

Featured Dojo-cho, November 2006



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Division 1

I started out in Aikido in 1984, when I first ended up in the beginners group in the Gothenburg Aikido Club. I was on the lookout for something different after having played European Handball, a rather tough and physical game, for several years. I decided to take up some sort of Martial Art. I choose aikido after having examined several different martial arts. What first struck me as appealing was the fact that there was no competition and still it was quite hard training.

I have always been a fan of Kurosawa and his work and I guess that the feeling of his early Samurai movies was something I could notice in the aikido I found. The clear cut moves, the strength of the techniques and the presence a skilled aikidoka could display felt really like something I wanted to achieve.

In the beginning I had several teachers, apart from Ulf Evenås who was and still is the head instructor of the Gothenburg Aikido Club. Stefan Jönsson was early on one of the teachers who meant a great deal to me. However one of the major influential persons was Per-Erik Olsson, who

later on started Björkstadens Aikido Club. He always maintained a great focus on the practical side of the training and still always put a lot of effort into the kihon practice. I really enjoyed those classes.

After sometime I started to teach at the Gothenburg dojo. I started to regularly teach beginners, intermediate, as well as advanced students. A lot of the time, when there were no classes at the dojo, I, by myself or with Jan Bratt, went over to the dojo for our own practice. This was possible because we had jobs/studies that allowed us to be flexible with our own schedule. Today when I am busy with my own company, the dojo, and not the least family, I understand what a treat and great opportunity that was.

Later on I moved from Gotheburg to Stockholm, in 1988, and started to train directly with Takeij Tomita Sensei. Tomita Sensei was at that time the leading figure for the whole Iwama group in Scandinavia. Of course I had met him in seminars previously but it was a great experience to train for Tomita Sensei on a regular basis. Few teachers I have come across have had such a strong emphasis on Budo as Tomita Sensei.

Later on I went to Iwama for two turns as uchi desihi. In Iwama I met Pat Hendricks Sensei for the first time in 1988.

Seminars:

I have conducted several seminars in Sweden as well hosted many.

When Ulf Evenås started to travel to Russia, I accompanied him with others to St Petersburg.

Soon the Iwama group began developing contacts with interested groups in Lithuania and I have conducted seminars in Villnius.

Recently I was invited to teach at the Memorial Day seminar in San Diego (2006). This was a heart warming experience where I met many open-minded aikidoka.

In Sweden I have been engaged in the Swedish Budo Federation and specifically the Aikido section. I have been acting vice-chairperson and chairperson for several years. I left the position in order to focus on the work with Stockholm Aikido Club. During my time as chairperson, I worked a lot with the All Sweden Seminar, where we gathered teachers from all different styles to teach during the Easter holidays. This was a great opportunity to really get a chance to experience the different flavours of aikido.

Media:

I have written one book about aikido. The book, Aikido Basics, is for the students in Sweden and mainly for students in the beginning of their aikido career. I offer the book for free as a pdf file, downloadable from our web site.

I also host several web sites about aikido. Not to forget, www.aikishuren.net, which is an attempt to give a wide view on traditional aikido over the world.

In 2005 I released a DVD production with an exclusive interview with Saito Sensei. I made the interview in 1998 in Denmark.

My Dojo:

Stockholm Aikido Club Iwama Ryu Aiki Shuren Dojo (www.stockholm-aikido.nu) was founded in May 1994.

When I started the dojo two people were there from the very beginning, Annica Leifsdotter who is not active today, and Massimo Corradini who is still one of our main instructors at the dojo. Today our membership consists of approximately 15 children in the youth group and about 40 adults. We have 8 classes/week and this does not include the free training sessions open to all members on weekends. In the beginning we trained in a gym hall, but early on after 6 months we moved to our own dojo. Today our dojo has a mat area of approximately 100 sqm. My dojo joined the CAA in 2005.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

A section like this is always difficult. Which experience would be the most memorable? Most of the times you do not realize it is going to be a memorable experience, not until afterwards, because you will discover it again later on...

If I really would have to pick a moment, it would be my first trip to Iwama as an uchi deshi. From the start when I was stepping into the dojo area and met Saito Sensei standing outside of the dojo. Where I first felt his presence, totally relaxed and aware. The training that followed for the period was very intense, and focused only on aikido.

Other related things could also be times such as when Hitohiro Saito Sensei took us out on a trip to the seaside and found a fish in the water, and swiftly made us sashimi right there on the beach.

Hosting Pat Hendricks, who is such a wonderful person to have as a guest, is one very good experience. Lots of fun for me personally and also great seminar participation.