

Featured Dojo-cho, January 2003



Richard Strozzi-Heckler

Two Rock Aikido, Petaluma, California
Division 2

I began Aikido in 1972 in Kauai, Hawaii. My first teachers there were Tohei Sensei and Toki Sensei. I traveled across the island on the suggestion of a friend to see what it was about and was immediately hooked. It felt like coming home. From the very beginning it appealed to something very deep and primal in me. A way to be in the world in which one could be inwardly peaceful and outwardly ready for action. A year later I moved to San Francisco and joined Aikido of San Francisco and studied with Doran Sensei and Nadeau Sensei. In 1978 I started studying with Saotome Sensei and have been doing so ever since.

In 1976 I started Tamalpais Aikido with George Leonard and Wendy Palmer in Mill Valley, California. We had classes six days a week, between 75 and 100 students and approximately 20-25 children in the children's class.

In 1987 I opened Two Rock Dojo on my ranch in Petaluma, California. It's a converted barn and we look out over rolling hills, cows, sheep, and horses. Classes are Monday through Thursday 6:00-7:30 and we have approximately 35 to 40 students. A kid's class in the works.

My most Memorable Aikido Experience

Memorable experiences are taking ukemi from my teachers, the camaraderie of training with people who have become life-long

friends, watching Doshu (Kissomaru Ueshiba) walk from his house to the early morning class at Hombu Dojo, using the art to peacefully subdue a ruffian who was harassing Ram Dass at one of his seminars. In addition, I was walking through a parking lot in my home town when a young man snatched an elderly woman's purse. I was nursing a stiff back at the time but I moved in his path and did an irimi nage that stopped him and was able to return the purse.