



## Aikido Northampton



### Start The Dance – By Doug Watson

It was about 7 years ago when I first looked at Martial arts. I went along with a friend because he had not stopped raving about it. I did that art for about six months and although I enjoyed the sport itself I found the aggression and confrontation did not really suit my character. Over the months my visits to the dojo became less and less frequent until eventually I never went back.

I made a promise to myself that I would return to Martial arts if I could find one that suited me better. For seven years I made this promise. For seven years I did nothing.

I sat at home one Saturday desperately trying to find a video I had not seen from our collection when I came across a film called Marked for Death. I decided it would do to waste away the hours and plopped it reluctantly into the VCR. For the next 2 hours I found myself feverishly playing with the remote. Stopping the video, rewinding, playing in slow motion. Totally transfixed by Steven Segal barely moving and yet having such devastating effect. It looked so beautiful, almost balletic in its motions, like a dance across my screen. I knew then I had found the Martial art I wished to study.

I first had to discover what Martial art it was, once that little problem was out of the way I spent the next few weeks researching what I could about this art they called Aikido.

After weeks of missed sessions and confusion, Steve our new Sensei invited us along to a Saturday seminar, a whole ten hours as an introduction to Aikido. Myself and my friends were the only complete beginners that day.

I felt once again like a child struggling to walk. It had all looked so easy sat at the edge of the mat, people young and old, slim and not so slim gliding effortlessly around the dojo floor. Subtle movements of a hand landing an opponent ruthlessly on the ground. Yet when I tried, even the simplest of moves was difficult beyond comprehension. How to stand, how to move, blending with your opponent, which way to rotate the wrist and at what angle. Feeling foolish as you are shown for the sixth time how to move and still not being able to. Being taught how to roll safely and still managing to find every corner God had the good grace to give my now battered and bruised body.

As beginners we managed about eight hours of the full ten. Everybody had been thoroughly impressed with us, surprised that we had lasted the morning let alone ninety percent of the day. The next morning I woke up and could hardly move, every muscle and sinew ached with godlike wrath. My wrists felt as if I had used them knock down telegraph poles. I was a mess, but inside me something had been born. I had seen things the previous day I had never thought possible. Learned things I had never even considered and found a strength within myself I did not know existed. I was content at last as I knew this was where I belonged.

It is six months on, I have made lots of good friends to train with and in my Sensei, a guide with infinite patience and understanding. I still find things difficult and make frequent mistakes and my moves are not perfect. I still cannot glide across the mat like the people I saw that day, but I no longer feel like an ugly duckling struggling to swim. I can impress my non-Aikido friends with feats of seemingly incredible strength and control. Of course they are simply secrets revealed to me about how my body works, and how other peoples work and the link between the two. That was the biggest challenge, destroying instinctive reactions and



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reflexes that only held me back. That I have now done, and pride flows freely when I think of what I am able to do now that sixth months ago I would have thought impossible. Oh and there is one more thing; I can leap, landing six feet from where my feet left the floor, hit the mat in a perfect roll and come up facing my opponent ready for his next onslaught, and that to me is a miracle.

Let the Dance begin.