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California Aikido Association, Division Head
Division 1

I started studying Aikido in June of 1974 while a student at Monterey Peninsula College in Monterey, California. I had been interested in studying a martial art and found a course in Aikido being offered that semester. The instructor was Mary Heiny who was a Sandan at that time and had recently returned from studying in Japan. It was during that semester of study that I heard about Stan Pranin who was teaching Aikido to a small group of students in his garage in Monterey. I studied with Stan Pranin until 1977 when we both moved to Oakland to study first with Bruce Klickstein and then with Bill Witt Sensei. Later that same year I moved to Iwama, Japan, where I became uchi-deshi and a student of Saito Sensei. I returned to Oakland in 1979 and continued studying with Bruce Klickstein Sensei.

Over the next 9 years I returned regularly to Iwama for brief periods of study with Saito Sensei. During this time I also earned my degree in Oriental Languages (with emphasis in Japanese) from U.C. Berkeley. In 1984 I founded the Aikido of San Leandro dojo. In 1988 I embarked on a 6 month European tour, combining travel and teaching, before once again returning to Iwama for study as a long-term uchi-deshi. I returned to Oakland and to my dojo in 1990.

Aikido of San Leandro offers 15 classes per week, Monday through Sunday. Our active membership includes approximately 80 adults and 65 children. In addition, Aikido of San Leandro also offers a full-time uchi-deshi program. Presently, my schedule includes teaching at 6 domestic and 6 international seminars each year.

MY MOST MEMORABLE AIKIDO EXPERIENCE

In 1992, at the All-Japan Demonstration in Tokyo, I was very honored to have been the sole uke for Saito Sensei's demonstration. I believe it was the first time for a Caucasian, certainly for a female aikido-ka, to have participated as uke for such a high-ranking teacher at such a high profile event.