

## Featured Dojocho, February 2018



### **Steve West**

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Division 3

I began my journey in the martial arts studying jujitsu in Auckland New Zealand in 1979 and 1980 while completing my professional training as a psychiatric nurse. My work over the last 7 years has focused on treating young people with serious mental illness and drug dependence through conversations, using a change-framework called Motivational Interviewing. Aikido and mental health practice are complementary in my life. In psychiatric nursing, to help guide young people in great distress and difficulty to discover new ways to live, without relying on psychoactive drugs; and in aikido, to continue exploring the way of aiki - with invaluable guidance, over the years, of my teachers - Clyde Sutton, Mike Ashwell, Dianne Haynes, Henry Lynch and Nadeau Shihan. Aikido has provided deep connections and long friendships, and psychiatric nursing, my commitment to the welfare of others. What is aikido if it is

not taken into the world? These and family, are my anchor points in uncertain times. In 1986 I moved into a teaching position at a nursing faculty (The Waikato Polytechnic) in the city of Hamilton, and it was here that I started aikido, under my first teacher, Clyde Sutton sensei. It was during this time as a kyu-grade student that Bob Nadeau and Richard Moon arrived in New Zealand for their very first visit. Later, my work took me to the lovely town of Rotorua, with mud pools and geysers - and Dianne Haynes sensei who guided me to sho dan. Since coming back to Australia in 2010 to live at home with my father and to help look after him in his final years (he passed away last year), I established my dojo. In July 2017 my student Patrick Low was our first at Mitcham aikido to be graded sho dan - with the support of a team of yudansha from New Zealand, including our head of school Henry Lynch 6th dan and Danny McIntyre 5<sup>th</sup> dan who led the grading panel. I also undertook new training under Paul Araki-Metcalf Shihan, in the traditional Koryu, Yagyu Shinkage-Ryu for around two years as a complimentary process with aikido, until Paul sensei moved away from Melbourne.

## My Most Memorable Aikido Experience

My most memorable experience, was at a gasshuku led by Richard Moon sensei, during one of his visits to New Zealand, and happened when he asked everyone to practice 'uke becomes nage becomes uke'. My training partners, Danny McIntyre and Barry Paletaoga and I moved into a corner of the dojo, and very quickly found ourselves in a new 'deep-space' (the realization only happening afterwards) - that time had seemed to stop and there being nothing outside of our shared process. We were joined together, deeply. I believe now, that we had broken "through the membrane" into what Nadeau Shihan talks of often - a new dimension. I have had similar moments during keiko since, but that first-time experience gave me a glimpse into new possibilities. We looked at each other and knew something special had just happened.

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