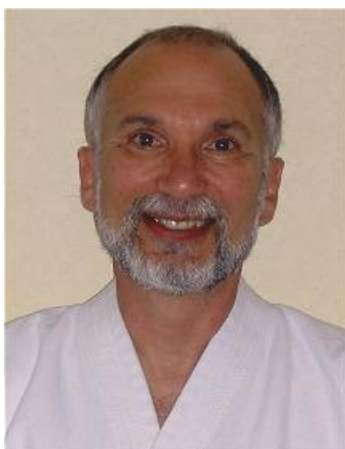


Featured Dojo-cho, September 2004



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As a young boy, I was absolutely fascinated by judo throws in an old James Cagney movie. This inspired me to start training in Judo, when I was 15. After about 4 years, I had a serious shoulder separation and stopped training for a while... but couldn't stay away from budo. So I tried karate for a few years, but it didn't really suit me. Then in 1971 I wandered into the Illinois Aikido Club and was very impressed with Isao Takahashi Sensei and with the dojo. As I had also developed an interest in Zen, Aikido seemed to fit me like a comfortable glove.

Aikido is perhaps the closest thing to a religion for me. The principles are everywhere and I enjoy exploring ways to incorporate them into my personal life. On a physical level, posture, balance & yielding are as essential to skiing and ballroom dancing as they are to Aikido. Aiki certainly influenced my interaction with my "clients", as a Parole Officer, and I applied Aikido principles on an almost daily basis, to defuse potentially violent situations, usually without having to use waza.

I started teaching when I moved to the Oregon coast in 1989. It was a very rural area and my classes averaged around 2-8 people. I actually found this small class size very rewarding, as I more actively participated in the training with my students, often giving them essentially 1:1 training. It was a 2-way street, though, and I learned as much as they did. Teaching Defensive Tactics to law enforcement officers in Oregon was an entirely different experience, learning to adapt "classical" Aikido waza to the modern world. Last fall, my wife and I moved from Oregon to southern California and I have started a new dojo at the San Clemente Community Center.

Frank Doran Shihan has been a major influence on my life. I first met him at a summer camp in Estes Park, CO. I was training with this guy I had never seen before, was very impressed with his skill, and enjoyed training with him. When I asked his name, and he said he was Frank Doran, I was speechless, because I had read about Doran Sensei and here he was out there on the mat training with me. Several years later, at a crux in my life when I was wondering why I continue to study Aikido, Doran Sensei accepted me as a student, reinvigorating my enthusiasm. He continues to influence me and the more I get to know Sensei, but more I remain impressed by him not only as an Aikidoka, but more so as a person.

My most memorable Aikido experience.

I've had many memorable Aikido experiences, but one that stands out occurred soon after I started Aikido. A brown belt was describing how she was at a bus stop the evening before, where there were also 4 rowdy high-schoolers. They all then boarded an empty bus. On the bus, the teens began hassling her, and she described applying a sankyo to one. At this point in the story, Takahashi Sensei walked by, started listening, shook his head and then suggested that she should have waited for the next bus.