

## **AIKIDO FOR LIFE**

**There are as many reasons for starting on the path of AIKIDO as there are bare feet on the mat. Conversely there are as many reasons to stop, or change Course. When I began to study AIKIDO, one of the Aikidoka told me, “Once you get over the pain everything will be good.” I learned this was true. And now I suggest that much of what ails you finds a kind of healing on the mat. One does face the things like a sore wrist, foot, elbow, shoulder. Lets face it. You have it, it has hurt at some time. This said, you still keep training. Some hurts show up, and some go away. So there must be something else that keeps you on the path. Assuming the absence of some masochistic behavior, we come in and train through pain. There is a kind of enjoyment associated with physical effort, endorphins and all, but I don’t think that’s what keeps the Aikidoist training. There is something more.**

**One finds that week in and month out, year after year, there is achievement. 3rd kyu, 1st kyu, Shodan, that first high fall for all to see, the time a randori felt fantastic to you alone. I say we all have seen someone at a seminar after a long time and had that, “Good to see you are still training” acknowledgment. Achievement is great, but we all know that it is the ego that calls for acknowledgment. I was told once that the reason that we don’t change belt colors, and stay with white and then black, covered by a hakama, is to help keep the ego in check. The shodan to shihan all look the same, as did kyu ranks. I am reminded of the founder of a Judo ryu, on his deathbed, who requested to be buried with his white belt, because he felt he was now a beginner in the next life. Sounds like a well-checked ego to me. So, if the ego is checked there must be something else keeping the fires burning that makes us go on.**

**Motivation can come from many places. We all find them in one form or another. The mind is funny that way. Give me something, and I will do with it my best. You can also find by looking outside of yourself that you get enjoyment from seeing another succeed. Seeing a wide-eyed kid with two left feet and a vision, come in to the Dojo to learn and soon is soaring in their abilities, makes me feel so good. I see in others the things given to me passed on to another, and then passed to yet another. How cool is that. Seeing that chain gives certain solidity to the universe. I love that stuff. Don't you? Work, family, community, etc. all have their input on the ability to keep training, yet one finds that as much as they all have their effects on you, training has as much an effect on them, by changing your way of being with all that comes into your presence. Things go well, then things go, let's just say, not as well. Like I need to do something other than train that day, or that week, till summer, when my injury gets better. I need not go on here with the excuse list. So how do you keep training in the face of these adversities? I feel one finds a way to keep the balance of priorities in favor of "I will train" over "I will not train."**

**"Aikido for life" is just a creation I use to let me know what I decided I want my life to look like. I once said, "This is my Dojo." I was not even signed up yet. I knew then, if this is what I am going to do, this is the place. Then, "Pain is temporary," as I began to swim in the waters of Aikido. I once said, "Aikido is not a race," to remind me that my Aikido is just that, my Aikido. And not when I test or who tests before me. "Aikido for life" now keeps me centered in my life. Whatever I do with this life, I like to know that my dojo is sound, the people there are well, and the energy somehow**

**propels me. Someone said that when you train, you see on the mat the same things you see outside. Or, “No matter where you go, there you are.” So you train. You sleep and you train. Eat, play, fight, and you train. You help out and you train. You love, hate, think, and you train. An old man once said, “Train every day.” That is quite a goal and it worked for him. “Aikido for life” works in the same way. Looking back over the common experiences on this path, from moving through pain, doubt I can possibly get through a 1st kyu test, frustration, how do you fold this thing, judgement, that guy bothers me when he does that, joy, I am so happy to see you again. It’s all there to stop you, or keep you on the path, so you have to decide. Deal or No Deal. Just kidding. There is only one way to keep training. Decide to keep training. In my words, AIKIDO FOR LIFE.**

**Kenneth ‘Skip’ Konen  
Sunset Cliffs Aikido  
Nidan  
January 26, 2008**