

## Featured Dojocho, January 2017



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I've started learning Aikido in 2004 in my hometown in Lithuania (Middle Europe) when I was 14. I was interested in samurai and Eastern philosophy and a friend of mine invited me to try Aikido. I fell in Love with it ever since. Later I've got introduced to O'Sensei's teachings and they really reflected what I was inspired about thus I've dedicating myself to Aikido practice. Soon Aikido became more important than school and university thus I've decided to become Uchi-Deshi as soon as I finish high school. This was when I've met my greatest influence in Aikido, Patrick Cassidy Sensei. I've spent 2,5 years with him as Uchi-Deshi and then finally made my long term dream-goal come true by opening a Dojo next to my home town in 2012.

I've started my Dojo when I was just 22 years old and did it professionally ever since. The Dojo opened up many doors including teaching seminars to corporations, schools and other institutions. Right now we are running two Dojo's together with my wife, teaching Aikido, Yoga and meditation, also facilitating a full time Uchi-Deshi program. While running the Dojo for me

the most important part is to make it real and practical. And by real I mean that the skills people would learn in Dojo could be applied to their everyday Life. How do you deal with many problems at the same time, as you deal with many attackers in a randori? How do you maintain stability when Life pushes you same way as an Uke pushes your shoulder. There are so many layers and parallels and I feel that the community really appreciates this part.

Introducing Aikido's perspective and abilities to people's lives is one of my main passions which has led to many various projects. I am doing stress relief seminars to schools, public institutions and other places, based on Aikido principles. I share how Aikido works in negotiations and teams with business people. Aikido can be such a huge inspiration to people for all ages. One more door Aikido opened a year ago is YouTube. I've discovered that YouTube is a great tool to share. When you say something to your students, you will have to repeat again when you meet other people. Yet in YouTube, what you share stays there for long. Right now I am leading a YouTube channel called "AikidoSiauliai" (Siauliai - city where I live) which introduces Aikido related topics, tutorials and some other martial art material.

## **My most memorable Aikido experience**

During this time there were so many memorable Aikido experiences... From time when Aikido approach helped defuse a direct "Now we will beat you up" decision of some drunk guys, to times where you would see the fire in people's eyes glittering after they realize how much their life can change... I will quickly share three steps on a same line that can be named as a single most memorable experience:

I was running a Dojo for six months and I started realizing that my goal shifted from fulfilling my Vision to making sure people receive what they want. Yet as Henry Ford said, people don't always know their desires until you show it to them. Leading by this and a conversation I had with Patrick Cassidy Sensei, I've announced a summer camp where we will go "deep" for three days of Aikido. Having many fears of losing students after I share fully what I am inspired about and I see as most important in Aikido and not 'honoring' some of my students official 'desires' of more self-defense, techniques and etc., I still decide to go full ahead and let it all be expressed in a row of Aikido sessions during the weekend. After it, the fire in their eyes was undeniable. Months after months everyone later spoke about the seminar as one of most memorable and life changing experiences of their lives. Then I realized, I should never make it all about the surface. We all need to Trust our Hearts and let them express themselves. Of course, later I realized how to honor some basic requests such as self-defense, techniques, etc. too, but this experience of the seminar is with me ever since.