

Bob & Todd's Excellent Friendship

By Todd M. Shirley (Tada, 忠)
Shodan, Aikikai

10 years ago I had the privilege of beginning a deep and lasting friendship via the Aikido community. I had been training for just over a year in Aikido, and I always made a point of welcoming new students to Los Gatos Aikido (Lou Bermingham sensei). One of the people that walked through that door was Robert Hulme Schumacher, Bob. I didn't know it at the time, but Bob & I would share many years and adventures in Aikido. We would travel extensively during the summers as ambassadors of Aikido (ATM #52, Bob & Todd's Excellent



Adventure). We spent many laborious hours designing & landscaping a Japanese garden & dojo (ATM #54, Backyard Dojo). We had also traveled to Japan on Aikido pilgrimages (ATM #66, Seven Days in Japan). Bob always encouraged me through life: Through graduation and Aikido training at the Univ. of CA at Santa Cruz (Martha Jordan sensei/North Bay Aikido); Through the ups & downs of employment in the Silicon Valley; Through the INS challenges I and my wife, Kazumi Yoneyama, have endured; Through the development of my cataracts and interocular lens replacement surgery; And only a few years ago our Aikido shodan exams at Aikido of San Jose (Jack Wada sensei). During the last couple of years Bob had developed cancer in various areas. Bob continued training in Aikido, as well as Tai Chi, Yoga, and brush arts (sumi-e, shodo). With his mortal existence at stake he changed, and he didn't change. He still approached his Way with the openness and curiosity of a child, as a beginner. Although, he newly experienced an intensity of appreciation for every detail in his life. Imagine that today could be your last in this form. Would you wake up extra early to meet the Sun, and soak in its warmth & light? Would you continue working at your 9-5? Would you continue your Aikido training? Or, spend time with family & friends? Bob could have done any and all with appreciation & joy. Bob was amazing that way. A true Aikido example. Robert Hulme Schumacher passed away with dignity & peace January 2nd, 2003. His final words of advice for the Aikido community were, "We need to do more randori".