

## Featured Teacher, November 2020



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I live in the south of Argentina, in the heart of Patagonia.

At a young age, martial arts caught my attention. I tried karate, tae kwon do, tang soo do and some others, I could never dedicate much time to them and they did not generate something special in me, until I discovered Aikido 25 years ago.

Techniques seemed incredible to me, almost unreal. For a couple of years I tried to organize my schedules to start practicing, but the final decision came after a discussion with one person. I went back to my house angry and tried to read something to forget the bad moment. There I found a phrase by O'sensei that changed everything: "Be grateful even for hardship, setbacks, and bad people. Dealing with such obstacles is an essential part of training in the art of peace."

The decision was made.

I started the practice with the only local instructor and my first tests were with Miyazawa sensei, the introducer of Aikido in Argentina.

Sensei made an annual visit (he lived in Buenos Aires, very far from my city) therefore I transformed myself into a sponge, trying to retain all the lessons and practice for the rest of the year. I carried on and met other teachers like Inagaki sensei. For me, someone from Iwama could bring me closer to O'sensei.

Then, something surprising happened. Aikido was about to disappear in the city. There were no instructors.

The second decision was made. I would continue the practice, no matter what.

With a great friend and colleague we decided to carry on with effort and dedication, practicing alone. Hours and hours of practice, without mats but with a sincere heart. Later we would start classes. After a while my friend and partner began another stage of his life, so I was all by myself.

Many places saw my students and I doing thousands of ukemi and techniques until, finally:

The third big decision: start the wonderful task of building my own dojo.

My family and some students offered their hands and effort so that on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 we could achieve the goal. The dojo was a reality, and right in front of my house, a dream came true.

That step made me gather more strength than ever and continue the search. There were many questions and I found all the answers (and much more) thanks to the fact that I was able to meet and become a student of a wonderful sensei, full of love, patience, wisdom and dedication, who made me see that aikido is everything I thought, felt and more. That sensei is Pat Hendricks, my sensei, my guide. Just entering her dojo made the inner flame that burns in me grow, her words and her teaching make me a better person. Thanks to her we are now part of the CAA, a wonderful community of practitioners.

My dojo saw many students, Aikido is a fresh presence in the city and little by little we grow and learn together with the students. In this wonderful place, effort, sweat, tears and energy are left with students who continue to arrive to train and experience the spirit of O'sensei.

## **My Most Memorable Aikido Experiences**

After so many years there are many experiences but in this moment I remember:

- My whole family building the dojo, the first fall, meeting Pat sensei.
- The night before my shodan test I went to bed repeating again and again “first of all Tai no henko, first of all tai no henko”. As you can imagine, the sensei leading the test table asked me to perform another technique, and I showed him my very best tai no henko.

**Finally, yes, I know! sensei Pat is far away than the teachers in Argentina, the reasons have already been explained, and also my life..... it's a beautiful adventure...!**