

Featured Senior Instructor, November 2009



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Division 1

I was introduced to Aikido through a friend in the mid 80's. He had a few mats in the basement of his house and would occasionally try to teach some techniques to me and my wife. It wasn't until 1992 that I formally began training with a Ki Society style dojo under the direction of Lance Sensei in Winnipeg. This dojo was affiliated with Imaizumi Shihan of the Shin Budo Kai in New York. We hosted Imaizumi Shihan several times in Winnipeg – an excellent instructor with great stories as he was an uchi deshi of O'Sensei.

In 1999, I decided to change dojos. There aren't many dojos in Winnipeg to choose from and began training with an Aikikai dojo under the direction of Kawahara Shihan. Shortly after I began training there, the current instructor at the time began the process of changing affiliations to Pat Hendricks Sensei and the NCAA. He had a number of reasons for making this change, and I'm definitely grateful that he did as I wouldn't be where I am now.

I assumed responsibility of the dojo in 2004 because the instructor at the time left for work in Eastern Canada. At this point in my Aikido journey,

teaching was not in my short term or long term plans. I became the instructor because I was the most senior student, but I was only shodan at the time. Immediately after assuming responsibility of the dojo, I headed down to Aikido of San Leandro to put my learning into high gear so that I can be a better teacher. Since then, I have been traveling to San Leandro twice a year as uchi deshi.

When I took over as instructor, our dojo was struggling and the student numbers were low. We were sharing a small facility with 7 or 8 other martial art groups and had difficulty getting mat time. I realized that we needed to break free from the way it was being run. I moved us to a new facility; renamed the dojo to the Aikido of Winnipeg; put some money into new tatami and other needs; and then changed the dojo into a not-for-profit group. It only took a few months for us to climb out of the slump and now, 5 years later, we are strong and nearing 40 excellent members.

We have stuck to “adult” members only – with our youngest student at 15 years old. The main reasons for this is because I work full time as an engineer teaching people the Toyota Production System. We train 4 times per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening & Saturday mornings) with 6 different classes (two classes on both Monday and Friday evenings). My favorite class is Saturday morning; we get a good turnout, mostly because we go for bacon & eggs right afterwards.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

The one that stands out most didn't happen in a dojo but at Pat Hendricks Sensei's house. At the end of one of my sessions as uchi deshi, Pat Hendricks Sensei invited me to her house for dinner as a thank you for all my efforts. She was sharing some excellent stories of Saito Sensei and while doing so, served some very good sake that she said was given to her by the Doshu. The cup was a bit hot and while listening intently to the stories I let it slip and sake spilled all over me. All embarrassed, I quickly got up and cleaned the mess. As soon as I was clean, Sensei just poured some more sake in my cup and continued on with her stories. I very much enjoyed both the sake and the stories.