

## Two Unique Months as an Uchideshi Silja Kervinen



Before leaving for two months to Kobayashi dojo I was warned by various people and in various occasions of the tough time awaiting me there as an uchideshi. However I had made my mind to go and see myself what was awaiting me. Besides I was curious to find out whether the warnings had any base in reality or whether they were hearsay and rumours that had on their way had grown out of proportion.

After the two months I can say that being an uchideshi is indeed tough at times with tightly scheduled, disciplined training and cleaning and therein between little time for oneself. But although toughness is the most well known side of being an uchidshi, it is only one side of it. The other side is that uchideshis welcomed as members of the dojo community and at the best of times almost as members of family. I was invited to share meals with my senseis and their families, to participate with them in tea seremonies and calligraphy classes and to visit with them onsens, Japanese baths, which turned out to be the most pleasant places to spend time outside the tatami.

What I was most impressed by both at the dojo as well as in Japan in general is the incredible kindness and helpfulness of the people. In comparison to many Western societies, where people have grown up to think of what they can do for themselves, in the Japanese society people are brought up to think of what they can do for others. Staying in Japan without knowing more than a couple of dozens words of Japanese makes many things more complicated than they would otherwise be. Yet every time I was in need of any help I could count on finding someone, either a friend or any passer-by, to offer me all the help me I needed and often even more help than I would have needed or expected.



What was the most unique part of being an uchideshi is that it gave an inside view to the dojo community as well as to some extent to the Japanese society in general. Such a view from the inside of the community and the society would otherwise have remained beyond the reach of a foreigner, but when



within reach, it teaches a lot not only about where I am but also about where I come from and where I am going back to.

In the end I want to thank Aikido Kobayashi Dojo and Musubi Fund for making it possible for me to stay for the two months as an uchideshi in Kobayashi Dojo. I would like to thank Kobayashi sensei and Hiroaki sensei

for taking me as their student as well as their wives Yasuko-san and Miyako-san for their warmth and kindness and for welcoming me to share their family meals. I would also like to thank Yamawaki-sensei and his wife Haruyo-san as well as Igarashi-sensei and his wife Machiko-san for welcoming me to stay at their dojos and share their family meals. Warm thanks belong also to the fellow uchideshi colleague Dylan as well as two of the dojo members, Hiromi-san and Kyoko-san, for being there always when I needed someone to give a hand or to lean on.



Finally and most importantly I want to thank all the members of Kobayashi Dojo, all my training mates. What I liked most at Kobayshi dojo is the positive attitude, the good humour and the energy all of you put into your training and in doing so together make the good atmosphere that there is to train.

