Over the last few years I have been approached several times to write a book, but the problem was just what to write about. People suggested either Judo or Aikido, but I considered that better people than I had already done this.

I decided that I should write something that I could leave to my children, because over the years I have often wondered about my own family history. What I do know is where I was born and where I spent my early childhood. However, I do not know very much about my immediate family. For example, being the youngest in a family of 12,
I do not know much about the life and experiences of my brothers and sisters during their early years; and have little knowledge of my parents and even less about my grandparents.

For many years my family celebrated my birthday on 29th March, but it was only when my sister Millie took me to Hackney town hall to obtain a replacement birth certificate that we discovered my birth was registered on the 30th! We deduced from this that I was born either late on the 29th or early on the 30th March 1931.

1931 was about the time the country and in fact the world was coming out of the Depression and starting to recover from the Wall Street crash and the considerable debt of WW1 of 1914-1918.

Grandfather on my father’s side was a boilermaker-shipwright and my father followed him into the same trade. Grandmother on my mother’s side was (I am told by my sisters) a Headmistress of a school; just where or what type of school I am not sure.

(See Appendix 2 for some family genealogy information)

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

I was the youngest of 10 children. There would have been 12 of us but two of my brothers died either at birth or very young. Our dad earned a few bob on the side by being a song and dance man at the Working Men’s Clubs – in fact he was on the same board at Hackney Empire as Gracie Fields.

My first memories of my childhood were when I must have been around three years of age. I remember sitting in the kitchen of my parents’ terraced house in 11 Cording Street, Poplar, East London, very close to the dock area. I have vague memories of my mother doing the washing in that kitchen, so I suppose it must have been a Monday, because during that period Monday was always wash day. I can also recall my mother telling someone, possibly my elder brother Tom, that I would not be going to school that day as it was
raining and my shoes let in water. Another recollection of a rainy day is when I was sitting in the passage of our house watching the rain bouncing off the pavements outside. It must have been summer because it was quite warm outdoors.

Another memory I have of around that time: it is a sunny afternoon when I and all my classmates were made to lay on camp beds in the playground and have an afternoon nap. This must have been standard practice for the infant schools in 1934/5. I know that I started school when I was three years old, tending to suggest that mother must have insisted that I begin my education as early as possible, probably influenced by my grandmother. I never knew my mother’s parents. The only thing I do know is that my mother’s name was Grace Govey and she lived in a fairly large house. One of my sisters did remember that my grandmother’s family had monogrammed china and in the early part of the century a family had to be fairly well-off to have that kind of tableware.

I have few memories of my early childhood. The one thing that remains constant is that I always felt loved and cared for. I suppose that can be understood as I had seven sisters and two brothers and I was the youngest of them. My mother and father loved me, my sisters adored me and my brothers loved and protected me. What a life! Dad was a good father to us all. He was a great gardener. I remember asking him for money to go to the pictures and he said “when you have dug over that part of the garden you can have it”.

One day I can recall when I was really scared was when I was around five or six years old and for some reason I was out after dark. I remember standing at the top of my street crying my eyes out, too petrified to go home because I could hear this strange noise in the darkness. A neighbour sent one of my sisters out to collect me. It turned out that a cricket was living in
the wall of the Spratts biscuit factory, opposite our house, and it was this clicking noise that I could hear and being so young and a townie I had never heard a cricket before.

Over the years I was told many stories about the family by my sisters, like the time dad was keeping rabbits and his pride and joy was a particularly fine Flemish Giant. Unfortunately for the rabbit it bit my eldest sister’s finger … goodbye rabbit! You see my dad loved his children very much. Another story they told me was an occasion when dad and mum were going to visit friends and my brother Bob and sister Edie were left to look after their baby sister Grace. Well they wanted to play out, so for safety they put Grace in a shopping bag and hung her up behind the kitchen door, out of the way. When mum and dad returned they asked where Grace was. Bob and Edie had forgotten all about her, but when they rushed into the kitchen there she was fast asleep in the shopping bag. Needless to say mum was not amused.

One last story about dad and his love for his children. One day he won a goat in a pub raffle, so he brought it home and put it in the backyard. Brother Bob started to tease the billy goat a bit and it was having none of that and ran at Bob and gave him a butt in the face, which produced a lovely black eye. Bye bye Billy! Several of the neighbours enjoyed goat for dinner for a few days.

In 1937 my mother developed cancer and sadly passed away. It was a sad time for us all, but my being so young my family shielded me from all the heartache. My sisters took the place of my mother and I suppose my elder brother Tom took it upon himself to look after me even more than before.

I suspect that it was due to my mother’s illness that dad took a job working for a company named N.Berg. They were a tailoring firm that produced men’s clothing and supplied their own line of retail shops. I remember visiting the factory and talking to the machinists and felling hand. I always seemed to come out with more pennies than when I went in – I guess it was because most of the women working there were Jewish and they love children.

My father met and fell in love with one of the women who worked at the factory. My brother Tom and my sister Dolly and I grew to know her and call her Aunt Daisy. After a while she came to live at our house. My older sisters did not like that at all: one has to remember that this was the 1930s and people tended to frown on such behaviour. After some harsh words between the girls and Aunt Daisy she left and went back to her sister’s flat in Hoxton, which was very close to the factory where she and my dad worked. I remember my sister Dolly and I making a long bus journey all the way from Poplar to Hoxton on a Saturday morning to plead with her to come back home to our house and stay with us.
Dolly was four years older than me so that made her about thirteen years old. When you consider that boys and girls started work at fourteen years old, she was quite grown up and my big sister, so she knew what was what.

Daisy, my second mum

Anyway, Aunt Daisy came back to stay and from that time on we called her mum. I can honestly say without any doubt she was the kindest, most loving and caring lady I or my family could wish for. Unfortunately, when she was a young girl she had been involved in a tramcar accident and was badly injured, so much so that she was unable to have children of her own, so I guess she showered all her love onto us three youngest. My eldest brother Bob and six of my sisters had all got married and left home by this time; perhaps due to my dad taking up with “This Other Woman” or because they felt that now that dad had someone to take care of the kids it was a good time to make the break.

Another early memory I have when I must or four years old, my brother Bob bought my suite. He came home from work one day and “Where’s Johnny?” My mother thought I was in the back yard playing. However, when they found me I was in the front room (The Parlour) with a fork digging holes in the seats of two of mum’s brand new suite. She went mad! Many years later one of my sisters told me that Bob picked me up and said “hold on mum, he’s only a baby – he doesn’t know what he’s doing”. That always brings a lump in my throat when I think what a kind and understanding man my mother and father had brought him up to be.

One time Tom and I were play fighting on the bed and I think I put my foot through the window. Mother came rushing up the stairs to see what had happened but my brother took the blame.

1939 saw the outbreak of the war.

I will always remember that day as long as I live. My sister Grace and her husband George had taken me on holiday with them to Ramsgate. On that bright, sunny Sunday morning George and I were standing on the sea front. We watched as a group of airmen jumped down from a truck and proceeded to go into the railway station. George said “Well boy, we had better be going home”. I remember thinking why, but I guess all the people knew it wasn’t going to be an easy time.
It may seem strange, but I always knew my sister Grace’s husband as Uncle George. It wasn’t till some years later that I discovered that he was also my new mum’s brother. So he was in fact my brother-in-law and my uncle. I think it was as a result of dad meeting mum that Grace and George got together.

We moved to Stoke Newington in late 1940 because Nat Bergs, the firm dad worked for, had opened another factory there and dad was asked to move over there and run the boiler and do all the steam pipe work. I suppose my mum also thought it was a good idea because it took us away from the dock area and it also gave her and dad a chance to get away from all the memories. Our house in Stoke Newington was great. It had a long back garden with a big tree that I could climb into and daydream about things, as young children are inclined to do. The house had three bedrooms, two reception rooms, a kitchen and a glass outhouse (what we now call a conservatory). There was a bath installed in a kind of extension, with an outside loo, but compared to our house in Poplar, it was magnificent.

It was after we moved to Stoke Newington that I had my first experience of being evacuated. I remember going with my sister Dolly to Windsor. My brother Tom who was only 17 decided to keep his friend company and volunteered to join the army. My mum and dad went potty but the deed had been done and Tom was off to war. Being his kid brother I was terribly proud of him, not appreciating the horror of war. I can always remember that each time he came home on leave mum would ask him to take me round and get my hair cut. The lady we were billeted with was getting on a bit and her son was the local milkman. They were very kind to us. There were three of us Londoners staying with the family, my sister and I and another young girl, I don’t recall her name. Each evening they gave us an Arrowroot biscuit and a glass of orange juice before we went to bed. We stayed for about six months. It must have been around 1941 because Dolly reached her 14th birthday in 1940 and would have been ready to leave school and go to work, so rather than leave me there on my own it was decided we should both return home to London.

The bombing in London was getting pretty bad, so it was decided to send me to another safer place. This time to a place called St Neots in Hertfordshire. I will never forget that place as long as I live. I was never so miserable in all my life. The person I was billeted with was a family consisting of Grandma, Mr and Mrs and their three children, two daughters and one son. Their name was Bull.

On arrival at St Neots all us evacuees were assembled in a church hall and the people came to make their selection of who they considered were suitable for their home. It was like a cattle market. I was a little fat kid with glasses and I seem to recall I was one of the last to be taken in by a family. I was selected by the family mentioned earlier. We got off to a really good start on the first evening. The mother sat me at a table over a sheet of newspaper and proceeded to do something that I had never experienced in my life. She proceeded to comb
my hair with a fine steel comb; my immediate reaction was to say very loudly “I don’t have Nits”. I had never felt so humiliated in my life. The problem for them was that I was an East End kid and they presumed that we were all unclean and dirty! That was the first of several incidents: things did not improve.

Anyway I settled in and because the local school was overcrowded it was decided to divide the school day so that half the children attended in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. It was during one of these afternoon sessions that our class was being taken on a school visit that I had first experience of a close encounter with the enemy. As we were walking along there was a sudden outburst of gun fire and overhead we witnessed a battle between one of our fighter planes engaged in an aerial dogfight with one of the German planes. It scared us more than a little and we were all told to lie down and be still.

The next incident was later in the year, we were coming into winter and the local pond was iced over. Mrs gave us all strict instructions not to skate on the ice. Her son being the eldest persuaded us to go anyway. It was odds on that we would get spotted and when we returned home we were strongly reprimanded. The boy would not own up to being responsible and as I had always been brought up not to tell tales I kept quiet. Mrs Bull decided that it could not be her darling son who had broken his word. As a result I was sent up to the bedroom and not allowed to go to the cinema with the rest of the family. What I remember most vividly was the father coming up to my room and saying “Sorry lad but there’s not anything I can do”. My question to myself was “who was the head of the house”? It certainly wasn’t him.

A further recollection was when I received a parcel from home which contained a plaid scarf one of my sisters had sent me. I only saw that scarf once and never received or saw it again.

Thankfully a couple of months later the girls contracted chicken pox and it was decided to send me home. My dad arrived and I packed my little suitcase ready to leave. My dad said “say good bye and tell them you’ll see them soon.” Doing as he asked we left the house but as soon as we were out of earshot I said to my dad “I don’t have to go back do I?” To my great relief he said “NO”. I was the happiest boy in the world when we walked down that pathway and headed for home. I was greeted by my mum and family and I was never sent away from home again despite all the bombs, V1s and V11 that Adolf sent over.

So the war years rolled on and I moved from the junior school of Princess May Road to the secondary school in Shacklewell Row, which was nice because it was about three minutes’ walk away from home. My recollection of school are of the occasion at Princess May when I was called to the Head Teacher’s office (she was a dragon). I had never been in trouble at all, yet the first words out of her mouth were “I see – it’s you is it? You’re always in trouble”! I never found out who she was confusing me with, but then I only ever remember seeing her that once.

My time at St Saviours was a little better. I was a little older but I recollect a time when the Head Teacher, a Mr Carr, took our class. I must have been around thirteen because I know it was just before I left. He came into the classroom to cover a lesson for our regular teacher and said “I don’t want to know what you DO know; I want to know what you DON’T know.
so that I can teach you something”. To me this was one of the most profound statements I had ever heard and I remember him and that statement to this day.

At one stage the Shacklewell Row school was closed due to a temporary move to the Princess May Road site, I suppose because a lot of the children were evacuated. Anyway, due to the war being on and there was fuel rationing, the local people were going into the closed school with prams and carts and ripping up the wood tiles off the floor to use for their fires. They were in fact looting the place.

I was called to the Head Teacher’s office and asked what I wanted to do when I left – I had no idea! So they decided for me and I was sent to work for a building firm by the name of Loweths. I was supposed to be trained as a carpenter, but all I remember of that job was one occasion whilst working with a carpenter who was seventy if he was a day. We were working on a pub in Kensel Rise (funny how these things stick in your memory). He said “Mind how you go when walking across the landing”. Yes, you’ve guessed it – I missed my footing and my leg went through the ceiling down to my knee. When we reported back to the office I wasn’t the most popular boy on the block.

Anyway, I wasn’t happy at the firm, so my Dad went round and spoke to the boss and I got my cards. You must understand that you couldn’t simply leave a job during the wartime. It was just after the end of the war and there were certain regulations that had to be taken into consideration.

We were still living in Poplar at that time and my dad had now left the ship building industry and was working for the tailoring firm of N. Berg as a steam pipe fitter and general maintenance engineer. In researching this story I have managed to glean some information from my brother Tom and sister Anne. One story Tom recalled was when our dad came home, threw his tools down in a corner and said “I won’t need those any more”. Tom said he couldn’t remember the year but it must have been around 1935.

So life moved on with us being bombed out once and moving to a house further down the street, from No 86 to no 104 Shacklewell Road. Here again a funny story. A woman in dad’s factory suggested that we should move to where she lived, in Essex. She said that she had never heard any bombs dropping or sirens and it was very peaceful. So Mum packed our bags and off we all went. Mum, dad, us three kids, my sister Millie and her new baby Maureen and Granddad. Dad came along to see us settled in.

I remember one sad story that my dad told us. Where we used to live the government had built some large brick air raid shelters in the street and when the sirens sounded everybody was supposed to go into these shelters. As it turned out the women and children were encouraged to go into these but the men all stood around outside smoking, chatting and generally watching the fireworks of the searchlights and anti-aircraft batteries. Sadly the street took a direct hit and most if not all the adult males in Cording Street and the two adjoining streets were killed. My dad was very sad for quite a while after that because he had known many of the men as friends and drinking partners.

Another funnier story was when Dolly and I were appointed as built in baby sitters for our niece Maureen. Every Tuesday evening Mum, Dad and Millie would go off to the pictures. Well, this evening Maureen just would not stop crying. Dolly and I became so worried that she sent me off the theatre to find Millie. The manager threw Millie’s name up on the screen
and out the three of them rushed to find out what was wrong. Naturally we lost our baby sitting appointment after that.

To get back to our visit to Essex … that evening the sirens went and the lady suggested that we went to the local air raid shelter. She didn’t come (as she had her own shelter in her back garden) so off we went in the black out to the local shelter. There were no lights or heating and the place was damp, smelly and deserted. You can imagine the reaction of my parents. It was only later that the discovered that the lady was hard of hearing if not downright deaf. So of course she didn’t hear the sirens or the bombs being dropped!

It was only when I returned to London that I attended full day schooling. So my chances of passing the 11+ exam to gain a place in a Grammar school were limited. This I must say had an effect on my self-esteem. There I was, a chubby boy with glasses, who felt dumb and not too bright. What made it worse, my best friend at that time did make it, so we drifted apart a little. When I left school at 14 years of age I went off to work.

*So now we come to the period of my life that we will call:*

**THE WORKING YEARS PERIOD**

As mentioned above my first job was in the building trade; my next was as a shoemaker.

This job was close to home so I had no travelling and the job was fairly easy, but boring. My wages were the princely sum of one pound twenty five shillings per week. This was two shillings and sixpence better than my last job.

I then managed to get a job for a bigger firm in Shoreditch and they paid me two pounds, seventy five shillings per week. Boy was I in the money! I was so well off I paid mum a week’s housekeeping in advance.

One of the men I was working with got the job as foreman of another smaller firm and they offered me better pay so I moved there too. I was about seventeen and it was here that I met a girl and fell in love – I must have been Crazy! However, we decided that as I was due to be called up for National Service it would be a good idea to get married. My wife Joan would then get a married person’s allowance, so perhaps we could save up for a home during the time I was in the army.

I went into the Royal Corp of Signals Regiment and was trained as a teleprinter operator. The months I spent in the army were, I consider, well spent. For a start I was taught to touch type, which as you can see I can still do. It also taught me to be more self-reliant.
I still consider that one way to cure some of the teenage problems today would be for all those youngsters who either do not have a job or are not in full-time education to be drafted into a force or an organisation that will direct them into some form of work to help either this country or the third world for, say, about two years. They could be taught a trade and at the same time learn to be a little more self-supporting; and perhaps learn to appreciate just how lucky they are to live in a country such as ours with all its comforts and security.

I was supposed to do only eighteen months National Service, but just when I was about six weeks away from demobilisation the government decided to increase the time to two bloody years. In the next six months I managed to get myself put on a charge and confined to barracks on two occasions. I guess it brought out the rebel in me.

When I finally did get demobbed I went round to the place where I used to work to see if I could get my old job back. Unfortunately they had a woman doing my job and so were unable to re-employ me. This in fact was against the law, because we were supposed to be guaranteed our old job when we were finished our duty to the nation – HA HA!

After leaving the army I worked for a grocery shop in Stamford Hill. I worked as counter staff, but there was one job none of us youngsters would touch, as it stank to high heaven. Frank the manager was the only person brave enough to go near it. This was cutting up a sausage called VOSH.

When I left there I took a job with London Transport as a bus conductor. I guess it was the love of a uniform. I did this job for about two years and then my brother Tom suggested I come join him at Fords of Dagenham. Both my brothers worked for Fords so I was in good company. This was great training for me as I was lifting 70 and 90 lb break drums. I would average about 75 drums an hour.

So I found myself another job for a few months at Genetos where I made surgical instruments. From there I moved to Honeywells making scientific instruments – I believe they were the first company to develop a heart and lung machine.
SKATING AND CYCLING

Skating and cycling were fun activities that I did in my spare time. My cousin David Tripp and our friends would often cycle from London to Southend or Brighton for a weekend. One weekend down in Brighton we camped out in a beach hut. A police officer knocked on the door to check up on us to make sure we were not getting into mischief and to leave the hut clean and tidy in the morning. One of the boys said “scouts honour officer”. After the policeman had gone one of the boys produced his brother’s fishing knife and we all burst out laughing.

I enjoyed the rush of speed skating on rollers and whilst in the army I won first place and free tickets to the rink at Forest Hill. Obviously being a gentleman I passed these free tickets onto a couple of girls.

SHOOTING

I have always had an interest in guns, right from a child watching all the Cowboy and Indian films and then through the years reading books on guns, but it wasn’t until about 1975 I was in a position to purchase my own shotgun. I wasn’t into shooting animals, so I got chatting to the owner of a gun shop, who told me about a clay shoot that took place on the last Sunday of each month. At that time I was driving an Austin something or other and we couldn’t get up Featherbed Lane with all of us in the car. I went with my daughter Audrey and her husband Mick. They had to get out of the car and walk up the hill. Mick turned out to be an excellent shot, hitting most of his clays. In these early days I was shooting with an old under and over 12 gauge. I was later talked into buying a Remington automatic by the guy in another gunshop.

I decided to ask Pepi if she wanted to try it out and for quite a while she was happy to come along and watch, but was not that keen on shooting. I had trouble with the automatic, it kept on jamming, so Pepi decided I should buy a new gun. That’s when I bought the Maruku 350. This is when my shooting really took off. I had taken a couple of our Aikido students shooting Caroline and Martin Baxter. Caroline was not doing very well with the club gun so I let her have a go with my one. She then hit everything out of the trap. Caroline went on to make the National Squad and competed for England. This is also when Pepi became more interested. She also tried out this gun of mine and shot 23 out of 25. Naturally, I lost this gun, it then became Pepi’s and she bought me another Maruku. Together we started entering competitions. I shot for the London Area. Pepi ended up being a better shot that me, becoming Greater London Ladies Champion. We continued to shoot even when we moved to New Zealand. Pepi’s name is on the wall at Waitemata Gun club. It was all down to my expert coaching - Ha Ha. Each year we both won numerous prizes at the Christmas shoot. We even went shooting in North Carolina with our friends Tony and Mary Anne Orlando.
A JOURNEY THROUGH 58 YEARS OF MARTIAL ARTS

Recently I was discussing the history of Tomiki Aikido in the UK and someone asked if I had ever met Pro Tomiki. I said that he had been planning to come to England, but unfortunately passed away the year before the planned visit in 1978. It was then pointed out to me that in fact I was a second generation student of Prof Tomiki, Yamada Sensei being the first generation. It also occurred to me that if this was the case the same could be said to Uishiba Sensei, because as Yamada Sensei had been a live-in student of Uishiba it therefore follows that although I had never studied traditional aikido I was still a second generation traditional aikido student … no snide remarks please!

I was then asked how I had become interested in martial arts. This all came about when I was about 14 years of age, around 1945, when I saw a movie called ‘Blood on the Sun’, starring James Cagney (a copy of which I now have). Obviously because WWII had just ended anything to do with the Japanese was looked down upon in England, but I still went ahead and looked for a Judo club. All my enquiries met with the same response – you’re too young, we only accept students of 18 years or older.

I got on with the rest of my life until I was serving in the army in Edinburgh. It was there that I heard of a Judo club, but again my enquiries were met with a negative response. The instructor there informed me that their beginner’s class was full but they would let me know when they planned to hold their next one. I was de-mobbed from the army in July of 1951 before they could contact me. However, during the last few months of service I wrote to my brother, Tom, in London and asked if he could please look up any Judo clubs – which he did. In fact he found there were only three such clubs within easy reach of where we lived in North London. One was the Budokwai in Gilston Road, South Kennington: another was the Judokai in Latimer Court, Chelsea: the third was the South London Judo Society, situated close to the Oval cricket ground in Kennington. My brother checked them all out and decided that the one best suited to us was the South London Judo Society, as it only took a bus and subway ride to get there, a journey of approximately an hour and a half each way. (Living in Mairangi Bay on the North Shore of Auckland, I have to chuckle when people say that our dojo in Browns Bay is too far for them to travel; when in most directions anywhere in this country locally is only 20 minutes’ drive away.)
So Tom and I joined the club, which later dropped the word South and became the LJS, simply the London Judo Society. We enrolled in the club’s beginners’ class for six weeks in September 1951, which we had to complete before we could attend the main dojo. As a point of interest, the mat we were practising on was a set of horse hair gym mats tied together with a canvas cover. I am sure this will bring back fond memories for some of the older judo students (if they’re still around).

Tommy

At this time judo suits were hard to come by and at first we bought jackets but these were expensive. I said “Why don’t we buy some cooks’ white trousers, sew up the fly and put a cord through the waistband? We will then have a complete kit”. So we set off to the famous Petticoat Lane Sunday market and bought the necessary whites. Tom’s wife Eva did the alterations and we thought we looked very smart in our full outfits and yellow belts. Needless to say these did not last long and fortunately we were able to buy judo suits from a visiting Japanese wrestling team who also did judo and visited our club.

The teaching there was carried out by two of the club’s black belts – Wally Coltham and Ted Cribben. My memories of Wally Coltham were that he was around 5 ft 6 in and a light weight who loved groundwork. Funny enough he never seemed to get a hair out of place when doing groundwork. I guess that’s what being skilful is all about. Ted Cribben on the other hand was around 6 ft tall and a stonemason. His favourite technique was Harai-goshi and he taught his method of applying this technique to us and I became fairly efficient at it.

Unfortunately one of the newly returned black belts from Japan did not consider it allowed for the development of good Judo and advised me to change this if I wanted to achieve my black belt.

We completed the beginners’ course and were taken along to the main dojo, which was a three storey building that used to be used by the local church, situated in St Oswalds Place off Kennington Lane.

It was in the mid-50s that the club obtained the services of Kenshiro Abbe. He was a very powerful and competent Judo teacher. I tend to think he was ahead of his time for England. You must understand that up to his arrival Judo had been dominated by the Budokwai whose founder Gungi Koizumi was a very well-educated, upper-class Japanese. It should also be understood that prior to 1939-45 Judo was generally thought to be an elitist activity, practised by a select few who could afford it. It was only after the war that the activity started to take off in this country thanks to the likes of George Chew, Eric Dominy and other people with like minds.

Kenshiro Abbe taught at the London Judo Society, as it was now named, and it was during this time that the famous or infamous (depending on which bit of film you view) contest between Mr Abbe and Tiger Joe Robinson took place. Abbe was in his early 40s at this time and Tiger Joe was in his mid-20s, a professional wrestler and in his prime, so to speak. There
are those who would suggest that if the contest was refereed by today’s rules Mr Abbe would have been the clear winner. However, this was then and the refereeing was not so well organised.

Kenshiro Abbe was a bit of a character. It was after an incident where he decided to leave the accommodation he was living in and decided to take up residence in the canteen of the LJS and then decided to allow his chaffinches to fly around the place and make their deposits everywhere (including the dojo) that the founders of the club decided it best to dispense with his services. There is another story of an occasion when he was invited to teach at Bisham Abbey, where the BJA held its annual summer camp. It seems that he saw a herd of cows in an adjoining field and decided to jump on a horse that was also in the field and proceed to round the cows up, like some cowboy. As you can imagine the local farmer was not amused and seeing that Mr Koizumi was also a teacher on the course this did not go down at all well with the BJA; so the BJA and Mr Abbe parted company.

So in September 1951 I started my 60 odd years of involvement in Martial Arts. I moved through the grades and eventually obtained my 1st Dan. It was shortly after this that the owners of the club asked if I would be interested in teaching a group of juniors. To be honest I didn’t think I knew enough judo, let alone teach others. The club seemed happy enough, so I started teaching. My class was an experiment because a lot of the adults in the club didn’t believe it would take off. It showed how wrong they were, because before many months had passed the club had four or five junior classes running, with people such as Mick Leigh and Joe Rowe. After some time teaching juniors I was asked to teach an adult beginners class. There’s a funny story attached to that. I decided to try something different and teach the class to learn their techniques on the left. This was fine until that group actually joined the members in the upper dojo. The teacher there asked the senior teacher to stop me teaching beginners on the left, which amazed me, because Ted Mossom was a left hander and did all his techniques on the left! It goes to show you can’t please everybody.

I asked Mr Chew, the senior teacher, if I could start an advanced class for Dan grades. They agreed to this, so once a month I invited various international players to come and teach the class: people such as George Kerr, Dennis Bloss, Dicky Bowen, Ted Mossom and Ray Ross etc. This went well for some months until we ran out of funds.

1959 saw a turning point in my martial arts career. One Saturday morning I was teaching my class when the phone rang: it was Mr Chew’s daughter who was running the front office. Sandra informed me that a Japanese gentleman had arrived wanting to see her dad – she didn’t say who or what he was. I suggested she sent him up to my dojo while she contacted her father. This man sat in the corner of my dojo and simply watched me. It wasn’t until the Monday evening that I discovered this gentleman was Senta Yamada, who had been invited to come to England to teach at our club. That Wednesday evening he proceeded to use me to demonstrate a variety of techniques.
Some months later Yamada Sensei decided to introduce the Tomiki system of aikido into the club. It was at this time that the club staged an annual display at the Royal Albert Hall and I was asked if I would assist Yamada Sensei in this display. Naturally, I felt highly honoured - and accepted. I took a week off work in order that we could rehearse what we were to demonstrate – that was the finest beginner course I ever attended! He spoke very little English and I understood and spoke even less Japanese; it was only by practising the techniques that I could feel the movement and the moment of opportunity that he felt was right for a particular principle and the appropriate technique he wanted to demonstrate. We were on the stage for about 15 to 20 minutes and I must have gone through the air about 40 times. I recall the commentator saying, as we walked off the stage, “There goes a very tired man”, referring to me - he didn’t know how right he was. At that display I was on the stage no less than four times, taking part in various demonstrations.

From that point on I became Yamada Sensei’s senior student, assisting him in various demonstrations around the county. It was understandable that the first group of aikido students were all Dan grades in Judo at one level or another. In 1961 I was awarded my shodan in aikido and was the first man in England to be awarded this grade in the Tomiki style of aikido. At a dinner I was asked to make a speech and I recall saying “It is lonely up here and would others please hurry up and join me”, which they soon did: people such as Dr Ah Loi Lee, John Wilkinson, Bill Taylor, Bill Martin and Peter Smith, to name a few.

In the early 60’s Yamada Sensei opened his own dojo in North London, over a club named The Regency. Because of lack of funds the mat consisted of a thick layer of sawdust covered with a tightly drawn canvas. I hate to think of the number of times I did my ukemi on a gap in that sawdust! It was a sad day for me when Yamada Sensei informed us that he would be returning to Japan. I think one of the things that prompted this was that we were somewhere up north preparing to do an aikido demo when we met one of the Otani brothers. Yamada Sensei spoke to him in Japanese and the man replied “I do not speak Japanese”. This surprised Yamada Sensei so much and I think it was one incident that convinced him to take his family back to Japan sometime in 1965. We kept in touch by mail or telephone for the next 18 years. Much happened in my life in the intervening years.
Soon after Yamada Sensei’s departure it was decided by a group of the remaining Dan grades to set up an organisation to try to gather together all forms of aikido. However, this was not to be, as several of the other groups were happy with their own autonomy. So the British Aikido Association was formed. John Wilkinson was appointed national coach, but when he finished his university course at St Johns in Twickenham, he decided to step down and I was appointed as his replacement. Here again as John stepped down from his position as Deputy Area Coach for the southern area of the British Judo Association, he nominated me to take his place, which the committee agreed. So I now became not only the National Coach for Aikido for the BAA but also Deputy Area Coach for the BJA.

(See Appendix 2, an article I would like to include here that was written by my teacher and best friend, Yamada Sensei, 6th Dan Judo 6th Dan Aikido)

**FREEMASONRY**

I became a freemason in 1979. My friend Len Marvelly invited me to a dinner, all he said was that I needed a Dinner Jacket and that he would come and pick me up. He didn’t tell me what it was all about. When we met again at the Judo club I then asked him “what was it all about Alfie?” He replied in the past we were not encouraged to invite potential members and it was expected that interested parties would approach an existing mason. This has all changed now and freemasonry is more open. I went through a lengthy process before I was finally accepted. I have been a member ever since. Even when moving to New Zealand a friend of ours Ray Roberts invited Pepi and me to attend a 70th birthday party of one of his Judo friends, Robin Bourdot. At this party I found out that not only did he do Judo, he was also a freemason. He invited me down to his lodge in Albany, where I continue to be a member.

**MY THREE MINUTE TALK**

It is quite amazing how others see potential in a person which that very person fails to recognize in themselves. **THIS IS A STORY ABOUT SUCH A CASE.**

I never thought that being an East End kid whose education had been heavily disrupted, having to dodge Hitler’s Bombs, V1 and V2 Rockets during WW11, that I would one day reach the dizzy heights of becoming an internationally recognized teacher!

Holding a 5th Dan in Judo and becoming the Area Coach for my association, 8th Dan in Aikido - where for several years I held the post of National Coach. Plus, being one of the few non-Japanese to hold the very high respected position as a senior technical official of a World Wide Aikido Association

(Article from the North Shore Times Auckland)
Eighty-year-old makes 8th dan

NEW GROUND: John Waite, 80, recently achieved his aikido 8th dan - here he demonstrates a move with wife Pepi.

It has been more than 50 years in the making but Mairangi Bay's John Waite has finally entered the exclusive ranks of Japanese aikido 8th dan.

The 80-year-old has dedicated his adult life to studying and teaching judo and aikido.

After years as 7th dan, Waite says he had been looking forward to getting to the next level but never thought it would happen.

"They are loathe to promote non-Japanese – they keep it very in-house," the Englishman says.

He is only "foreigner" to have been awarded the rank – the others are Japanese, two of which are the technical advisers to the Japanese Aikido Association – but he is pleased to have the honour.

"I didn't want to be awarded it posthumously," he says.

Waite is no stranger to leading the way.

In 1969, he became the first person to be awarded 1st dan in the Tomiki system of aikido in the United Kingdom and Europe.

He was the founder of the British Aikido Association, and was the national coach for the British Aikido Association for several years and was southern area coach for the association for 14 years.

Waite describes aikido as a subtle and deceptive martial art.

"It's movement and dance with a sting in its tail."

With his wife Pepi, Waite moved from England to New Zealand in 2002 and started teaching aikido at the Northcross Community Centre.

In 2004, Waite and his wife organised the aikido section of the Tran Tasman Masters Games, and they continue to teach twice a week in Browns Bay and have plans to take their students over to Japan for the next international competition in 2013.

Waite also holds the rank of 5th dan in both the British and the New Zealand judo associations.
THE START OF MY JUDO COACHING CAREER

In 1954 when I achieved my black belt I was asked by the club organizers if I would take the very first beginners class for juniors. ME - I couldn’t even spell beginner let alone teach a class. Anyway I accepted and over the years I went on to teach both juniors and seniors.

During my 60 plus years of studying and teaching Judo and Aikido I have had the privilege of meeting, training and being taught by many of the great and famous people in both activities. I will not bore you by reciting a whole list of names, but I would like to mention the few in Britain who had a lasting effect on my teaching and to a degree on my whole life.

I first met Geoffrey Gleeson in the mid-50s when he was appointed as National Coach to the British Judo Association. He and Charles Palmer were two of the few in those days who had actually been to Japan to study Judo. Part of his brief as National Coach was to make the activity more enjoyable, to study and devise ways of encouraging people to stay in the sport. There were unfortunately many instructors in clubs around the country who had little knowledge of how to teach. They were instructing simply by rote, what I call the “monkey see, monkey do” system. Judo was one of the early martial art type activities in the UK, followed by karate and Aikido and years later came all the multitude of others. Geoff’s job was to find out why people were leaving just after they completed the beginners’ course, and to devise ways of encouraging these people to find the activity so enjoyable that they stayed.

Gleeson was the first person to suggest a Teaching Method and actively promote the idea to instructors and to keep in mind that Judo was an “individual skill activity”, such as golf, tennis and shooting and any activity where the result was down to the individual. Many owe their progress to Geoff’s influence. I qualified as a County Coach in 1961 and it was partly his influence that got me into school teaching.

THE START OF MY TEACHING CAREER
In 1966 I resigned my job in engineering and took up the post as a full-time Judo Coach for the Inner London Education Authority and as a consequence became heavily involved with the British Schools Judo Association (London) so much so that over the years I held the posts of Secretary, then Treasurer and finally Chairman of that branch of the Association.

I still continued teaching Aikido and in 1967 I was elected to the post of National Coach for the British Aikido Association. I contacted the Senior Inspector for Physical Education, Stan Woollam, to discuss my problem, which I considered had little or no progression for me. He suggested I apply to sit a special entrant’s exam for London University to enter the Teacher Training programme, which I did in 1969. When I informed Stan Woollam of my success his only comment was “You can take the Teacher Training Course, but only if you can find a suitable candidate to cover your school programme – if not you can’t go”. It took four goes before I finally found someone to replace me!

I have always considered this to be one of the most enjoyable periods in my life, spent at Avery Hill College at Eltham, Kent. I passed and went on to complete the three year course qualifying in 1972 as a teacher of Craft and Design Technology. I was fortunate in that the Ernest Bevan School in Tooting was one of the schools in which I had been teaching judo and they needed a technology teacher.

In late 1973 I was approached by Stan Woollam, the Senior Inspector for PE (my previous boss). He invited me to come to the college and sit in on the current Judo Coaches Course for Evening Institute Instructors. I had attended this course several years earlier. I was intrigued by the invitation, but after the course had finished he turned to me and said “Well, do you think you could run this course?” Needless to say I was more than a little amazed. So began 13 years of coaching and examining any and all candidates who wished to teach Judo and later Aikido in the ILEA, running such classes in both their day schools and evening institute programmes. I continued in this post for 13 years, until the Inner London Education Authority disbanded in 1985/6.

In 1974 I decided to change Education Authorities and went to teach in schools in the Borough of Croydon.

From 1966 until 1986 I was involved in the London School’s Judo Association, first as secretary, then as combined secretary and treasurer and finally as chairman. All through this time I was also coaching the intermediate team for the Association.

**FAMILY LIFE**

When I look back over the years there are obviously some regrets, but who was it who said “you can’t make an omelette without breaking eggs”, and at the time I did what seemed right. I have always considered that I have been very lucky in my life. I married very young and unfortunately this ended in divorce, but I was fortunate enough to be presented with two lovely children, Christopher and Audrey, who I love dearly.
I met Joan my first wife at Goodmans Shoe Factory in Shoreditch. I was working downstairs shaping the shoes and then back tacking them. Joan worked upstairs constructing the upper part of the shoes. Some of the more matronly ladies in the factory thought they would do some match-making. They thought “he’s a nice young boy and she’s a pretty girl, they will go well together”. We dated for a couple of years and then decided to get married before I started my National Service. One of the reasons we thought about getting married was that if we were married we would be able to claim family allowance and possible housing for Joan while I was enlisted. We had two beautiful children together, our son Christopher and our daughter Audrey, who I love dearly.

Christopher was born whilst I was still serving and 15 months later Audrey came along. My mum let us live with her in Stoke Newington but then was able to get us a flat through a family member in Hoxton. We stayed there for about 3 years. It was a pokey little flat for four of us, so a contact of mine through Judo managed to get us a flat in Shoreditch. It was a two bedroom apartment on the top floor quite close to Joan’s parents. After finishing my time in Edinburgh it was not easy for us, just like a lot of young families, trying to make ends meet after the war.

Audrey was keen on swimming and spent many an hour at the local pool which was walking distance from our home. Chris was more of a wheels man and would spend his spare time on his bike or his roller skates. They both loved to go to Jefferies Museum on the weekends to view the artwork. Jefferies Museum was just across the road from our flat.

I tried teaching them Judo - Chris wasn’t interested but the few lessons I gave Audrey in our living room, saw her nearly put me through the piano with a very skillful leg technique.
Things didn’t work out for Joan and me. I wanted to do more with my life, but she was content as we were, so after about 12 years we separated. I moved out and went to live in Streatham, South London.

I met my second wife Yvonne purely by chance. I was attending a Southern Area Judo Competition with another club member, Phil Davies and on the way to the competitions he needed to stop by his sister in law’s place, and that’s how we met. Our relationship blossomed and after a few months I moved in with her in Tooting. Yvonne had a six year old son, Julian, by her first husband. Julian
was a very keen footballer and loved to watch Wimbledon play. He also enjoyed cycling. Fortunately we managed to rent a cottage in Wilton in Wiltshire and would travel down there for the weekend at least once a month. Vonnie suffered from agoraphobia so getting her to go down to the cottage was quite a challenge, but she did enjoy her time down there. Often we would go down with our friends John and Vi Bellamy. I remember one time when we decided to try and move a double bed upstairs. This was a tiny cottage, so after hours of maneuvering we decided the legs would have to come off. I don’t think we had ever laughed so much; we did finally get that bed up stairs though.

Yvonne’s agoraphobia continued, which started to put a strain on our marriage, but then it was Christmas of 1975 we received the devastating news that she had breast cancer and was terminal - we had been given a year to 15 months. That was the worst time of my life. I was angry that she had not told me earlier. I understand now that she was scared, but things could have been different. That following year consisted of numerous visits to the Royal Marsden Hospital and me not knowing if I was punched or bored. She passed away at 3am one morning by my side: the loss of a lovely lady.

My involvement in schools’ Judo and running courses for these activities were the only things that kept me sane over the next few years.
I met my current wife, Pepi through Judo. I believe that this is why our relationship has lasted. We had similar interests. She moved from doing Judo to doing Aikido, which we still teach today. We have run many classes together and have travelled the world enjoying a sport that I have spent over 60 years in. We never had children so we were able to do more things together.

This third partnership has been the most lasting and wonderful period of my life! It was in 1982 that Pepi moved in with me at Tooting. Shortly after this we decided to purchase our flat and it was at this time the flat below also became vacant so I approached the landlord about the possibility of purchasing both properties. He saw no reason why we couldn’t. We set off to the bank and we managed to get a loan to buy both of the flats. Things moved along quite merrily and after 15 years we were MORTGAGE FREE so I thought, only to find a week later Pepi suggesting we should look for a new house, because things were becoming very congested in Tooting. We were unable to park outside our flats and later the council introduced a parking tariff. Therefore we decided to move. We started to look for property in Morden. We found a lovely property but missed out by five minutes. When one door closes another opens and we found this much better house in Camrose Close, Morden. As I was retired now and Pepi was in a good job we decided to buy this house in her name, with our flats acting as guarantee. We spent five years doing this house up and getting just the way we wanted it, I thought that this would be our final move, but lo and behold we are now living on the other side of the planet in Auckland, New Zealand.

Getting back to 1982, Pepi asked me one day “What would you really like to do?” Without hesitation I replied “visit Japan”. “Okay” she said, “we will go next year”. No one was more surprised than me when Pepi produced the airline tickets and in July 1983 we flew off to Japan.

At this time my teacher Yamada Sensei was living in a place called Ju, which housed a religious order, in a farm in Yokohama. As you can imagine our first meeting after some 18 years was quite emotional and despite his years he took a bit of keeping up with. We spent six happy weeks travelling round with him and visited many places that tourists never get to see; and he introduced us to many senior officials in both business and martial arts. We visited a number of dojos, training with various senior grades. Obviously they wanted to see what we had to offer. I can always remember one
training session when we were training with several of the students who had been previous captains of Waseda aikido club. One of these was Sato Sensei who is now one of the senior teachers for the JAA. They were all amazed that Pepi was still wearing a white belt. At that time she had been training for some eight years.

Unbeknown to me the purpose behind my demonstrations at the various dojos was, I think, for people to make an assessment of my knowledge and skill. We went to the Budokan in Tokyo where an aikido competition was taking place and met Obha Sensei. It was during this visit that I was awarded my 6th Dan. This caused some upsets back in England with the BAA but as there was nothing they could do about it, they had to accept the situation.

It was in 1984 that Yamada Sensei decided to accept my invitation to make a return visit to England and from that time he has returned every 12 or 18 months to teach both aikido and judo. He never ceases in his drive to work for the good of the world and I feel fortunate that he spares the time to visit England so that we can benefit from his teaching. More recently he has been searching for a system of teaching that is suitable for the 21st century. He considers that all the various martial arts are competition orientated, which is at odds with the study of Budo. The whole concept of studying any martial art is to work at improving the inner self and endeavouring to reach a state of awareness that transcends the physical and material world. The achievements of reaching a grade or winning medals and trophies should be seen as a short term objective, while we work towards a much higher goal.

For many years he has tried to refine a method of training that will inculcate this idea – to look beyond the mere application of techniques; to look for ways of training people through the physical vehicle of any sport; to study ways and means of improving the self and in the process improve others. To lead by example, is one way of describing this system of training, which is what Yamada Sensei does very well.

Me and two of my students Tim Byrne and Wendy Maynard with Mr Yamada

Over the years I have visited Japan several times, either to attend competitions or to take groups of my students to visit several of the friends we have met over the years.
In 1991, when I took early retirement from my job as Head of Department, I decided with the assistance of three of my aikido students to take on the task of producing a set of five videos covering the basic drills of our system, plus the six koryu kata that we had been practising over the years. The purpose of the exercise was to leave some record of our system. There had been several books written on the subject, but I always considered that with the advanced technology of video this would present the subject better. Since I have been in New Zealand I have been able to get the series produced on DVD and these have been successfully distributed around the world, including Japan.

I received my 7th Dan in 1995 from Mrs Tomiki, while attending an international event in London. This was a very proud moment for me.

In 1999 the Kikusui Kai organised a celebration of Yamada Sensei’s 40 years of his introduction of Tomiki aikido into England and possibly Europe. This was staged at the Tooting Leisure Centre. Some sceptics said that it would be a disaster and would not happen but after the event, which was both a spectator and financial success, we were proud to say “Yes it could”.

OUR MOVE TO NEW ZEALAND

Well here we are in New Zealand. How the heck did we get there you may well ask. So I guess here is a good a time as any to move onto the whys and wherefores of moving to the Land of the Long White Cloud.

I must point out here that if it were not for all our friends and family around the world we could never have afforded the trip. So right here I would like to record a big vote of THANK YOU to you all for being so kind and generous to us. We will never be able to thank you enough.

Pepi and I decided, when we first bought Gemma and then later kept Star from Gemma’s litter, that once both dogs had passed on we would take off and travel the world. Well in 1999 sadly Gemma passed on. Star went a couple of years before her. We had had many wonderful years with them. But now we decided to stick to our plan. Pepi took a year’s sabbatical from her College in September 2000.

From England we went over to America, staying with Pepi’s sister and her family for a while. We then went across to Tonga. We were originally going to spend 2 weeks in Tonga, but having spoken to Mr Yamada, he told us that one week was more than enough. As it was we had seen the whole island in a day and spent the next 6 days relaxing in the sun.
After Tonga we flew into New Zealand, first landing in Auckland and then Wellington. We stayed with a friend of mine Cyril Leigh. Whilst in Upper Hutt with Cyril we decided to hire a car and take a tickie tour. It was on this tour that Pepi fell in love with New Zealand, so much so that we decided to look into immigrating. Pepi, being the great researcher, looked into it all and compiled all the paper work that the New Zealand immigration service required, which took about six months.

We had been considering moving out of England for a number of years prior to this. I was offered work in North Carolina which we were both considering quite seriously, but then the bottom fell out of the economy and put an end to this idea. I was then offered work in Japan. This was a very cushy job. I was given full accommodation, meals and spending money for teaching English in a hospital for one afternoon a week. I held out for a month and realized that I missed Pepi and the dogs in England too much. If we didn’t have the dogs, Pepi would have joined me which would have made it much easier for me. But it was not to be, so I returned back to England.

When we saw New Zealand we had no commitments and were ready for a move.

What did we like about NZ you may ask? Well for a start, the first language is English. They drive on the left (as in England): well, most of the time anyway. The people are extremely friendly and helpful, to the point where if they don’t stock what you want in their store, they will tell you of a store that may have it and even tell you where you can buy it cheaper!

The population is now becoming very similar to England in as much that you will find Chinese, Korean, Japanese, South African, Indians and a multitude of European people here, although the majority is British.

It is suggested that there is a population of 5,000,000 here in New Zealand but 1,000,000 are never at home. They are always away on their big OE (Overseas Experience). Another suggestion is that for every one New Zealander there are four sheep: I will leave the maths to you.
The weather conditions up here on the North Island are very welcoming for us Brits. with winter temperatures falling to around an average of 8 degrees at night. To give you some idea we do not even have a fireplace in our house. However, as you move further south so the temperature does drop. If you have ever visited Scotland that is the weather condition down on the South Island. One thing I will say the scenery is mind blowing down there.

As I said English is the first language with Maori being the language of those people who are tended to be accepted as the indigenous population; although in fact this is not the case. These islands (of which there are two) have been resettled several times over the centuries. The first it is suggested were from as far away as South America. Then the inhabitants of the pacific islands found the place. They either drove those people off or killed and ate them. These unfortunate gentle people were the Moriori and it’s suggested that some descendants of this race can still be found on Chatham Island.

The earliest immigrants became known as the Maori and have since become considered to be the indigenous population. As you can see in truth we are all immigrants whether we arrived thousands of years ago or yesterday, as is well known. “History is written by the winners”.

To get back to the story ...

Our original plans were to book into the Sky City Hotel for a week and then look for rented accommodation. But as good fortune would have it one of my students David Barratt had married a Kiwi girl, Alison, and she had just given birth to Connor. Her father Pat was coming over to England to see his new grandson. Pepi thought it would be a good idea to invite them over for dinner so that we could ask Pat all about New Zealand. When they arrived Pat took out a sheet of paper and proceeded to tell us what our plans would be. First he said “Ally’s room is vacant as she is here in England so you can come and stay in her room”. He then went on to tell us how he would help us buy a car, where to look for a house and the best place to buy stuff. Well what can I say - he made our transition to New Zealand so smooth. We finally arrived here in October of 2002.

We bought our house in November but were not able to move in until February as the lady that owned it was moving into a retirement village and her place would not be ready until then. All Pat said was “you might as
well stay here with me until then”. What they say about the Scots is all a lie as we have it first-hand how generous and kind this Scot is. We refer to him as our godfather and a true friend.

Enjoying an evening with Pat in our back garden

I wanted to continue to teach my martial arts and I happened to mention the fact to one of my ex-students and friend Peter Martin, who lived in Sweden. He suggested that I contact Brian Cloynes, an old acquaintance of ours from the old days in the Regency Club in London’s north. I contacted Brian and he put me in touch with a colleague of his named Ray Roberts. We arranged to meet Ray and during our chat it turned out that we had similar connections in the British Schools Judo Association. He gave us some very good advice as to how to proceed in Auckland.

We made one big mistake in our early days here of trying to start an Aikido class in the November just after we arrived but we soon discovered that in this country the preparations for the summer holidays start from around mid-November and go on until the middle of February. We had 1,000 leaflets printed and spent days...
distributing them but with a very poor result. In fact our first beginner’s class consisted of 6 students. We soldiered on with them until May 2002 when because of domestic situations we had to return to England. When we returned to NZ in the September we resumed the class and decided that we would advertise our next beginner’s class in February to start in March. This had the desired results. Our first class attracted 22 students. A couple dropped out along the way but the majority completed the course and we managed to retain a good number of the class.

In 2005 David and Allison Barrett decided to return from England with their son Connor and after they settled in David began to train with the class, which was a great help.

Our class at the Judokwia NZ

We have been very fortunate during our time here by having visits from students passing through on the way back to England and the welcome visits of Adrian Walters and his partner Helen on two occasions. Len Marvelly and his family also came over for holiday so the class has had the benefit of training with some experienced players.

Adrian and Len
Ray also arranged for us to meet Johan Boshoff, the teacher of the Ippon Judo. So now we had two dojos and the classes started to build.

Our class at the Ippon NZ

In 2004 we were asked to organise the Aikido section of the TransTasman Games. We tried to attract other styles of aikido to take part in a display. We did manage to get one group interested, but the others declined as they objected to any form of competition even if it was a display of a set number of techniques to be judged on their technical skills. This was a resounding success, but unfortunately due to funding problems, was not held again.

Judges and Gold medallists from the Trans-Tasman Games

Since the formation of the Kikusui Kai branch here in New Zealand we have produced two Ni-Dans from England and have produced four Ni-Dans, three Sho-dans and a number of intermediate grades. We are proud to say that our club is growing very nicely in all aspects of aikido on and off the mat. This year we plan to take a number of our students from England and New Zealand to Kyoto, Japan, for the International Aikido Event.

Over the years I have travelled all over the UK and been invited to various countries around the world to teach, hold seminars and give demonstrations, including Japan. I have also been invited to teach and give demonstrations at several international events. Because of my depth
of experience and years in both activities I am now considered to be a teacher of international standard.

I have always said to people “I may NOT be Good Looking … but I sure as hell have been Lucky”!

OUR TRAVELS ABROAD

My first trip abroad was to France in 1962, when a group of us from the Judo club went across for an event with Mr Yamada. After the event some of us decided to see the night life. We called in to a night club to see the KanKan girls. We were sitting there in the semi darkness and all you could see around the room were these Judo insignia glowing. I think the bouncers took the night off as there wasn’t going to be any trouble. My second trip out of England was again for Judo; the London Judo Society asked me to go over to Jordan to meet the Crown Prince of Jordan and set up a programme of junior classes. As it was, the classes were already established. My belief was that as this was shortly after Vonnie passed away, George Chew and Eric Domony thought it would help to get my mind on something else.

It was not until Pepi and I got together that my travelling really started. When we made our first trip to Japan in 1983 we were met at the airport by Yamada Sensei. What a reunion that was. We boarded a coach as I sat next to Yamada Sensei he leaned over to me and said “she is very young”. I said “I am very lucky” and we both laughed. Our first night was in a YMCA. Our room was so small you couldn’t even swing half a cat. I thought I can’t take six weeks of this. But, the next day we travelled down to Yokohama where we met a friend of Mr Yamada’s (Mr Hoshino). He was a very upright executive and walked like a 10th Dan. We were marched out of the train station and along the road. Mr Hoshino would point out to us different shops, roads, the bowling alley and many other places: we thought this very strange. We then arrived at a mansion, which to us is a block of flats. We got in the lift and Mr Hoshino said “we go to the top, I always start at the top”. Again we thought what is it with this man! He took us into the apartment and showed us around, even to the point of explaining that when the beer under the sink ran out, just put the empties outside and they will be replaced. Not being beer drinkers we were not sure what he meant. Anyway we smiled politely. He then turned around and handed me the keys and said “this is your home for the time you are in Japan”, and left. I was dumb struck: I looked at Mr Yamada and he just smiled. Later Mr Hoshino returned with a big box of groceries: what a man. Apparently he and his friend (Mr Tasaki) bought this place in town so that if they worked late they could crash out for the night. It was ours to use for the whole six weeks, even when we travelled down to Fukuoka, we were able to leave most of our luggage in Yokahama. We had a wonderful time visiting many places and people.
While we were shopping I saw this belt I liked and being an avid buckle collector I was keen to buy it. But when I suggested to Pepi she talked me out of it, which is not normally like her, but it was quite expensive. I saw it again at the airport just as we were leaving to come home - again Pepi talked me out of it. Oh well I thought it’s not meant to be. When we arrived home and I was unpacking what did I find in the suitcase, but the belt! To this day I don’t know how Pepi managed it. I am sure that she conspired with Yamada Sensei, because we were together all the time.

Since then I have been back to Japan eight times: four of them with Pepi and the other times with groups of Judo and Aikido students.

Pepi’s sister Meera and her family live in America, so we have made numerous trips over to California. One of these trips fell over my birthday, so Meera and her husband Raj bought us all inclusive tickets to Las Vegas. That weekend Pepi and I saw four shows and most of the hotel displays down the strip. Over the years we have also done many trips around America with Meera, Raj and their girls Sharena and Monisha. We also took a cruise down to the Bay of Mexico and trips over to Hawaii twice.

Earlier I started to talk about our around the world tour and only got as far as New Zealand. I will continue now. After New Zealand we went over to my nephews Peter and Robert in Australia. Peter, Jill and their family live in Melbourne. We spent Christmas with them and then moved on to Perth to see the New Year in with Robert, Maureen and their family. From Australia we went into Japan and then onto India, before returning home to England.
Whilst we have lived in New Zealand we have returned to England about 5 times. These trips back to England would not have been possible without the loyal support of my students and friends – in particular Tony Evangelou at Rotherhithe, Richard Todd at Margate, Arthur and Bob Austin at Wandsworth, and Tony Russell-Ward at Sheffield.
We based ourselves with Kumar, Leena and Rohan, Pepi’s brother and family in Beckenham, Kent. Our trips back to England once took us through Hong Kong and another time by way of Singapore, but most times breaking our journey in California.

I was once kidnapped and taken to Cyprus for a shooting holiday. I thought I was going to meet a sponsor for our Aikido event. So suited
and booted I set off with all the relevant paperwork along with Pepi and one of my students, Adrian Tyndale. I was told that the meeting was to take place in one of the hotels near the airport, so I didn’t cotton on until the guns and suitcases were pulled out of the boot of Adrian’s car at the airport.

Another wonderful holiday was with Audrey and Mick in Malta. Halfway through the holiday we were pleasantly surprised by their son Steven and his girlfriend Tasha turning up. Fortunately they were able to book the room above us.

The Aikido has taken us to many places such as Brisbane, Australia, Ohio in the USA, Thailand, Spain and of course England and Japan.

MY PETS
As a child my dad kept chickens and rabbits. These were mainly for the table. He also raced pigeons. He even had a portrait painted of the one he was most proud of. We had a number of dogs through my childhood; mum had a little terrier which she was really fond of, her name was Trixie and Maureen used to push it around in a baby’s pram.

Joan and I didn’t have any pets because we were always out at work and busy bringing up the family. When I moved in with Vonnie, she already had a big boxer called Max. When Vonnie used to baby-sit the greengrocer’s girl Tracy, Max would sit at the top of the stairs to prevent Tracy falling down them. Unfortunately he developed cancer and had to be put down. We decided that we would not get another one, but a week later we saw a boxer advertised in the local paper, so I went over to North London and bought him. We called him Sam: he was much lighter framed than Max but just as much fun. Julian’s mate had a cat that just had a litter so he talked us into having one. I had just received my 3rd Dan in Aikido, so we called him Aiki. As with all kids Julian promised to look after him and tend to all his needs: this lasted a week and then his mum was left with the job. Talking about Aiki the cat reminds me of a tip one of my college lecturers gave me. He said that “if you are asked to write an essay, you can always bring it around to something you are familiar with”. So I wrote about how Aiki the cat came into our lives and went on to write about my Martial Arts.

When Pepi and I got together we decided to get a budgie. One of my friends bred them, so picked out a nice blue boy for us. We called him Peter, as Pepi had a budgie when she was young called Peter. Apparently he was such a nice bird, we hoped that this Peter would be his clone. In 1986 we decided to try and open our own Martial Arts Centre in Sydenham, South London. As Pepi would be at the Centre all day on her own we decided it would be a good idea to get a dog to keep her company. Pepi being the great researcher and never having owned a dog before, bought every book she could find on dogs. I even took a day off school to go to Crufts so that we could look at the different breeds. I was not that keen on having a dog, as they are such a commitment. Pepi saw a litter of Weimaraner puppies advertised in the paper and asked me if I would come and look at them, as I have had dogs before, she thought I would know what to look for. When we got there, these three little puppies came running over to us. I wanted to take all three, but Gemma chose us. She came over and fell asleep on my foot. She was the best buy ever. I always said that if I wasn’t with Pepi, I would marry Gemma. Pepi was keen to make sure Gemma was well behaved. She joined obedience, agility and show classes with Gemma.
Together we would go all over the country for different shows - although as time went on the shows took second stage to the pub lunches! Gemma did so well she gained a 5th place at Crufts. Two years later we decided to breed Gemma, we must have spent over a year looking for a suitable sire for her. In 1987 she gave birth to seven little puppies, four girls and three boys. We decided to keep one of the boys and called him Star.

He picked up Gemma’s good behavior and habits, so now we had two dogs to tour the country with. Star ended up being a little too big for the show ring, but we continued to do obedience classes with them. At the obedience class we met up with a lady called Pearl who had two boxers. She and Pepi became great friends and ran the dogs together most weekends.

Our next pet was one I really didn’t want. I took Pepi to the local fun fair and told her she must not win a goldfish. So what happened - we ended up with a fish. I thought, oh well fun fair gold fish don’t live that long. We put him in a bowl and after a month decided to buy a tank. Six months later he needed a companion. Fergus lasted about six years. He developed a swim bladder problem and the vet told us that he was suffering. He must be the only fish that had to be put down by the vet. His companion, Dougal, was given to a friend who had a large pond with lots of goldfish.

After our dogs passed away we decided that we could not go through that kind of loss again so decided not to have any more pets… so I thought. But last year we started talking about getting another dog. As my health was not so good we decided that a boisterous young puppy would not be a good idea. So again Pepi researched into what would be easier to manage and lo and behold we ended up with a
Senegal parrot. His name is Spartikiss. He was bred by a lady and her daughter in Wellington, so seems to prefer ladies. Or it just might be me he is not too fond of. He has a little harness so Pepi can take him out for trips to the beach. I am really glad that we got him, as he will be great company for Pepi in later years.

CONCLUSION

Finally I would like to say a big, big THANK YOU to all the people who have touched my life in one way or another. Firstly to my mum and dad for bringing me into this world and giving me a loving start to life. Secondly I would like to thank my second mum who continued the great job my birth mum and dad started. I would also like to thank all my brothers and sisters for sharing and caring for me.

Thank you to my three wives who loved me without reservation. To Joan who gave me two beautiful children, Christopher and Audrey. To Yvonne who brought Julian into my life, who I am proud to call my son. To Pepi who has supported me in all my interests and opened my eyes to many wonderful experiences.

To all the Judo/Aikido students and instructors I have had the pleasure to teach and practice with especially Senta Yamada, my best friend, teacher and mentor for fifty plus years, who will never be forgotten. Martial Arts have been a true passion of mine and I have enjoyed every session and made some wonderful friends along the way.

To all my nephews, nieces, grandchildren and other family members who have kept in contact throughout the years - thank you.

I love you all

I would like to thank North Shore Hospice and particularly Barbara for helping me assemble this book. I would have liked to include lots more photos of my family and friends, but unfortunately there is a limit to the number of pages. If I have missed anyone out or if there are any mistakes in this book, please forgive me and put it down to old age.

* * * * *
JOHN WAITE

I have three children, two from my first marriage:
   Son            Christopher John Waite
   Daughter       Audrey Veronica Barnett nee Waite

Step-son from my second marriage:
   Julian Jackson

All three children are married with families

My second wife passed away in 1976

My wife Surekha (Pepi) Waite and I have been together since 1982
We have no children

I have 10 grandchildren all living in and around London, England
I have 5 great grandchildren living in and around London, England

I served two years National Service in the Royal Corp of Signals  1949-51
Employed by London Transport           1951-54
Worked in the Engineering Industry    1954-66
Employed as sports coach in the Inner London Ed. Authority  1966-69
Attend Avery Hill Teacher Training College (annex of London University)  1969-72
Retired from my post as Head of CDT Department  1991

Came to New Zealand in 2000 as part of our round the world trip  2000
Obtained residency                        2002

1881 British Census:

Dwelling 7 Brunswick Place, Whitechapel, London

JOHN WAITE        Head. Occupation Boiler Maker  Age 35  Born Stafford 1846
EMMA WAITE        Wife. Occ. Dressmaker            Age 45  Born Dorset 1836

40
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Louisa and Robert came with Emma to the Waite family. Robert was christened Dec. 1865 his father was recorded as William and mother Emma.

**FAMILY TREE**

Robert Waite married Emma Snear Aug. 1868. Their son  
Robert Henery Waite married Esther Redgeman. Their son  
Robert James Waite (16/12/1887) married Grace Govey (1/1/1892) in Aug 1908. Their son  
Robert George Waite (18/1/1913) married Elizabeth Quinton (7/7/1913) in Aug 1935. Their son  

We believe that Robert Osborn (1863) and Robert Henery Waite are one and the same.
LOOKING BACK FORTY YEARS

Since ancient times in Japan, the practice of Budo has been very important in the personal development of human beings. We use Budo as an inclusive term to describe the spirit and practice of Judo, Aikido and other martial arts. Through practising the physical skills of offence and defence, a true harmonisation of body, mind and soul can be achieved. This was the true aim of Budo, not just winning competitions. Budo was not a matter of fighting for its own sake; on the contrary, it was more about the promotion of mutual respect and a peaceful way of life.

We can make a comparison here with the ancient Greek system of Pancratium, whose practitioners developed not only their fighting techniques but every kind of skill and accomplishment. In ancient Greece, the Olympic Games, at which these skills were demonstrated, were part of a religious festival not just a sporting event.

Traditionally, in the world of Budo, an over display of winning prowess was considered to be very vulgar. When I started Judo, in about 1930, the traditional attitudes were still very apparent. I remember that we used to have contests at religious festivals and the people watching were very serious and discreet in their behaviour. There were no raucous celebrations of victories.

After the Second World War, during the period of American occupation, the situation changed dramatically. The Americans seriously considered Budo and the practice of martial arts generally as a contributory factor leading to the promotion of a warlike spirit, so they prohibited these activities. However, by that time Judo had already spread to Britain, France and many other parts of the world and become well established.

I remember that when I first visited Britain forty years ago (in 1959) I was very pleased to see that the traditional true form of Judo, which was disappearing in Japan, still remained alive and thriving in Europe. In Japan, there was a strong desire to dispel the misunderstanding about Judo which led to the American prohibition, so the emphasis was placed on Judo as a sport rather than a means of personal development.

There were some positive aspects to this. Judo first became an Olympic sport in 1964 and its popularity spread all over the world. Once Judo was regarded as a sport it was obviously rational to introduce weight divisions. However, for some practitioners the main aim was to get a gold medal at the Olympics, so the personal development aspects of Judo were neglected to some extent.
Budo was not about fighting for its own sake; on the contrary, it was more a way of promoting mutual respect and a peaceful way of life. I should point out here that martial artists in the past were not physically weaker than those of today. These early Judo people were highly skilled practitioners. Size was not the criteria. Even the lightest of them were strong, dedicated and devoted students and could throw heavier built opponents with ease. They continually analysed their own capabilities, and were also socially adept.

In the world today, everything is changing drastically. Budo is no exception. The advances of science help make the world smaller, and whether we like it or not, it forces us to realise the importance of mutual prosperity.

After the Second World War, in which two ideologies faced each other, there was an increase of conflict between justice and raw power. Misery and wars increased, still creating some unfortunate situations.

Meanwhile, some European countries have taken the initiative in a search for world unity, ending unnecessary competition. The European Union is an example of this. However, if leadership is lacking an ideal organisation will not be formed, making it clear that the world could face destruction in an instant.

It is about time to realise that neither ideologies nor power, nor organisation on its own can create an ideal world. We should try to understand that our egoism is part of the problem that stops us from attaining a peaceful world. It is easy to blame others as the cause of our difficulties, while we neglect to make an effort to overcome our own faults and weaknesses. So far, egoism has destroyed initiatives and organisations, which could have led to a world in peace. Our enemy is our own selfishness.

The true aim of Budo is to overcome egoism, not just to defeat our opponent. The teaching of Jesus, Buddha and others all agree with this. However, it is sad to see that even religions have been tainted by human egoism, which has resulted in promoting wars in the name of God. Consequently I am extremely pleased to learn that, mainly in England and France, there is a strong desire to teach and practice Budo in the traditional way.

Of course Budo begins with the study of practical techniques to use against an opponent but this is not just to achieve victory in the contest but to win the battle with our own egoism.

It was my good fortune that, right from the beginning, I learnt Aikido directly from Ueshiba sensei himself and I was very grateful for his special training. He taught me that if you win by force, you will one-day loose by force. It is bound to be like that. You cannot overcome you enemy by force. The true aim is mutual respect (love) and shared appreciation of the skill that you and your opponent are practising which go far beyond mere competitiveness. This is the only way to win your enemy over and to live without enemies. This is the way to pursue true freedom and happiness of the world without unnecessary rivalries.
Of course, I acquired a great deal of knowledge and many practical skills from Ueshiba sensei but during my training with him I noticed that I would experience sudden and surprising insights into the true spirit of Aikido. These insights made a profound impression on me but were difficult to express in words. When I tried to do this Ueshiba sensei would say, very happily, "that's Aikido".

Ueshiba sensei and also Kano sensei, the founder of Judo, would both say "Achieve victory over yourself before you achieve victory over others". I am sure that this approach is the true spirit of Budo, with its emphasis on harmonious personal development. This kind of approach is needed to make world peace.

As mentioned before I have been impressed by the positive moves to develop the true spirit of Budo, which involves maintaining strong links with traditional practices.

Fortunately, from Dr. Kano's Judo and Ueshiba Sensei's Aikido I was able to learn many techniques and important principles.

And finally, from Tomiki Sensei I could learn his teaching system of Aikido too, as taught to him by Dr. Kano in Judo.

I will always be most grateful to these three Sensei, and I hope that I can continue their good work for world peace.

I also hope that in the near future, a book on their lessons will be produced. On this occasion of the fortieth Anniversary I would like to extend my gratitude for all the kindness shown to me.

I applaud the efforts of all those who are setting a good example for us all.

S. Yamada
6th Dan Judo 6th Dan Aikido