

Aikido Biography of Bernice Tom Sensei, Sixth Dan

"In the spring of 1974 I was attending the University of California at Berkeley when a friend excitedly told me about the Aikido dojo in our neighborhood. After seeing Aikido I was intrigued by it's philosophy and physical movements so I began immediately at the Aikido Institute of Oakland, California, first with Alan Grow Sensei and then with Bruce Klickstein Sensei. In the fall of 1974, I saw Morihiro Saito Sensei teach at the Aikido Institute. The following spring, Bruce Klickstein Sensei, myself, and 3 other students made a month sojourn to Iwama, Japan, to study with Saito Sensei. He welcomed us with a kindness and compassion that I would never forget.

Five years later, in 1980, I moved to Iwama, where for the next three and a half years I studied with Saito Sensei. The year before my return to the U.S. in 1985, I made a brief trip to China to study acupuncture. I moved to San Diego to continue my study of acupuncture. I was welcomed by Wes Leavens Sensei whom I had met while in Iwama, Japan and who at that time was the dojo-cho of Sunset Cliffs Aikido. After his departure from the dojo in 1987, I took over the teaching duties and became dojo-cho in 1990.

Sunset Cliffs Aikido conducts classes daily, including mornings and evenings - 19 classes a week. We focus on weapons training as a fundamental part of Aikido. From day one, students learn weapons techniques with tai jitsu as an integrated study. We also have a live-in student program that has been enjoyed by students throughout the world."



Brief training history:

Began Aikido in February 1974 at Oakland Aikido Institute. Met Saito Morihiro Sensei in October 1974 at the Oakland Aikido Institute. Went to Japan first time in March 1975. Went second time to Japan in July 1977 and received Shodan. Trained in Oakland with Bruce Klickstein Sensei and Bill Witt Sensei, and occasionally with Frank Doran Sensei in San Francisco. Received Nidan in 1979 from Aikido Association of Northern California. Moved to Japan 1980–85. Received Sandan from Saito Sensei in 1982. Moved to San Diego 1985. Began teaching at Sunset Cliffs Aikido in August 1985. Received Yondan from Saito Sensei in 1988. In September 1988 took a group of 23 American aikido students to Iwama Japan for one month stay. Became sole proprietor of Sunset Cliffs Aikido dojo in 1990. Received Godan from Saito Sensei in 1992. Received Rokkudan from Saito Sensei in 1998. Hosted Saito Morihiro Sensei at Sunset Cliffs Aikido every year from 1988 to 1994. Continued to travel to Iwama, Japan, staying approximately one month, total of 7 trips from 1988 to 2002. Teaches classes daily, adults and children, at Sunset Cliffs Aikido.