

Featured Dojo-cho, April 2018



Lyn Meachen

Belmont Dojo, Riai Aikido Wellington, New Zealand
Division 3

My Aikido Background

I found Aikido over 23 years ago. A friend told me about a guy at her work called Henry who did a martial art called Aikido and we decided to go along and have a look. We stayed for the whole lesson and I instantly fell in love with the art. The grace and beauty of the movements had me hooked, and I never missed a lesson for the first year.

Henry Lynch Sensei was my first teacher and as such a key influencer on my Aikido. He was a natural teacher, and as a beginner made my learning understandable, fun, and at the same time challenging. Danny McIntyre Sensei continues to bring home to me the pure joy of Aikido, tapping very much into the spiritual and energy side of the art.

In later years Robert Nadeau Shihan has been a key influencer on my Aikido. He has helped me to understand there is so much more to the art than just technique. Shihan makes you tap into the energy side of Aikido in a way no other teacher I've seen can. His sharing of the teachings and stories from O'Sensei are enlightening, and he constantly challenges you to be the best Aikidoka and person you can be.

Brief description of our dojo

We started out small dojo in Lower Hutt, New Zealand just over 3 years ago. We have around 14 members and our dojo is very family oriented, with lots of couples training. Fifty per cent of our club

members are female, which is great, and we also have a couple of teenagers training as well. My partner, Andrew and I, run the dojo jointly and he was the real driver in getting it off the ground.

Other Aikido or non-Aikido related info about me

In my spare time I work as Wealth Coach for Kiwibank helping staff to improve their conversations with customers around their investment needs. When I'm not working or training in Aikido I love to travel. I particularly enjoy visiting 3rd world countries and have trekked in a number of countries in the world, including Tanzania, Nepal, and Peru.

My Most Memorable Aikido Experience

This is a tough one. I really can't narrow it down to any one experience so here's a short list (in no particular order)

- Teaching kids – the first time I taught kids I was blown away by how amazing it was. We had some with disabilities and some who were very ill. The sheer joy on their faces when they did something for the first time was very special.
- Opening day of our own dojo - we had 17 people on the mat, big guys, teenage girls, people who had done other arts, and a 75 year old, none having ever done Aikido before. It was scary and exhilarating all at the same time.
- First experience of the Black Hole – Henry Sensei used to talk about this place where you're thrown and you enter a black hole i.e. you lose time. It's only happened to me a handful of times, but when it has it's been amazing. I was uke for a visiting Sensei once and there was a real energy connection. One minute I was going into the air, the next minute I was back on my feet, but don't ask me what happened in between because I have no idea. I was lost in time.
- Shodan grading – this is always something very special and memorable. Family and close friends were there to watch and support me which made it all the more meaningful. I remember being so nervous the night before that I couldn't sleep so I popped on a cassette from Richard Moon Sensei; I think it was 'Aikido in 3 Easy Lessons'. All I remember is it was the best thing I could have done. It really helped me to relax and enter a good space for the day to come.