

## Featured Dojo-cho, October 2009



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Division 2

I first saw Aikido being practiced in 1981 while living in Calgary, Alberta. At the time, I was deeply involved in competitive Judo. We had just finished an afternoon training session at a local college and on the way back to the locker room I noticed a large group training a martial Art in a multi-purpose room. I stopped and watched for several minutes in amazement at how easily the Sensei would dispatch the uke. I would likely have stayed to talk to the Sensei that day if I had not been dragged away by friends who were in a hurry to get home. I never forgot this moment though and several years later, I would transition to Aikido

I started my Aikido training at a Tenshinkai dojo in Edmonton, Alberta in the early 1990's. I was fortunate to train for several years at this dojo with a group of senior students who had a fantastic work ethic and dedication to the art. They would willingly share all that their knowledge and pushed me to train hard at every practice. Although most of us have all moved on to separate paths, I remain close friends with most of this core group of people.

I believe my biggest eye opening experience in Aikido came in '98 – '99 when I spent the better part of a year working in Salt Lake City. There I met Hugh Young who generously worked with me during that time. He taught many subtle nuances in my

technique that assisted me immensely in my growth as an Aikidoist. It was also during this time when I first attended a Doran Sensei seminar. The comfortable style of his teaching made for a wonderful training environment. Equally, the ease and grace with which he moved was truly inspirational and continues to be to this day.

In 2003, Northern Alberta Aikido was founded as a non-profit dojo with the philosophy that we make Aikido as affordable as possible to all. We started in a small training space above a plywood supply store that was extremely hot in the summer and bitter cold in the winter but it did not matter as everyone was happy to be on the mats training together. We have since moved to a better training space and are still a relatively small dojo but we are definitely a tight knit group.

My introduction to the CAA came through an old friend from my Salt Lake City training days. Rick Berardini encouraged me to come to California with him for some training and while there I was introduced to some great Aikido and even greater people. Sometime later, Northern Alberta Aikido became a division 2 dojo under Doran Sensei. During this time I found a great friend and mentor in Cyndy Hayashi who has helped me personally to grow as an Aikidoist and a dojo cho. She has also left an indelible mark on everyone in Edmonton who has attended her seminars here over the last three years.

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

As for my best Aikido memories, I will always treasure my time spent training with all the wonderful people in Salt Lake City. Further to that, my first CAA summer camp was an inspiring experience that offered great training and fellowship. But honestly, my best memories are made year after year at our dojo. From the day to day training, to our Annual Golf Tournament, to the Christmas party and the Annual Hockey Day in Canada road hockey game. I could not be blessed with a better group to be around.

It is my goal to continue to bridge the gap in the Aikido community in Edmonton and to teach my students to do the same.