

## **Featured Senior Instructor, November 2008**



**Elaine Yoder**

City Aikido, San Francisco, California  
Division 3

I found aikido in 1977 at a Sport for Every Body conference at Dominican College (now University) in San Rafael. Wendy Palmer, Richard Heckler, and George Leonard co-taught a workshop introducing aikido with a demo and a class. I was looking for something that was as interesting as the dance I had been doing and found I liked the immediacy of training with a partner and the demands of the alignment. Since I lived in Marin at the time I started training at Aikido of Tamalpais right after the conference. Wendy, Richard, and George were my first teachers. Those years at Aikido of Tamalpais were great fun (the dojo was playful....) and I still hold a deep respect for their ability and commitment to the art and their generosity with all of us.

Within about a year I joined the car pools from our dojo to San Francisco to train at the “Turk Street” school (Aikido of San Francisco) with Senseis Robert Nadeau, Frank Doran, and Bill Witt. That was when I recognized Nadeau Sensei as my long-term teacher and began to train more often in San Francisco. The past 30 years have held a lot of ups and downs (sorry) and Nadeau Sensei’s insight, persistence, and humor have been remarkable.

The dojo where Nadeau Sensei teaches is now called City Aikido. We are located on Mission Street between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets in San Francisco. I have been teaching on Wednesday evenings for

about 20 years now (time flies!). The focus of my teaching over the years has been to offer ways to make Nadeau Sensei's teaching more accessible: improving alignment until it is a natural event, clarifying where the line of a technique might travel, accessing power or energy by developing a relationship with true grounding, and recognizing that we can continue to learn if we keep listening.

***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

I really can't name an event that I would consider most memorable. I am just glad we are all here doing this together. The opportunity Nadeau Sensei offers is to be part of a group of students and teachers who are interested in the more elusive and most important aspects of the art; to keep moving toward what O Sensei might have been experiencing. It really is important to keep asking questions about what we are doing and how we can take this art off the mat. My Feldenkrais® practice asks for the same type of essential communication, going toward an ability to move with a functional and pain-free alignment. There are many opportunities in our lives to experience the process of grounding and developing awareness that we play with on the mat.