

Featured Dojo-cho, October 2003



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Division 3

I started aikido in October of 1969, during my senior year at UC Santa Cruz. Robert Frager was my first Aikido instructor. During that time he was in very close association with Robert Nadeau, so Nadeau sensei was also a very early and important influence. At the time I was studying shotokan karate. But I had read an article on the "Psychology of the Samurai" in Psychology Today Magazine. It talked a lot about the philosophy of aikido and about Osensei. After having read it I remember wishing that there would be Aikido available to me. Soon after that not only did Frager sensei start the UCSC Aikido club, but I found out it was Frager sensei who had written the magazine article!

I graduated from UCSC and did 2 years in a masters program at UC Davis. During this time Allen Grow, who founded the Oakland Aikido Institute, was my teacher. After finishing up with my masters, I was so sick of school that I decided to go to Japan to study aikido. In April of 1973 I wound up at the Shingu dojo in Wakayama Prefecture. In a period of 5 years, I was 3 years there and 2 years back here. My first stay overlapped with Linda Holiday sensei. We studied under Hikitsuchi sensei, and under the 3 shihan of the school: Anno, Tojima, and Yanase senseis.

In 1976 Nadeau sensei opened Aikido of San Jose. And in 1980 he sold me the dojo. I've been chief instructor ever since, although since 2001 Nadeau sensei has re-joined the dojo, teaching Monday noons and evenings.

My dojo probably has around 50 adult members, although this is way down from pre 9/11. We are currently limping along like the rest of the economy, although the practice is enjoyable and energetic.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

I thought long and hard about my favorite Aikido experience. I thought I might dredge up something from my early years. But instead I chose something very recent. In July of this current year I was invited to co-teach a weekend intensive with Linda Holiday sensei and with Anno sensei. As I grow older, I get more and more satisfaction out of working and creating as part of a team. Collaborating with a dear friend and with one of my earliest teachers and inspirations was an incredible experience. I am reminded of training together after class in Shingu, where Anno sensei would explore and Linda and I would try our best to pick up what he was doing. Linda, of course, is a dear, dear friend. And Anno sensei has always seemed to me to be a very wise older brother, as opposed to a guru or teacher. I hope I was able to convey how special this recent experience was to me.