

Uchideshi Florencia Fridman



The question: why did you started practicing Aikido?, came up several times during Uchideshi. I precisely choose the expression “came up”, because I did not had to face it before.

I started practicing Aikido 10 years ago, in a small town 20kms away from the capital city of Uruguay. It was one of those towns where nothing ever happens, but, if you step out these common places and scratch the surface a little, everything is happening.

A path, a long wooden hallway, lighted in the sides and surrounded by stones. At the end, a blank space, an altar. I came in, took my shoes off, went carefully across the hallway and sat down to observe in silence. From that moment on, I could not be away from Aikido.

I would realize years later, that at the time I was in luck (even though I don't believe in such thing), of encountering my Sensei, for whom I will be forever grateful. This Sensei and his teachings molded my life, helped me to be patient and tempered, to wait and to act. To find the right timing. One of the many things I value the most among his teachings, it is to learn to be passionate. I have never met someone with such passion and devotion. And this feeling can be so contagious that in time around him a great community emerged, a diverse and complex family, joined together by a shared passion. Each one of us, the Rioplatense family, Aikido lovers.



My Sensei told us stories while sharing tea. Stories about his practice, his teachers, his travels to Japan. 10 years ago, I learned that Aikido Kobayashi Dojo hosted Uchideshi, a live in training program completely dedicated to Aikido, from that moment on, I knew I was coming to Japan.

I was an Uchideshi in Aikido Kobayashi Dojo for 10 weeks. Each one of the different from the one before. What at first was magic, transformed to real. A hard reality. Despite of it all, the level of exhaustion both physical and mental, the capacity of discover new and profound grades of pain and frustration every weak, can not be compared with the quality and quantity of learning of this experience.





I am beyond grateful to Aikido Kobayashi Dojo, to Soshihan Yasuo Kobayashi, from whom I had the honor of taking classes, making of his dojo my home and discovering an extraordinary feeling of shared joy in practice; with the Dojocho, Hiroaki Kobayashi Sensei, for whom I have great admiration and whose Aikido amazes me every

practice; and with all instructors in charge.

I also extend my thanks to each of the practitioners, being in an unknown place, with such physical and mental demands, it is possible be vulnerable. Each of them made the only moments of real enjoyment occur during practice. Their patience, their kindness and willingness, gave strength to move forward.



The uchideshi experience is simple, and with simple I don't mean easy. The uchideshi experience, as I said before, is hard and tough. But simple.

In my case, I tried to pay attention, to listen, to know how to ask and not be afraid. Smile and remember the gratitude of being able to invest time in doing what I love.

Paying attention is key in this experience, that's how I learned "If you lose the center, you lose everything", as Kasahara Sensei commented while showing me how to fold his Hakama; or the infinite number of times I was told to relax, expanded by senpai Norikosan and her comment "If you do not relax, you will get hurt", among hundreds of passing remarks that I repeated as mantras in difficult times.

Closing, I share some conclusion, or brief part of my learnings in this experience: the Shodan test is a small step in a long way; when in doubt, always ask myself if I am doing my best; if I treat people with love and respect, I will get the same in return; we are all passing through, I am not that important.

10 years ago I started practicing Aikido, I don't know why. But if I know why I stayed and why I will continue. Each experience, each person is unique. My word of this experience is "縁"(en) in that I do believe.

