

# Following Aikido to Japan

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The Scrimger family followed their passion for aikido all the way to its homeland.

For the Scrimger family, who live just a stone's throw from Island Aikido near Prospect Lake, martial arts just happened to drop into their lives last year.

Tired with the politics surrounding regular sports like hockey and soccer, the family of five who live on Prospect Lake Road in Saanich jumped at the chance to try something new and exciting, said father Paul.

I always tell people it's another Victoria success story," said Schrimger, who's been practicing with his family for over a year now. We saw a notice on the mailbox and Fred had recently moved in to the neighbourhood. So he stuck a notice on the mailbox and we followed it up. And he was essentially open to families, so he was encouraging people to come and give it a try."

Scrimger said the whole family - which includes his wife Sandra, daughters Victoria, 15, Liana, 17, and son Stuart, 10 - all caught the aikido bug when they started training with Haynes at the Prospect Lake Community Hall.

From my point of view, I like the physical fitness aspect," said Paul. And also, as an older person, I really like the mental concentration.

The mental focus part of it, it really forces you to think constantly. You're changing positions, you're changing sides. It demands a lot."

His daughter Lianna said she enjoys the power one can exhibit through the practice of the ancient martial art.

My favorite part of aikido is that you don't have to be a big person to do it effectively," said Lianna. There's a realistic aspect where you can protect yourself by using the other person's energy and power against them. The worse that someone wants to hurt you, the more they will end up hurting themselves."

Working at a desk job all day dealing with the possibility of carpal tunnel syndrome from repetitive tasks, Paul's wife Sandra said she's been very happy with the results.

I've noticed some increased flexibility," said Sandra. I work at a job that's in front of a computer and I get kind of a shoulder problem and my doctor said that aikido is the only thing that has kept me from seizing up completely. They (the moves) initially looked like alarmingly strenuous things, but they're really not."

So when the offer to go to Japan through Island Aikido came about, the whole family jumped at the chance. Spending time in Tokyo attending demonstrations by senior Senseis and sitting in on local classes for part of the time, the family also got a chance to do some sightseeing. They visited the Japanese Natural Museum, took a flower arranging class, soaked in the hot baths and did a flurry of other activities over the 16 days.

It was wonderful," said Sandra. We were worried because in Canada we're not used to that kind of dense population. So I thought 'we're going to be squished all the time and lost on the subway,' but we



Front from Left: Liana, Victoria & Stuart Scrimger. Back from left: Sandra & Paul Scimger, David Haynes, Virginia Parsons - Island Aikido members, visiting Japan.

were able to manage quite well. The rapid transit was excellent and there were endless things to see."

Aside from checking out the architectural beauty of modern Japan, Paul said one aikido demonstration - which is also used by the Tokyo riot police - left a resounding impression on him.

We went to see one of the black belt demonstrations," said Paul. That was very impressive - the level of expertise. One of the highlights was there was a three-on-one competition. It's basically an exercise, one has a wooden sword, one has a dagger and one is unarmed and they all attack this person with a sword simultaneously. It's full out, so it was pretty impressive stuff."

From a kid's standpoint, the trip to the video-game-crazy nation was also a chance to work out their all-important thumb muscles.

I liked the electronics and the cool games that were there," said Stuart who celebrated his 10th birthday in Japan. Some of them were pretty violent."

As for why the young tike likes aikido, the reason is obvious to anyone who knows what goes on in the life of a young boy. I like it because it's a martial arts thing for all ages," said Stuart, and we got to go to Japan."

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