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Although he stayed only two weeks as an uchideshi, it seems that his uchideshi experience affected him much. It has been more than twenty years since Mr. Yoon of Korea met aikido for the first time. We now find development in the young generation---the future.

My Visit to Aikido Kobayashi Dojo Kim Johan

It all began by the words of my aikido teacher in Korea, Yoon sensei, “Come back alive.” He said that with a smile, and now that I am at the end of my uchideshi experience period, I realized the meaning of his smile: my stay in Japan as an uchideshi was full of interesting experiences.

I would like to share some of those experiences with you here.

First of all, I must tell you about Kobayashi Sensei. Yoon Sensei told a lot about Kobayashi sensei to me, and I was hoping to learn many things from him. In his 70's, he can be considered as an elderly person. Yet, he is still full of energy and takes uke during practice. He makes lessons very enjoyable for everyone who is taking part of his class. His commitment to his class made me respect him very much. During practice, I was astonished not only by the quality of his technique (of which there is no doubt), but also by his constant loving smile and generous nature towards everyone including uchideshi. I could feel that these attributions come from long years of experience as an aikido instructor. It seems that everyone in his class was united as a family when he was present.

Secondly, I would like to tell you something about kid's class. This was my first experience of teaching Aikido to children because we don't have a kid's class in Korea. The kids learn variations of the techniques taught in adults' class interspersed with a lot of games designed to increase their co-ordination and develop their fitness. It seems that both children and adults have fun learning Aikido in Kobayashi Dojo.

I was also very struck by the number of females practicing Aikido, because in Korea, there are very few women practicing aikido. I felt very envious of the atmosphere where there are many women, such as female



member of Meiji University aikido club, who practice aikido with such enthusiasm and dedication as men do.

I was very sad to leave after two weeks as my body had just about to adjust to the routine. Dojo life wasn't too difficult to adapt to because I'd worked as uchideshi before in Korea, and I was able to share all the chores with my fellow uchideshi Bjorn and Lars. I enjoyed their company even though communication was difficult because I'm not fluent in English.

I don't speak any Japanese either, and this was a real frustration. I got two hamburgers at Moss Burger when I thought I'd ordered something else! Buying food at the supermarket for Friday morning breakfast was a very difficult experience. After aikido practice, it was very frustrating not being able to respond to Dojo members' questions and conversation and that is my major regret.

Finally, I was very happy to meet Obayashi San (who is very popular in Korea!), and eat delicious Japanese food everyday with other uchideshis. I ate natto for the first time and really enjoyed it.

I want to come back to Japan to stay in the dojo and I'm going to learn some Japanese so I can speak to more people!

I can't thank Kobayashi Sensei and Hiroaki Sensei enough for their hospitality and for making me feel so welcomed.

