

Keitsu, Keitsu,

...where for art thou Keitsu?

You came upon the Tomiki Aikido scene as a young man, a strong, driven and enthusiastic young man. Powerful and unrelenting in your approach, bold and confident.

You were a force to be reckoned with - physically and in the demands you placed on yourself. It was clear you also expected a lot from others....

Fresh faced were you, full of vitality, lots of brown hair and a quick laugh - a gaffaw really - when you were amused or irritated. It was unmistakable - Keith was here!!

The most notable part of you was your big heart, and that is saying something, as you were noticeable as a whole in your own right! But it was your heart that seemed to give you enormous strength, continuous drive and your tenacity for fully living..... that is how I remember and that is how I will always remember you.

You gave so much of yourself....first to your students and fellow aikidoka, to your beloved Aikido Club at Mayfair Park, to the students you inherited and developed at Northwestern's Lake Shore Aikido Club, to those you knew and sheperded for so long at the YMCA off North Avenue....nationally and internationally, you gave of your heart and communicated your passion.

...in 1981 you brought your great personality to Japan, encouraged by your giving heart, you made life long friends with our competitors and fostered a non-political view of Tomiki Aikido - based on mutual respect, fair competition and honest butt kicking... You earned a lot of people's respect with all of it...including the last part!

...when it was needed, you gave of your accounting knowledge and added the steady hand of your financial wisdom to a young Japan Aikido Association (USA) helping to make it into an organization to be proud of. Your heart was fully in this as well & it showed to all who knew you; to those who had the honor to know you.

...I think, Keitsu, you have never stopped giving from your heart and it is a wonderful thing to leave a legacy such as that when you are remembered. It was your giving nature and big heart that ultimately killed you probably, too. Not knowing how your life was going to unfold, even in your last months, you gave way beyond your ability to sustain it... I hope those closest to you now appreciate your continuous generosity...and honor the big heart that you were to the last breath.

You may not have recognized it when you were living, but you were loved and you made a difference.

FITO, my friend.

G.L.

A Man Who Made a Difference

Keith Benedix was never more alive than when he was on the mat, whether at practice or play or competition. The drive, the spirit, the will, the determination to excel in the art and to inspire others to do the same --that is the essence of Keith Benedix. We can't replace him; we can only strive to be like his warrior self.

- How many of us are competing and playing and enjoying aikido today in part because of the influence Keith had on us?
- How many of us would have never envisioned participating in an international event without the influence of Keith?

Keith was a man who so deeply engrained himself in our mindset about aikido that he could make an international team out of nothing, simply by making a proposal. We strive to attain that spirit, that willingness to devote oneself to the betterment of others as well as ourselves. Keith loved tournaments and we loved Keith.

We dedicate this 2008 Rocky Mountain Regional Tournament to the man without whose influence it could not have occurred. His guidance and support helped to create such regional, national, and international events for the fortunate members who benefitted from the experience. We held this tournament in his honor for one who did so much for so many and who will live on forever in our hearts and our minds and our aikido and the aikido of our students. The spark that was Keith Benedix will never be extinguished. The fire of his spirit will live on forever, and hopefully this will continue to be proven in events such as this final tribute to him. May his spirit survive in all of us, in our dedication to this art and to the family it has created for those who strive for excellence in the art.

Thanks for letting me know that Keith has begun the long journey. I only knew Keith on the mat. The first time I met him was up in Chicago in the eighties. He was a young hard ass then doing knife randori. Cocky and energetic then Keith mellowed like we all do but he always had that glint in his eye whenever I saw him that made you want to ask him, "So what do you know that I'm missing?" I can only speak for the Keith I knew, who was always ready to answer a question and was never demeaning or dismissive to those less knowledgeable than him. He was friendly and engaging and fun to be around. His stubbornness added to his charm rather than detracted because Keith wasn't afraid of who he was and was ready to admit his mistakes if he realized at some later date that he was wrong. And it was awe inspiring to me to watch him on the mat! I would say that I will miss him but you can't miss someone who will always be a part of you.

If you can, please forward this to his family. It's important for them to know the affect for good he's had on so many people.

Mike Barr

I am very saddened to have lost Keith Bendix this week as an instructor, as a fellow competitor and most importantly as a friend, I will miss him dearly. I met Keith back in the 1980s when I had just started practicing Tomiki aikido and his personal influence on my development was immediate and immense. Keith was always willing to share, to make suggestions and to encourage me on my aikido path. Throughout the 1990s I participated in every national competition and two international competitions and always enjoyed the many times we spent together, sharing conversations on aikido and life, competing against and with each other, and Keith got to know my family as well and became a friend to all of us, my son Ian came to admire Keith as much as I did and also modeled his aikido after Keith's. One of Ian's favorite competition memories was matching against Keith at the 2006 National games in Vassar. As I told Keith in Los Angeles at the 1998 national games, he was my Tomiki aikido role model and I strove to become as good as he was.

Though we often were in competitions at the same time we never had a chance to participate directly as team members until 2001 in Osaka. The memories of that competition are some of my favorite memories of time spent directly with Keith as his wonderful qualities as person were never as obvious as they were on that trip. The US team went to Japan in October of 2001, just one month after the attacks on the World Trade Center, to compete in the World Games. It was Keith who sponsored our team jackets, encouraged us all to sew US flags on our dogi's jackets (mine is still there), and it was Keith who organized much of our sightseeing and travel arrangements. He selected places for us to see in Osaka and Kyoto and shared some of his favorite locations in those two great cities with us. And for the first and only time Keith and I were able to participate as partners in the free style kata event, which was icing on the cake since I'd always admired Keith's competitive style and talents and had copied them for many years. But best of all on that trip I got to know Keith, Jr. and Kyle and got to see Keith as a loving parent, as a total person, not just as an aikidoka. I'm saddened that we never got to play as a team again, we had "unfinished business" in that arena as he told me later. But I'll never forget the memories of that great trip, and I hope that Keith Jr. and Kyle have as many good memories of that trip to Japan in 2001 as I do.

My deepest condolences to the Bendix family, my thoughts and prayers are with you all in this sad time.

Bob King
Mansfield (Ohio) Tomiki Aikido Club

I really don't know how to start this. Every time I start to write this, I get overwhelmed by memories of times together and conversations with Keith. I can't even walk through my house without having memories of Keith, being here, having something to say. I could go on about my memories and how much I'm going to miss him. I know most of you have your own memories. But this isn't about the memories we have, it's about Keith -- the person and who he was. There are only a few people that truly knew the real Keith. I'm going to try and keep this short, because we don't want to read a whole life dissertation. Despite his outward personality, where a lot of the time he seemed to be the grumpy old man, he really had a very kind soul. A lot of the time he was lonely inside and just needed to tell someone what was going on inside. The way he explained it to me is "my family and friends come first, and then me last". This is so true about him; he would be the first to jump in with both feet to help a friend out. He always wanted you to do well and he would take up for you to the end. He was a fierce competitor, but would be the last person to injure anyone. Keith did so much for development of the JAA/USA and Tomiki aikido in general, giving time, money and teaching to anyone that asked. There will not be a time that goes by that Keith didn't have something to with, in my life and many others. So in ending this I would say that Keith is in a better place, resting in peace. Actually, in a better place - true, but resting - no, that wouldn't be Keith. I will always feel him looking down on me telling what I'm doing wrong or right.

Your saddened friend & brother,

Dave

Message from Japan

Dear Keith's family.

I deeply regret the passing of Mr. Keith's death.
In around 1975, I visited USA and practiced at N W
University
in Chicago. At that time, I met him for the first time.

Since then, he had made efforts to develop the Tomiki
Aikido
more than 30 years.

I heard that when the 6th International Aikido
Tournament held
in 2005 at Katuura, he had a will to participate in it in spite
of his bad condition.

I wish to express my deep sorrow over the untimely
passing of
Mr. Keith Benedix. May he rest in peace.

Hideo Yoshikawa
JAA Head of the Steering Committee

Hank Yoshikawa

The world is a poorer place with Keith Benedix no longer in it.

I have been fortunate to have known Keith for more than 20 years. I first met him during a clinic at the Y in Mansfield, Ohio in the mid 80's. Anyone who knew Keith back then, will agree that he was a bit full of himself. They would also agree that he was an accomplished martial artist. Even as brash as he was, it was hard not to like him. He had a genuine passion for aikido and a willingness to share his knowledge ... sometimes whether you wanted it or not.

Keith mellowed over the years, as we all did, but he never lost that passion. He was always interesting to be around, whether on or off the mat. He was a self professed "control freak", but that helped drive him to be precise and exacting in his art and in his work. His knowledge and understanding of aikido helped me and many others to better our art.

I remember being in Australia in 1999, getting ready to test for my 4th Dan. I had one technique in the set that just never felt right. It was always awkward and I hated it. Keith was passing by as I practiced between sessions and saw me attempting that technique. He stopped me and said, "Try stepping in this direction, then turn." I did as he suggested, and it WORKED. I couldn't believe it, after months of struggle, just a simple adjustment and the move became graceful and flowing. He probably went on and thought nothing of it, but I'll never forget that he had the right word at the right time to make a huge difference in my presentation.

Keith was a fierce, and intelligent player who gave 110% every time he competed. I had the dubious pleasure of striving against him several times over the years. We were pretty evenly matched. He had the edge in experience, and I may have been a bit quicker. Somehow though, at the end of the match, he always managed to come out on top. I will miss those opportunities to test each other.

I also had the pleasure of being able to work with him in recent years as a member of the Board of Directors for the JAA/USA. Keith was a corner stone of the organization. He held the posts of VP and CFO. He was meticulous with the records and justifications for spending the organization's money. He also had input into our curriculum, and was instrumental in creating and developing the current set of DVD's that we have. We could not get him in front of the camera, but his insight and suggestions from behind it made for a better product.

Keith often had strong opinions, but they were usually backed up by considered thought. Many times during Board meeting debates, or email flame wars, Keith would not jump in right away. When he did speak up, it was often with the voice of reason that would concisely state both sides of the issue and then suggest a compromise that would satisfy everyone.

Keith and I discovered early on that we were the same age, and, as time passed we each had 2 sons of about the same ages. So as we met over the years we took turns bragging about our sons accomplishments and exploits. I know from these times that Keith was at least as passionate about his sons as he was about anything else in his life. He was very proud of them. I hope they realize how much he appreciated them and enjoyed the time he spent with them.

We will all miss our friend Keith. As I said before, the world is a poorer place without him.

Wade Current

このたびのキース・ベネディクト氏の訃報を聞き、とても残念でな
りませ

ん。

私達はキース・ベネディクト氏がアメリカに私たちの合気道を広め
るために

努力された功績に対して、心より称賛いたします。

そして、心よりキース・ベネディクト氏のご冥福をお祈り申し上げ
ます。

NPO法人 日本合気道協会

会長 富木 昌子

The JAA would like to extend their deepest sympathies to the family of Keith Benedix. They are truly sorry about their loss. We praise his distinguished service which made such an effort to make aikido known to the United States. We sincerely pray for him.

From JAA

Chairman Masako Tomiki

このたびのキースの訃報に接し、深い悲しみと驚きを禁じえません。

シカゴでの毎週金曜日の彼の合気道クラス、練習後に一緒に飲み明かしたこと

が、とても懐かしく思い出されます。

昨年デンバーでの再会、そして今年もデンバーで再会できると思っていたのに、

それができずとても残念でなりません。

謹んでキースのご冥福をお祈り申し上げます。

日本合気道協会理事

遠藤 関男

In receiving this news of Keith's death, I cannot stop my feelings of deep sadness and surprise. I can recall having drinks together after practice at the aikido class with him every Friday in Chicago and missing it very much. Last year I saw him at Denver's event and I thought that it was possible to meet him again in Denver for a reunion this year. Very regrettably, this didn't become possible.

I respectfully pray for Keith.

Sekio Endo, director of Japan Aikido Association

His contribution to Aikido throughout the years has been outstanding. We shall remember him with gratitude for his tireless effort to develop Aikido Kyogi in the USA. We know that Sensei Keith Benedix was a much trusted USA/JAA director and that USA/JAA will keep his legacy alive and continue to be inspired by his courageous and clear attitude.

We are thinking of you in this time of loss and bereavement.

With sympathy,

Nariyama Tetsuro

Difficult, demanding, gruff, argumentative, not very flattering way to describe a friend of 30 years but for those people that Keith called friends - he somehow rolled these traits up into a ball, twisted them around and turned them into charming, endearing and passionate. To know Keith was to love him

I met Keith some 30 years ago on Touhy Ave. beach – we were lifeguards together - I was still in high school - Keith was in collage – he was working on getting his black belt in Aikido and training to go to Japan for a tournament. He was larger than life. He would practice Aikido on the beach in the morning before the patrons would arrive. He would tell me about the evolution of Aikido while we walked to our beaches after lunch. Eventually I had to see what this Aikido was all about. Ultimately, Keith was responsible for one of my greater achievements - earning my black belt. Looking back today some of my very best friends and fondest memories come from Aikido. I traveled the globe because of Aikido. Heck if it weren't for Aikido and Keith, I wouldn't have married my wife Ellen and be blessed with my two boys Ted and Joe.

When Ellen met Keith and I, she thought we were a couple of macho city PUNKS. Ellen and Keith didn't get along all that well at first, but soon, Keith charmed her and she started coming to our Friday night Aikido club. Then Keith tried hooking us up. For months Keith kept telling me to ask her out and all the while telling HER to ask ME out. If it weren't for Keith, I have no idea what my life would be like today. But that was Keith – always helping his friends get what they wanted and needed.

Above all, the one word that describes Keith is loyal. Today, the word loyal is rarely used to describe people. But for Keith it wasn't just a word it was a way of life. Whether it was getting between me and a group of mad frat boys hell bent on beating me up for doing something stupid, giving me his wallet and telling me to take what I needed when I was short a few bucks back in collage, or setting me up with my wife-to-be – Keith was always there – any time any place. All of his friends probably have similar stories of loyalty. His loyalty probably played a significant factor in his demise, but for Keith he just had to be loyal no matter what the consequences.

For a good portion of my almost 20 years in Aikido, Keith and I were kata partners. We competed in countless tournaments and won countless awards. After my son Ted was born, I found myself wanting to spend more time at home. As many of us know, juggling work, family and hobbies is difficult – something had to give – it was Aikido. My giving up Aikido meant that Keith lost his kata partner. He went on to compete with other partners, but I don't think he enjoyed it as much. Several times over the last few years he asked me to come back to Aikido so that we could compete together again – so that we could be partners. While I knew all along that someday I would come back to Aikido and that we would once again be kata partners – the timing just wasn't right. Now, I am saddened that my friend left this world without us ever getting the chance for us to be kata partners again. Who knows, maybe someday, in another life, in another place, we'll get the chance again.

Keith I only hope that I was there for you the way you were there for me. I hope that I was as loyal a friend to you as you were to me. Keith, my friend, my partner, I love you, I'll miss you. You touched my life in so many ways and I'll always remember you.

Thanks for being at Touhy Avenue beach 30 years ago....

Gary