

## Featured Dojo-cho, January 2004



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I started the path of budo when I was a little boy of 12 years with Judo, like many others. One day I asked my sensei what he thought was the best martial art of all, a question that only a beginner's mind can think of. He answered that he had seen Aikido and was very impressed by the variety of movements and also the enormous possibilities of such a simple looking weapon like the jo. He also said that it is the most complicated to learn.

Four years later in 1981 a student from a dojo in Zurich started to teach Aikido in Lucerne. I think he was a 2nd Kyu by this time. Because it was in our Judo dojo and I still had the word about Aikido in the back of my mind I attended these classes too. We were all completely beginners and together we discovered the beauty of Aikido. We often had many different teachers at the beginning and the lack of advanced students somehow glued us, the first generation, together into a special group. The teachers I had during these days were Hanspeter Tschol, Christian Glesti and Renato Barizzi. Later Kurt Bartholet Sensei came from Zürich to teach us on a regular basis. He also brought many other

Senseis to our little dojo in central Switzerland. M. Ikeda Sensei also taught many times in Lucerne. We had visitors like the former Saito Sensei, Endo Sensei, Frank Doran Sensei, Cyndy Hayashi Sensei, Bruce Klickstein and others. Soon I discovered that I had to go out into the world and collect experiences and I attended many international seminars by different senseis to bring back new Aikido know-how. I met Frank Doran Sensei on his annual seminars in Zurich and got hooked to his crisp clear style of open hearted teaching and friendliness. Very different from the often distant and too martial way of many others. I started to attend the San Rafael summer camp in the early 90's and came back almost every year. In 98 and 99 I stayed a full year in the Bay Area and practiced every day at Aikido West after I became student of Frank Doran Sensei.

The dojo of Aikido Lucerne started in 1981. In 1992 we moved to the current place where we have a big and bright location in the center of the city. We never had a single dojo cho. We are a group of three main teachers and a growing group of new teachers. Georg Gallati 3rd Dan, Michael Spitz 4th Dan, and I are teaching the group of about 60 adults. We also have kid's classes. We managed to have our individual styles but still be open for all the changes and developments of the daily Aikido life. I also like to attend classes of my students and learn from their discoveries. After my return from the USA I also started to teach classes at the Aikido Sursee dojo, a growing dojo founded by former Aikido Lucerne students with a current member count of about 60 adults.

### ***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

There are so many memorable experiences and in almost every class new ones add to them.

A funny story happened after my Nidan test at a Saito Sensei seminar in Germany. Usually a keiko gi wears of over a long time. You add some patches and fix some holes and It will work again until the fabric is too worn off to get fixed. During my test the gi was in perfect shape. During the first class right after the test, somebody partly tore off a sleeve from my shoulder and shortly after the other one came loose too. Then again in one movement a long ripping sound announced the ending of my gi pants. After the class my friends then completely tore the rest of my gi in parts off my body. Somehow I got the image of a snake that sheds its skin to grow to the next level.

When I think back to the beginning of my history I believe that my judo sensei was right to tell me that Aikido is the best martial art of all, at least for myself. I would never have met all the friends all over the world and made all those wonderful encounters and experiences.