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Aikido I
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Aikido I - ePortfolio Submission

Martial Arts has been a part of my life for well over 20 years. I remember growing up and watching classic Bruce Lee movies with my father; such great flicks as 'The Big Boss,' 'Fist of Fury,' and of course 'Enter the Dragon.' I wanted to be Bruce Lee, I wanted to be fit and agile, and of course I wanted to become an exceptional martial artist. So began my journey into the world of Martial Arts.

When it came to deciding the type of art I wanted to study, I have always felt like an open book. I first began with the American martial art of Kajukenbo Karate. I fondly remember attempting to do the splits and having 'assistance' from my Sensei; I have been able to practically perform the front splits ever since. The next, and most influential, form of art I began to enjoy is Chinese Kempo. Kempo and Karate share similar philosophies and yet can be identified as two very different art forms.

I have always been intrigued by the versatile styles of Martial Arts available to those who wish to learn a fantastic skill set. Kempo and Karate, in my opinion, are a very hard and at times very rigid martial art. I was interested in exploring an art that would allow me to experience the softer and more peaceful side of martial arts. I had really no idea where to begin. Looking through the Salt Lake Community College course catalog I came across the Aikido I entry and performed a little bit of research. The first thing I did was locate the definition of Aikido; "The meaning of Aikido is Ai = Harmony, Ki = the spirit, or source of energy and Do meaning the way." From this definition alone I knew that I had to experience Aikido for myself.

I attended the first class and was very satisfied to see our instructor, Jonathan M. Kroupa, dressed in a formal Aikido training uniform; an Aikidogi. We pieced together our mish mash of colored training mats, lined up facing our new Sensei, and was instructed on the formal greeting used to open our Aikido training; I was instantly hooked.

Every class began in the same fashion; lined up side by side, facing our instructor, and performing the opening greeting. Warm-ups followed the daily instruction. I felt that the flow of class was crisp and continuous. Our instructor would perform the daily technique and then allow us to practice these techniques on our chosen partners. I felt that the way Sensei Kroupa conducted class was indicative of a great learning environment. In Aikido, it is very important for students to practice their observational skills simply because the instructor may not show all of the nuances and tricks of the demonstrated techniques. Sensei Kroupa mentioned this to the class on several occasions and performed his instruction with that very idea in mind. For that I am very appreciative. I felt that Sensei Kroupa taught just like he learned as a student, just like his instructor was taught before him; this exemplified the tradition and life of Aikido.

I have really enjoyed the time spent in Aikido. I truly feel that all martial artists should at some point incorporate multiple styles and techniques into their martial dictionary. I was very impressed with the soft and peaceful techniques that turned out to be very effective and forceful when performed properly. I will most definitely consider continuing Aikido training in the future.

This class was everything I expected. The only difference I can make from other martial arts training would be the inclusion of a training uniform. A formal martial art class will require a uniform while a uniform for this particular learning experience would not be a practical requirement. There were elements of formality and respect that this Aikido class demanded. I

feel that had this class been taught outside the SLCC LAC, it would have still been the same learning environment that has been expressed to us by Sensei Kroupa.

In conclusion I would like to thank Sensei Kroupa for sharing his time and experience with the class. Aikido is a wealth of knowledge that I hope one day to further explore. It is in my opinion that all serious martial art students take time to supplement their training by taking the time to explore Aikido.