

Featured Teacher, February 2020



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It was in the summer of 1987. I was at a Unity retreat on Crystal Mountain, WA. The program listed "Introduction to Aikido" as an activity. What caught my interest was Dan Millman was listed as one of the co-facilitators. I had read his book, "The Way of the Peaceful Warrior," and was curious to meet the author. So I went. The class was led by Craig Eddie Sensei. I was struck by the profound implications. I had been studying the business and personal applications of "active listening." I immediately saw Aikido as a physical form of listening and I knew I had found my martial art.

Fast forward all these years later... last week I was visiting Friedl Shihan's dojo in Ashland and I am introduced to Senseis Mark Leitzel and Leigh Schickendantz from Kalispell, MT. During our visit I discovered both had studied with Eddie Sensei. This marked the first time I had met anyone that had a connection with Eddie Sensei in common with me. The next day I received an invitation to be on Spotlight. Michael

Smith Sensei suggested I go to the CAA website to check out the Spotlight section, and there are my new friends Mark and Leigh.

My road between then and now was marked by Tri Thong Dang Sensei, Dave Brigham Sensei and now, Frank Doran Shihan. As with all aikidoka, I have been inspired by the many Senseis I have met at seminars and trained with.

Aikido and Healing Arts of Roseville is now in our 10th year. It is an extension of a vision shared by our founding members, Dave and Mary Brigham, Troy Yee and my partners at the time Bryan Banta and Eric Miller. Our vision is that as aikidoka we share in a true fellowship where we collectively serve the mission of Aikido as inspired by O'Sensei.

On a personal note outside of Aikido, I have enjoyed a long and satisfying career as an arborist. Working with trees has helped me develop an appreciation of their beauty. My interests as a wood worker have been greatly influenced by the beauty I see in their structures. I love to make furniture that shows the soul of trees.

My Most Memorable Aikido Experience

It was 2005 when the now infamous Aiki Cruise happened. The cruise featured Mitsugi Saotome Sensei, Hiroshi Ikeda Sensei and others. We embarked in Florida and the destination was the Cayman Islands. The concept was great. We had the foredeck of the ship as a training area. Windscreens surrounded the training area. Calculations were figured that the mats would stay down in up to about 25 mph of wind. What wasn't calculated was the ship going 22 knots into a 25 mph head wind. The mats were lifting and flying around the foredeck. So we stacked the mats up and secured them right behind the windscreen for the duration of the voyage. We trained for days on the teak decks of the ship. The mental picture for me is Saotome Sensei leaning about 10° into the wind with his hakama flapping in the breeze demonstrating technique for us. Another time Ikeda Sensei was teaching and called me up to take ukemi. I grabbed him and the next thing I knew I was in the air thinking, " Well, this is it." High falls on a solid teak deck don't always end well for uke. The mystery for me is I landed light as a feather. I give full credit to Ikeda Sensei for my survival intact.