

Featured Dojo-cho, February 2004



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Sandia Budokan Aikikai, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Division 3

In early 1983, I was at a downtown festival in Albuquerque, NM. I noticed a demonstration where people were throwing each other and rolling around on a mat. It looked dancelike and beautifully flowing. I had done many sports and physical activities in my life but nothing had spoken to me like this. It was Aikido. There were few choices in Albuquerque at that time. I found Sandia Budokan where Lynn Reafsnyder Sensei was the instructor. The group was not affiliated with any organization but shortly after affiliated with Yamate Ryu aikijutsu and Frederick Lovret Sensei.

I enthusiastically trained daily and read everything I could find about aikido. My sister was living in San Francisco at that time. I went to visit in 1984 and having read much about Robert Nadeau Sensei, took his classes. I was amazed at what was going on. I didn't

understand much of what he said but I could see into a lot of what he was doing. I returned 4-5 times a year for many years.

I also continued training in aikijutsu and reached the rank of Oku-sandan but my personal philosophy and way of looking at the world resonated with aikido. I had become close with Nadeau Sensei through the years and after having become the instructor was privileged to affiliate with him and the CAA since the mid 90's.

Sandia Budokan was established in 1980. There are about 20 aikido students ranging in age from late teens to mid-fifties. We have training available 6 days a week. We focus on vigorous training and encourage supportive individual growth. Solid technique flows as inner knowledge flourishes. We seek to embody aikido principles both on the mat and off. Sandia Budokan also has a kenjutsu school and a karate school. We are able to enjoy combined training the last Saturday of each month.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

My most memorable aikido experience continues to grow within me. I had known Nadeau Sensei for many years and had attended many classes. Sometimes I was used as uke. One day toward the end of a class, I was called up to be uke. I looked at him and he said "just attack". I came with a shomen strike, missed him completely, and rolled. After several attacks, he started to whisper in my ear when we would blend, saying things like, "relax your arm" or "connect to me with your center". I felt like I was attacking with full speed and intensity and our interaction was happening in slow motion in an oasis in the middle of the universe. This reinforced the importance of the elements of time, wonder, joy, and patience in my training. For this and many other things, I thank him. Brothers do not have to share blood.