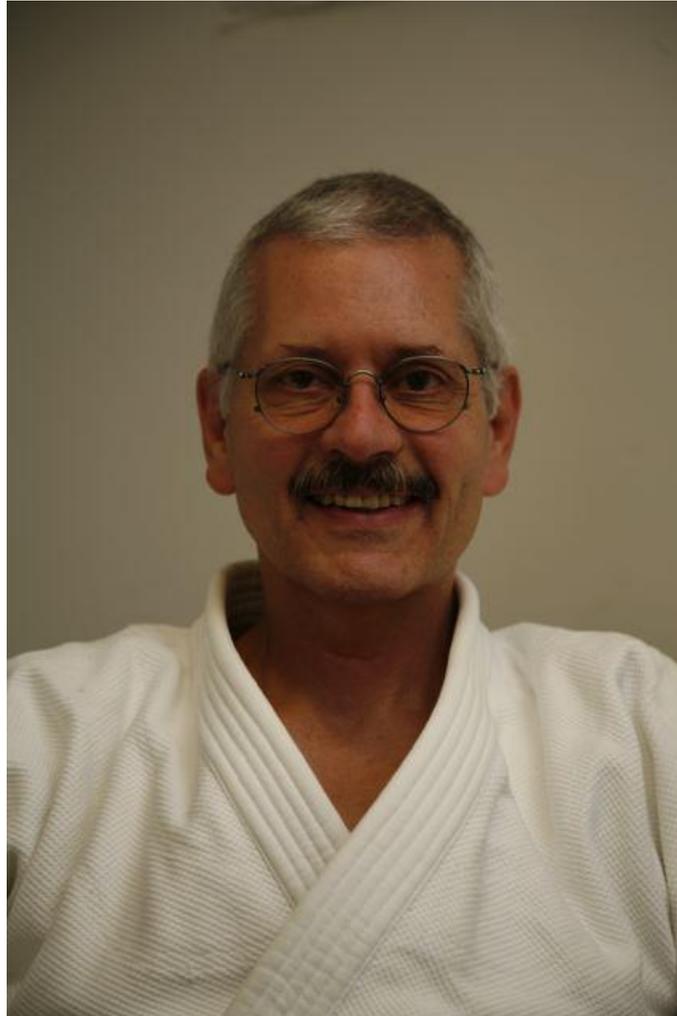


## Featured Dojo-cho, July 2001



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Division 3

On Feb. 26th, 1976 I signed up with Aikido of San Francisco and soon found myself going to the Turk street dojo daily as well as to weekend events and the summer camp. I had been searching for a while for something deeper in my life and after bumming around South America for over a year I hoped to find that in San Francisco. Somehow the word Aikido came up, and then again, and so one evening I stumbled up the long stairs into the dojo to watch a class with Bill Witt. I was impressed by his ability and willingness to tune into me (the unimportant visitor) right away. Bill, Bob and Frank were 4th Dan at that time. To me they were like gods. A few weeks after I had started Aikido, Saito sensei came through. I just watched the class. He was everything my

regular senseis were to the power of ten. Wow! I also took up Tai Chi Chuan with master Choy Kam Man at that time, which I practiced daily for about 12 years. ...Somehow this feels like I'm writing my own obituary. Ah well.

November 1977 I returned to Switzerland as a third kyu and trained at the Zurich Aikikai. I went to summer camps with Tada sensei and, after he arrived in 1978, followed Ikeda Masatomi sensei around Switzerland. 1980 I got Shodan from him. 1981-83 I was back in the Bay Area with my wife Monika. Living in Oakland I went to Bruce's dojo and only made it to the city occasionally to catch Terry Dobson's class. The Nidan exam at Aikido of San Francisco is still very vivid in my memory: Bob, Bill, Frank, Pat, Bruce, Terry and Linda sat on the board and each of them took the time to say something meaningful to me after the test.

My son was born in Oakland. On his first birthday we left California to once again return to Switzerland. November and December of 1983 we spent in Iwama. As a family Saito sensei allowed us to stay in O'Sensei's old house next to the dojo. Since that first visit I have been to Iwama on a number of shorter occasions and still continue to go there. I like the intense training atmosphere at O'Sensei's old dojo.

1984 I built my dojo on the outskirts of Zurich converting an old barn. It opened in the fall of that year. It operated independent of any association and loosely connected to Iwama until 1997 when I closed it due to a number of internal and external problems. About a dozen people reached blackbelt during that time. Three of them are operating their own dojos now; we form a loose group of about 80 adults and 40 kids training ([www.aikidoinstitut.ch](http://www.aikidoinstitut.ch)). Since 1984 I have organized international seminars with Saito sensei and other teachers pretty much on a yearly basis. 1997 I was seriously burnt out and wanted to quit Aikido. After a little over half a year I decided to start training/teaching again as something seemed to be missing in my life without Aikido. Joining the AANC in that moment gave me a feeling of finally coming home.

### ***My most Memorable Aikido Experience***

Oh, most memorable Aikido experience? Getting thrown by Bob, time and again.