



Kimori Dojo My Second Home

I came to Japan three years ago on a scholarship to study Japanese at a university in Kyoto. Kyoto is a great city, I think it is very similar to Christchurch in many ways and I still enjoy going back there occasionally to visit friends. The year I spent in Kyoto passed very quickly, time flies when you are drinking constantly, working when you are supposed to be in class and hanging out with friends when you should be studying. I can't understand why but for some reason my Japanese did not improve at all that year. Anyway the weekends were what I really looked forward to while living there. I would get up on a Friday morning and work at the dormitory's cafeteria from 6am. I would finish around 10am then happily pack my bags and head to town to catch a bus from Kyoto to Nagoya (all the while my poor teachers were wondering where I was). I would spend the weekend training and drinking with the Sensei and members of Kimori Dojo. Great!

Then it was time to finish up at Uni (although I never really started) and move to Nagoya. I moved a couple of weeks early so I could meet up with Simon Puffet who was in Japan for a short period of time. The training was great....until I got myself nailed by one of



Sawada Shihan & Aaron McConnell



Aaron McConnell Sensei - Kimori Dojo

Sawada Sensei's Ikkyos! Remember that Simon?? I watch the video every once and a while and it still makes me cringe.

That year, the second year was really tough. I had come to Japan with the intention of training and learning as much of Kimori Dojo's Aikido as I possibly could in one year. Unfortunately I found myself working at least 12 hours a day 7 days a week (well, I only worked 6 hours on a Sunday, my day off). I was building foundations for houses, doing a lot of the grunt work. As you can expect, this affected my training quite seriously. I was always late or missing classes completely, and became very stiff. I was also diagnosed with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (the doctors here are way too eager to operate, scary!). I continued that job for around 9 months but then gradually started replacing it with odd English teaching jobs here and there. I was also lucky enough to have Sawada Sensei offer me various kinds of work at his company.



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My second year here in Japan finished up and I started out my third year with a trip back home. I had a great time in New Zealand when I visited with Sawada Sensei in March last year. Catching up with family and friends and seeing how everyone's Aikido had developed. I especially liked reacquainting myself with good coffee and pies! After I came back to Japan I started a couple of new Jobs. One was teaching at a private English school, and the other working at a kindergarten. I love kids and working at the kindergarten was a dream come true compared to the construction work I had been doing. With the new jobs I had more energy, regained my flexibility and got back into serious training.

So now I find myself entering into my fourth year here in Japan. It doesn't really seem like that long. Nothing much has changed, my grasp of the Japanese language still resembles my grasp on Aikido, I am always totally confused and messing everything up. The only noticeable difference I am aware of since coming here is the stiffness in my joints and the concerning amount of grey hairs that seem to be appearing, I hope I am just imagining those.

In the three years I have been here things have been very up and down, but one constant thing, one of the best things about living and training at Kimori Dojo is the absolute pleasure I get when friends (old and new) from abroad come to stay and train. There is nothing like sitting down after training, having a few beers and talking in English (sometimes in a Kiwi accent, yeah! Sometimes in that incomprehensible American accent, Cheers Neil! And I can never seem to get my head around the way Canadians speak aye!).

So if you ever get the chance to come to Japan, please put a few days aside to come and train here at Kimori Dojo. It makes my 2nd home feel like home. NZ will always be home but while I am here, at my second home its wonderful to hear the good old kiwi accent.

by Aaron McConnell - 13/03/2008



Aaron McConnell during taijutsu class at Kimori Dojo



Weapons Seminar February 2008