

I love Aikido.

I moved to San Diego to be closer to my daughter. When I moved here, I didn't know anyone else besides my daughter. I had wanted to study Aikido, so I went to visit Sunset Cliffs Aikido. When I came to the dojo, I learned about the uchi deshi program. I decided that rather than watching television at home, I would rather study Aikido, so I asked Sensei if I could move in as an uchi deshi. She agreed, and I moved in 2 weeks later. That was more than 5 years ago.

Over the past 5 years, I have studied Aikido under Sensei's direction. When I first started classes, I felt clumsy and awkward. I was too stiff. I couldn't remember where to put my feet. I didn't know the difference between *Irimi* and *Tenkan*. In fact, I couldn't remember any of the Japanese names for the attacks or techniques. Sensei and the other students were patient, however, and kept encouraging me.

Instead of worrying about my difficulties, I just persevered. I figured that if I kept coming to class, eventually some of the stuff Sensei and the advanced students were showing me would rub off. And slowly it did. At first it was work - much like going to the gym. But that slowly changed. One day, it suddenly occurred to me - "This Aikido stuff is fun!" Ever since then, I look forward to going to class every day.

I look forward to seeing the friends I have made through Aikido. I look forward to meeting new people, and watching them improve. I look forward to learning something new. It amazes me that there is always something new to learn about Aikido - it never grows old or stale.

When I started getting ready for tests, I met with a more senior student to help me prepare. At each level I was surprised to learn that there was more to the techniques than I already knew. When I prepared for 3d *kyu*, I thought I already knew how to do *Ikkyu*, but I was to learn that there were details that I had somehow overlooked. As I advanced, and prepared for other tests, I found that there was always more to learn. "This is great!" I thought. It was a gift that never ended.

My Aikido training is just beginning. I look forward to the future, knowing that there is no end to what Aikido has to offer. I am grateful for the effort Sensei has put into teaching me; every instruction she gives me helps me move forward on my Aikido journey. I am grateful for the selfless effort so many of my friends have made to help me improve. Behind every test that we watch, there are many people who have helped each student prepare for that test. I owe all the people who have helped me along the way a deep debt of gratitude. Thank you to all of you. Working with you has been the most important part of the journey.

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