

Aikido Essay Ralph Stenzel

Oktober 2023

I wish i could say that Aikido was love at first sight for me, but the truth is that my wife and i simply wanted to do some kind of sport together. We came to the conclusion that learning some self defense techniques would be fascinating and useful. So we searched for a Karate dojo near to where we lived.



Fortunately we could not find the right place for the trial training and only found some old guys playing Ping Pong in a school gym. Some times i think back and imagine if we would have found the Karate dojo on that particular day, i would now smash wooden boards and bricks with my bare hands. But instead my wife found an Aikido dojo just around the corner and talked me into giving it a try.

So we went to our first training at the O Sen Kan Dojo. I remember entering the old gym the first time, the smell, the old wooden pillars and opening the door to the changing room. There was this ordinary looking guy named Jürgen, who gave me a friendly welcome. He asked some questions and explained me the procedure of the training session. I had no idea what kind of power this man could create on the mat and how many students he welcomed before me and how many never came again after a shorter or longer period of time. Nevertheless he seemed optimistic and positive.

The first Training was weird. Doing all this unnatural feeling movements and repetitive falling to the floor in a jogging suit. But i liked that there was not much talking and it felt like everyone was training seriously. My wife and i got to sweat and so we decided to come again and try it out for at least a year.

More than seven years later i am still rolling over the mat and sweating like hell. Found friendship on and off the mat. Still confused on how to make some techniques work but i see a big change in my behavior off and on the mat. I am more in balance and aware of my surroundings so I can recognize the intentions of other people early and react in time to avoid confrontations no matter if they are verbally or physically.

Sensei Jürgen never showed a big ego in all this years. Although there are only a few who have mastered an art to this degree. I respect that a lot. For the future i hope that he teaches on for many years to come until he looks like Osensei itself. I for myself hope to learn many more aspects of this beautiful Art in the years to come and carry lots of aspects and values over to my everyday life. Because in the dojo on the mat its still training after all but in our everyday life the real fights will happen.

Sensei often says we need to empty ourselves before we start a class in order to get the most out of it and this reminds me of something very powerful that Charles Du Bos said:

“The most important thing is to be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.”

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Aikikai Dornbirn