



David M. Valadez
Senshin Center
Dojocho

Upon Their Lips by David M. Valadez

Deshi: People seem to be very interested in studying Aikido here, until they hear about the Minimum Training Requirement and the Intended Training Schedule Policy. These things seem to make people very hesitant when it comes to seeking membership in the dojo.

Sensei: Then those things are doing their job. Hesitation means that one is thinking about one's decisions. It will always be better for the dojo that people think about the ramifications of becoming a member than if they did not.

Deshi: I think I can see that, especially when I look at the overall body of our membership. People are very conscientious about their training. We all benefit from that. Still, it is a bit, for lack of a better word, "unsettling" that so many folks cannot see all the freedom in those two policies. To them, these policies often represent nothing short of tyranny.

Sensei: To he that cannot assume the posture of zazen comfortably, that posture will be torturous and full of restraint. To he that can, there will be no such restraint. We feel restraint because we are offering resistance. When we offer no resistance, freedom is all around us.

Deshi: I can see that. After all, two days a week is nothing really, as far as the Minimum Training Policy Requirement goes. Most here train well over that amount of days per week. Still, when you inform a new person that they have to train a minimum of two days per week in order to start, you can almost see the "difficulty" in their face. That "difficulty" is truly difficult to understand. I refuse to believe my own difficulty to understand comes from or mostly from me having lost perspective on what it means to be a new student. I mean, sure, things come up, things like injuries, illnesses, life's duties, etc., these things come up, and so our schedules have to reconcile with those things, but really, what thing should we think we can learn with but two hours out of every one hundred and sixty-eight? This is what is so perplexing – where does the common sense go? Why does one accept that they will never learn the guitar well, that they will never learn golf well, that they will never learn a language well if they only study two hours per week but that somehow something like Budo, something so complex and so sophisticated, can be acquired with such an amount or with even less investment?

Sensei: To be sure, one cannot help to think how odd it is for someone to say that they want to begin training but also have the question of "How many days can I miss?" upon their lips. Trust your perceptions on this matter.