

## Featured Dojo-cho, June 2001



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Division 2

I grew up in Hawaii where I began studying Kendo and Karate at about 10 or 11. I continued my martial arts training through high school and into college, up till the time I left Hawaii to attend the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. I moved down to Anchorage after graduating. Shortly after arriving in Anchorage, I began playing volleyball. While I enjoyed volleyball, I did not really care for the competition: getting one up on the other person/team. After a few years, I decided that I had to find something else that would fill this hole I was feeling. I thought about taking up martial arts training again, but was uncertain as to which art would provide me with what I needed. Right about that time, in 1982, I met Steve Atkinson at a dinner given by a mutual friend. Sensei Atkinson was planning to start an Aikido school. After a full evening of conversation on the martial arts and Aikido in particular, I decided that Aikido with its emphasis on harmony and non-competition, might be that missing piece I had been looking for. I began my Aikido training, under Sensei Atkinson

as one of Aikido North's original students a few months later. Initially, classes were offered through the YMCA. In 1984, we moved into our first official dojo home. We have relocated several times, moving into our present home in 1988. A few years later, I think it was 1990, Sensei Atkinson left Alaska for California, turning the responsibility of dojo-cho over to me. After Sensei Atkinson left, I became a student of his teacher, Sensei Frank Doran. I'd like to thank both Sensei Atkinson and Sensei Doran for their guidance and example over the years. For me, Aikido training has been a very useful tool for self-development and for improving my interaction with people on and off the mat.

We have a small but dedicated group of dojo members here at Aikido North. Our children class ranges from 6 to 12 students. Our adult membership consists of about 20 to 25 students. We have classes 6 days a week. Being so far from everyone, we are always very happy to have visitors.

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

One of my most memorable Aikido experiences happened early in my training. For me it was one of those great, unexpected lessons we are fortunate to occasionally experience. About two years after I started Aikido, I attended my first retreat with my sensei, Steve Atkinson and several other members of our Aikido North Dojo. We flew to Colorado for Boulder Aikikai's annual Summer Camp in the Rockies. It was my first experience being around such a large group of Aikidoists. For the first couple of days, attending classes taught by Saotome Sensei and Ikeda Sensei was very stressful for me. Up to this point, the only teachers I had studied under were Atkinson Sensei and Doran Sensei. As hard as I tried, I could not figure out the techniques they were demonstrating. Everything looked new and extremely complicated. The only thing that saved my sanity was attending Doran Sensei's classes. I could understand the movements he demonstrated. They were familiar, and I felt safe and confident working through the training in his classes. Then about the third day, after Doran Sensei had just finished demonstrating a particular technique, the light bulb flashed on and suddenly things became clear. This was the same technique demonstrated by Saotome Sensei in a class just previous. It was the same, but different. I realized that all the movements I had seen up to this point were ones I already knew, but being in a different setting, watching different people demonstrating them with different emphasis, they seemed to be brand new. It was a valuable lesson that has taught me to look at the similarities in the movements of techniques and to build upon them, instead of focusing on the differences. Taking it a step further, I try with people to look at what we have in common, then any differences we have become less

significant and less likely to get in the way of our relationship.