

Featured Senior Instructor, October 2008



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Aikido of Eugene, Eugene, Oregon
Division 2

I started martial arts training in 1976 while living in Arcata California. I was studying Kenpo Karate. And dabbling in Tai Chi, Pakua, and Hsing-I. My instructor was Jim Walker who got his black-belt from Ed Parker in the '60s. Jim had also studied Tai Chi under Cliff Ma in the 60's. I also studied under Bob MacDougal whose lineage was the Tracy System of Kenpo. It was at that time that I started Zen meditation under Reverend Donald Gilbert, a Zen Master of the Korean Choge lineage. Martial arts appealed to me; probably because of the vulnerability I was experiencing as a veteran yet undiagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (In 1971 I had been a medic with 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam.)

After a break from martial arts, after a short stint as a Buddhist monk, and after bicycling Europe for 11 months, I moved back to Arcata in 1982, got a job, and started studying Aikido under Tom Read Sensei, founder of Northcoast Aikido. I fell in love with the art immediately. It, and the way it was being taught by Read Sensei and his top student, Doug Knox Sensei resonated with me, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I was hooked. The instruction of visiting sensei, Mary Heini, Linda Holiday, and Jack Wada, also had a profound impact on me.

After getting my Shodan in 1986, I moved to Eugene, Oregon, went to school for a while, and then back to work. Knox Sensei soon followed, opening a dojo, and teaching aikido classes at the University of

Oregon. When Doug left Oregon due to the illness of his father, I closed the dojo and took over aikido instruction at the university. I taught there from 1987 to 1997, in both the Service Physical Education Department and the university's Club Sport Program. It was in '86 that I met my aikibrother Chuck Hauk Sensei, who more than ably assisted me in the Club Sport Program and occasionally filled in for me in the PE Department.

In 1997 I left the University of Oregon and started teaching in various martial art dojos in the Eugene/Springfield area. In 2001 we found our present and most wonderful home at Best Martial Arts Institute in Eugene Oregon, run by Alan Best.

In 2002, after struggling for years with combat related post traumatic stress disorder, I finally abandoned martial arts and aikido all together. Chuck Hauk Sensei assumed Dojo Cho responsibilities. After 8 months of soul searching, I returned to aikido, becoming Senior Instructor under Hauk Sensei, a position I now cherish. As did Hauk Sensei, I asked Doran Shihan if I might be his student. He warmly took me in.

At Aikido of Eugene, we offer adult classes four times a week, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 PM, and Saturday and Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 10:30 AM. Barbara Knapp, a Sandan student of Michael Friedl Sensei, also teaches a weapons class Saturday mornings from 8:00 to 9:00 AM.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

This is a hard one, because I have had so many memorable experiences, and continue to have more experiences, with newer ones building on older ones. Because of this, my perceptions are always changing. What was memorable in the past, is usually still memorable, but for different reasons, as my perception shifts or changes. But I will give it a go.

While teaching at the University of Oregon, in the Service Physical Education Department, as students shared with me, it soon became very apparent that roughly 50% of the female students and approximately 10% of the male students taking my classes had either been raped or sexually molested in their young lifetimes. I was stunned.

Taking the advice of Nadia Telsey, an ex-student of mine, a past director of Rape Crisis in Eugene, and at present an adjunct instructor in the Women's Studies Program at the University of Oregon, I would work carefully with these students. As can only be done in PE classes, the aikido that was taught was pretty basic. But with certain students who requested it, I would slowly lead them through techniques, where by the end of the term, they would be planting me three inches into the mat. For some students, to finally *not* flinch when I slapped the mat was a major

break-through for them and how they were trying to live their lives.

In my aikido experience, nothing has so profoundly affected me as the courage I saw manifested by students on the mat in those classes. And as I get older, as I deal more and more with my own combat related stresses, I draw courage from my memories of those young and vulnerable students. And as Doran Shihan once told me, sometimes you just have to cry, and I do.