat.

Mortally afraid of public speaking in the past I would now walk with open arms onto the stage and welcome the audience; instead of shrinking away from it with shoulders raised, in a futile attempt to hide from it as I likely would have done before.

Similarly, I frequently observe the narrow focus on the supposed conflicts in meetings at work, where participants would have “dug in” positions, and I am often able to use the bigger view of Aikido to help see what is behind these positions and thus potentially see the conflict in a new light.

And most importantly Aikido has helped in the upbringing of my son, where it allowed me to remain present in many challenging situations, and let go of the focus of whatever might be “wrong”.

I look forward to continuing my training of Aikido not only for my own benefit but also for those around me and for society as a whole.

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Best Regards.

-- Lars Hofhansl