

## Featured Senior Instructor, February 2009



**David Kunis**

Aikido West, Redwood City, California  
Division 2

When I moved to Santa Cruz in 1976 I was lucky to move into a house with several Aikidoka and couldn't wait to get started. There was an all-star cast of teachers at Aikido of Santa Cruz including Senseis Linda Holiday, Jack Wada, and Glen Kimoto who got me off to a great start and still continue to inspire me. Then, my job at UCSC ended and I moved to Marin County to train for a brief but intense time at the Aikido of Tamalpais dojo with Senseis Wendy Palmer, Richard Heckler and George Leonard. In 1980 the perfect job opened up at Stanford as I was able to take a long lunch break to study Aikido under the direction of Frank Doran Sensei. He has been awesome, especially in reining me in when I would swing too far in one direction or the other. In 2000 I started managing the day-to-day operation of the Stanford club, and I like to bring many of the yudansha into the teaching process. They get great experience, and the students get exposed to a wide variety of viewpoints. Of course we all still orbit around the Aikido West dojo.

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

One of my most memorable Aikido experiences was off the mat, using the principles that I had learned to break up a dog fight at a local park. Someone had managed to temporarily separate them only to be severely bitten in the re-engagement. At that point there was a lot of chaos and yelling and one dog had clamped onto the other's ear and refused to let go. I waded into the fracas and put one knee on the dog's

body and the other on the neck. Slowly I transferred weight from my toes to my knees. It's funny what you remember, but at one point I saw these "whale eyes" roll over to take a look at me. I think he was trying to figure out where this weight was coming from and why it was progressively becoming so much more difficult to breath. Then he decided breathing was more important than fighting and released. It wasn't quite over but most of the fight had left the dog. The slow and calm application of pressure seemed to help along with giving the aggressor some time to "come back to this planet" and make the choice of when to call it quits. I also consider myself very lucky to have settled it without further injury but don't recommend this as a training tool. However, I do continue to work at a wide variety of animal shelters and rescue groups every week and always ask for the ones that need the most help