

## Featured Dojo-cho, August 2010



### **RAY BUTCHER, 3RD DAN**

Henshin Aikido, Dublin , Ireland

Division 3

I started practicing Martial Arts at the age of 10 in the local community Judo Club in Dublin , Ireland . After 3 years of Judo, I then studied Karate for 10 years, over this time I studied several different Karate styles.

In 1989 I emigrated to Australia and continued my study of Shotokan Karate. For a few years I hadn't felt the same passion for Karate, I felt something was missing and that I needed another direction. Not sure what I was looking for, and while looking for another Karate style, I found an Aikikai Australia Aikido club in Sydney . I always had an interest in Aikido and its philosophy, so I began practicing in March 1990. Aikikai Australia is under the direction of Seiichi Sugano Shihan. He held courses every winter and summer in Australia , the winter course was usually in Sydney and the summer course would be different states each year, it was a great opportunity to visit different parts of Australia . I looked forward to Sugano Shihan's course every six months; it was a fantastic opportunity to receive instruction from such a great teacher. I was fortunate in Australia to be surrounded by so many great people and teachers and for them to share their Aikido experience with me; it gave me a very strong foundation in my Aikido, and I formed some very strong and important friendships.

I returned to Ireland 1998 and started training in an Aikido dojo in Dublin (Dublin Aikikai Aikido). The DAA is under the direction of Sensei Philippe Gouttard 6<sup>th</sup> Dan of the FFAAA who is under Christian Tissier Shihan. I started my own Aikido dojo in Swords, CoDublin in May 2000. In March 2009 my partner Maeve and I opened a full time martial arts school, so the club was renamed Henshin Aikido as part of the new Defend University Ireland Training Studios ([www.defendu.ie](http://www.defendu.ie)). At the moment we have 20 adult students and we are starting our junior

program in September.

I am the Lead Instructor for Defend University Ireland , and a Master Level Women's Self Defence Instructor of the Women's Self-Defense Institute. I teach self defence to women's groups, in schools, colleges and universities. I teach defensive tactics, control & restraint classes and de-escalation techniques to Law Enforcement, Security personnel and in the Health sector.

### **My most Memorable Aikido Experience**

There have been a few; but one that has stuck with me happened during my first class of Aikido. I was a bit skeptical and had watched a few classes before deciding to get on the mat. Coming from a Karate background I was concerned about the practicality of Aikido, as everyone looked to be taking ukemi so easily and with what seemed to be no resistance. But I knew that the only way to find out was to take a class. After the warm up we started to practice, I was lucky that I had some basic ukemi from my Judo days, so I could enjoy and concentrate on the techniques and Aikido ukemi..... Half way through the class I got this overwhelming feeling of being at home on the mat amongst these people that I had only just met. It was a sense that I was at the start of something important, I had found the direction that I had been searching for. I told myself that it was too early to be sure but that feeling didn't go away, to this day when I feel like giving up especially when working through injuries; I always remember the feeling at that first class. It's not the most exciting "memorial moment", but it's the one that keeps me going and gets me on the mat on those difficult days.

Another memorial moment was the time when I was asked to collect Sugano Shihan from the Airport and drive him to the winter course in Sydney . I was a 2<sup>nd</sup> kyu at this time and so I was very nervous at the prospect of being alone in a car with Sensei for over an hour, what was I going to talk to him about! Should I talk to him about Aikido, what Aikido questions should I ask him, or should I talk at all! Well after a few minutes into the journey Sensei started talking to me, just a normal conversation, we didn't stop talking for the whole journey; I think Aikido was mentioned very briefly once. I thought to myself wow Sensei is human, as a 2<sup>nd</sup> kyu this was a huge discovery. I think I got a little insight into my Sensei the person that day; he is a humble, sincere and in recent years I think a very courageous man.

I have trained with many Sensei since then and I have many memorable moments. I look forward to new experiences with the CAA, and I look forward to meeting everyone at the courses.