

## Obituary: Patrick James Toner

20 April 1930 – 2 March 2021

It is with the greatest sadness that we announce the passing of Patrick James Toner, JNZ & Kodokan Shichidan. Pat was awarded his JNZ Lifetime Award of Grade in 2008 and his final Kodokan grade in 2015.

Born in Gillingham, Kent on 20 April 1930, he always cited the fact that he shared his birthday with Hitler with wry amusement.

Pat Toner was one of the horde of 'ten pound poms' who migrated to New Zealand in 1956 after being graded that year to 4th Kyu by the BJA & has been a JNZ member since it was founded the same year.

Prior to this he served in the Royal Marines and SBS in Malaya.

As a member of the old Wellington Judokwai at the YMCA on Willis Street, he was part of the winning team at the inaugural National Championships in 1958 and won individual many medals over the years.

He was graded to Shodan by the 1st Kodokan Mission (Masumoto <8th Dan> & Takeuchi <5th Dan> & recent All Japan Champion) in Wellington in 1962.

In 1964 he embarked on a year's training in Japan. He practiced Judo at the Kodokan where he was under the tutelage of Donn Draeger. He also attended the funeral of Kyuzo Mifune, Judan whilst there.

Following the 1964 Olympics there were many celebratory competitions all over Japan. Patrick competed at one held at Tenri University, where a large Dutch contingent including Anton Geesink and Wim Ruska were also present. Patrick managed to make it through to the third round at this competition.

His training in the martial arts included Kyokushin Karate, which he studied directly under the style's founder, Masutatsu Oyama, achieving a grade of Nidan as well as being awarded his branch instructor's certificate.

He trained under Morihei Ueshiba in Aikido recounting many a freezing morning sitting in seiza listening to long lectures from the founder in his archaic Japanese.

In 1966, Pat was captain of the New Zealand Judo Team which contested the Oceania Champs in Australia. He won silver in the open weight event, losing to team mate and close friend, Phillip (Mick) Yarrow, after Mick managed to distract him from the fight for a second. This was a source of much amusement to Pat, who never balked at telling the story if prompted. He also won bronze in his weight category.

When Rick Littlewood was selected to represent New Zealand at the Munich Olympics in 1972, Pat was in Europe at the time and Rick was able to smuggle Pat into the Olympic village so he had a suitable training partner. This became a whole lot harder after a terrorist group attacked the Olympic village. Pat composed a detailed account of these events following Rick's passing in 2018.

Through the next 40 years Pat travelled around the world dozens of times to compete or learn more about Judo. During this time he won many medals in World Master (Veterans) Championships including golds in Brisbane in 1997 & France in 2006.

Patrick lived a busy life in the martial arts, training Judo, Karate and Aikido at various times. He was coach, friend, confidant, drinking buddy, dining companion and inspiration to generations of martial artists in New Zealand.

Right up until the last weeks of his life, he was a regular visitor at the dojo of Wellington Judo Academy – a club which through Pat's involvement, as well as many of his close friends like John Haanstra and Terry O'Connor traces its lineage from the old Wellington YMCA club, Budokan, and Miramar Judo Academy.

Pat was inducted into the New Zealand Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 2000 at the same time as Rick Littlewood.

He received Life Membership of the New Zealand Judo Federation in 2009.

While laconic by nature, when given the right prompting, Patrick was a wellspring of entertaining anecdotes. His collection of catch phrases will live on through his friends.

Pat was a bon vivant who had a huge lust for life and though dogged by illness in his last years, he still enjoyed the company of friends and family right until the end.

The thoughts of all of the members at Wellington Judo Academy and the extended martial arts community are with Patrick's wife of thirty years, Carol and his daughters Patricia, Maureen, Maria and Victoria and their families as well as his siblings and extended family in the UK.

JNZ also extends its condolences.