

Instructor Profile

Martin Nagle – Junior Dojo Coordinator



I left my homeland of the Long White Cloud late in 1980 to start the typical Australasian 'Finishing School' of backpacking in Europe. In 1982, while living and working in London, I began studying Macrobiotics, Shiatsu and Oriental Medicine at the Kushi Institute located in the East-West Centre in Islington. It was there that I first came across Aikido, as the Centre had a Dojo on the top floor. I had heard many positive reports about this 'new age' martial art that had a universal philosophy and a reputation of integrity to it. I watched a demo and was so impressed with the easy, fluid grace and controlled aggression of the uke, that I just wanted to be like him as soon as possible ... so I started training. The Instructor was Sensei Andy Hathaway and to this day I'm still not sure what school or style it was because I wasn't concerned about it at all, and had nothing to compare it with anyway. I believe it could have been the Takemusu system.

In my second and final year of training there, I also began doing Oki Yoga, which at the time was a totally innovative, dynamic, intense mix of Iyengar yoga, martial arts and Macrobiotic philosophy developed by Masahiro Oki, an eccentric Japanese 'Master' who claimed to have been a spy in the Second World War. Oki Yoga taught me how to be creative with kid's games and exercises and I still credit it with my flexibility which, thankfully, I mostly seem to have retained.

After more travelling adventures, eventually I landed in Armidale NSW in 1987 with 1yr old twins and another boy on the way and working as a drug and alcohol nurse/counsellor at the local Community Health Centre.

There was no Aikido in town, so I did some fairly extensive networking and found a Black Belt instructor who was willing to travel 2 & ½ hours every weekend to help me and a small group of keen students to get started in the local PCYC. Sensei Louise Collins taught a style called Shin Sen ('free spirit') developed by Sensei Ken McLean based in Sydney. Some years prior, he had ceased his affiliation with Japan Aiki Kai and began 'doing his own thing' which was essentially an Aiki Kai/Ki Society/macrobiotic

mix. It was strangely synchronistic that Louise was a macrobiotic cook and a yoga instructor, so I enjoyed her training very much, and as she gradually withdrew the time she had available for us over a two year period, I began to take on more of the teaching role. I was 3rd kyu at that time, so it was a great opportunity. I also went to training camps offered by different styles and met Sensei David at a Shonan Remnai camp in Tewartin in 1991/2. We shared some common views about being unhappy with our various styles and the lack of support we received. But he had recently met Sensei Joe Thambu and began training in the Yoshinkan system – which eventually changed both our lives.

In the early part of 1994, I invited Sensei David to Armidale to show us this system which I knew he was really happy with. That visit both confirmed and changed my views of how Aikido should be completely. I began training and teaching it immediately and it marked the beginning of our ongoing personal and professional friendship. I trained every day & went to Melbourne a couple of times to train with Sensei Joe Thambu, who also visited Armidale with Sensei Michiharu Mori, who had plans to emigrate to Australia within the following couple of years. I achieved my Shodan within 3 or 4 months of switching styles and still clearly remember the pig pen baptism - organised by someone who was connected to someone who knew someone whose initials apparently started with DD – but I never found that person!

By the end of that year, I had moved to Brisbane and again tried out different systems, including Tenshin Shokai and Aiki Kai, but within months I heard that Sensei Mori was coming and wanted to set up 'maybe on the Gold Coast'. Sensei Mori was the last 'live-in' student of Kancho Gozo Shioda, the originator of the Yoshinkan system. When he arrived Sensei David and I basically convinced him that Brisbane was the best place to be ... so we started looking for a Dojo space while we sent the word out to some other disaffected students in other Dojos and began training in a PCYC in north Brisbane.

I remained Sensei Mori's 'Sempai' (senior student) for the next couple of years or more, achieving my Nidan with him and also beginning to work for the Aikido Institute presenting Sensei David's 'Warrior' behaviour management programs in northern Brisbane High schools.

At some point in 1997 I 'hit a wall', left Brisbane, did a Permaculture course and lived in a little cabin in the Dorrigo forests for nearly a year, eventually heading back to Armidale to be closer to my children. I kept getting asked to teach Aikido again (and again!) so I did. Within a month I had more students than could safely fit in the PCYC, so through the local Council, found a little unused community hall on the outskirts of town. With a few basic renovations and a paint job (and mats!), it was perfect!

I taught there from 1999 – 2006 until I took up a full-time position that Sensei David offered me here on the Sunshine Coast, coordinating the Junior Dojo and initially maintaining the school's programs and now working for the Education and Training (disability) service.

Aikido has given me more than I could ever give back and it's a humbling honour to earn an income doing something I love so much.

Martin