

Featured Senior Instructor, November 2019



Steve Patek

River City Aikido, Sacramento, California
Division 2

My martial arts journey began in college in 1974 when I joined a Tong Soo Do club at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. The Club was primarily a group of black students from Sacramento who had trained with a sensei in Sacramento. I spent a school year training with them. That year also happened to coincide with my body finally starting to grow out instead of just up. I learned a lot and knew that I wanted to continue in the martial arts. It also was clear that in a striking art like Tong Soo Do speed and strength did make a difference and that after sparring you are going to be bruised and sore the next day. I had to ask myself, "am I going to still want to be doing this when I'm really old, like 45?"

My last quarter I discovered a new Aikido Club being led by a brown belt from Santa Barbara. This was more like it. After graduation, I got a job in Arcata as Assistant Planner. After getting settled in I found a small aikido dojo in Arcata led by a black belt named Michael Batcholer. He was affiliated with a sensei in Eureka, Richard Kaaholi. I

trained with Michael for four years and was awarded my black belt from Richard about the time Michael decided to focus on Tai Chi.

Shortly thereafter, Tom Read returned from Japan to open Northcoast Aikido. I trained with Northcoast Aikido through the 80s. It was an amazing group, a bunch of 20 something year old newly minted Shodans. Mostly 6 foot plus, 200 pound plus guys, Johnny, Doug, Russell, Hal, Carl, Daryl, Forrest (not everybody was over 6 feet). We knew almost everything there was to know about aikido. Strangely, every decade I have trained I know less of what there is to know about aikido. Job responsibilities and night college courses limited my ability to train in the late 1980s.

In 1990, I accepted a position in West Sacramento and left Arcata. After a year I felt the desire to get back to training. I found River City Aikido under Hershel Roby. In time Hershel retired and Brian King became dojo cho. Eventually, Brian retired and in 2010 I became dojo cho.

River City Aikido has been in Sacramento for 40 years since its founding by Mark Bartoch. We have been affiliated with Frank Doran and now Michael Friedl going back to the Northern California Aikido days.

There have been strong times and times of struggle but we have adapted and maintained. We are currently somewhat unusual in that our principal instructors are myself, from the Frank Doran lineage, Wayne Wallace, who began at River City and later spent 5 years at Iwama studying, and recently Jaime Calderon, a senior student of Steven Seagal. It makes for some interesting classes.

My Most Memorable Aikido Experience

My most memorable moments in aikido mostly tie back to the Summer Northern California retreat. Going back to San Rafael, Atherton, Quincy and now Tahoe City I have never failed to be challenged and inspired by the aikido and the friendships. I particularly remember the first several years of attending Sensei Ikeda's sessions and going what that hell is he talking about.