

## **Azimuth Summer of 2006**

### ***1. Reflecting on your original proposal—What would you do differently and why?***

My Azimuth experience in Chicago could have been enhanced in two ways. When I first began practicing aikido at the Chicago dojo I only took classes with the head sensei. After a few weeks I began to study with different teachers at the dojo. I found that these classes attracted smaller numbers of students and focused more thoroughly on one or two techniques. By building my skills in these other classes I was able to gain much more from the head sensei's classes. In hindsight I would have studied with the other teachers from the very beginning. The second thing that I would have done differently is a long the same lines as my first problem. There was a week intensive in Colorado that many students from my dojo attended. I think I would have benefited if I had gone to this intensive because some of the best teachers in America were leading this seminar.

### ***2. How was your original view different from your experience?***

I did not have a particular strict view about what I expected to get out of the experience. I simply intended to dedicate myself to the study of aikido, as much as my body would let me. I think by not having preconceived expectations I was able to thoroughly enjoy aikido and living in Chicago. I found the aikido community to be better than expected and the family I lived with did a great job introducing me to the city.

### ***3. Did your proposal meet the needs of your actual experience? How could you have improved the proposal and/or the experience?***

My actual experience was above and beyond what I had expected so it's hard for me to be very critical. I would have liked to continue studying for a longer period at the

dojo in Chicago. When I left, I felt I was only just beginning to get really grounded in the principles and practice of aikido. Something that I found to be unexpectedly good about the experience was having the time to focus on reading aikido literature, when I was not practicing the martial art. I found this multilayered approach to learning to be very beneficial. As I have stated before the only thing I could have done to improve the experience would have been to attend the seminar in Colorado.

***4. How did you affect/ interact with your community environment?***

I found the aikido community that I was in to be very supportive of me and my effort to train. For example I would teach a morning class from 10 a.m. – 11a.m. and then after every class a number of students would stick around and have tea and crackers. During this time we would often talk about the techniques we had just gone over in class and different parts of aikido philosophy. Since most of the students in this class had night jobs, after we had finished our tea we would go back out on the mat and practice together often till two o'clock in the afternoon. I also had an interesting experience living with a family that had two young children attending the Chicago Waldorf school. Across the country the curriculum of Waldorf schools are very similar, so I found myself reflecting a great deal upon my childhood.

***5. What affect did this have on your values?***

My Azimuth experience left me thinking a great deal about how to make the world a harmonious and peaceful place. First and foremost I was examining how my actions and interactions with others could contribute to a dialog of peace. After my experience I was and still am very conscious of my breath and the power that is tied to having this

awareness of an inhale and an exhale. This experience did not necessarily change my values but it helped me to clarify many of the ideas that I believed in.

***6. What was your interaction with your site mentor?***

My mentor was a 65 year old grandmother named Yukie. She taught had taught across the states, but at this dojo she chose to be a student so she could give her full attention to helping beginning students like me. The first time I trained with her she said “come on now, attack me as hard as you can.”, so I came full speed with my attack and she promptly set me flying across the mat. She was a great mentor, she would always remind me that aikido was meant to be fun and that I should have smile on my face.