

NEWSLETTER

No.271 March 2018

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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February Report					
New members 6		Total number of adults training 45		Total number of children training 43	
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 23rd & 24th February					
Shodan	Lily Crampton	5Y2 step	Kaido Mori	2Y2 step	Andrea Troncoso Salas
5th Kyu	Ana Cuthbert	3Y12 step	Cameron Blake	S5 step	Neale Windress
7th Kyu	Errin Rodger	3Y11 step	Murray Booth	S4 step	Greg Burley
	Jonathan McConnell	3Y1 step	Michael Bannah		Louis Chatfield
8th Kyu	Benjamin Cribb	2Y8 step	Vladimir Roudakov	S3 step	Duong Thai
9th Kyu	Ayumi Iwazaki		Janna Malikova		
Events in March					
1. Sogo Shinsa			2. This Month's Holiday		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 9th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 23rd 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 24th 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easter Holiday: 30th March Friday ~ 2nd April Monday		

Coffee Break

A trip to Ukraine

I would like to share my story of a series of events on a trip to the Ukraine in October last year. I am not writing about Aikido this time, but I'm offering some laughs for your entertainment.

Well, the start was an email I received from an Aikido instructor in June last year. He was one of my uke's at the seminars I held in Poland back in 2014. In the email he wrote, "My students and I liked your seminar and style of aikido technique and I would like to invite you to conduct a seminar in Lviv in the autumn. A lot of the heads of young European Aikido schools (such as: Ukraine, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland) would like to come to your seminar because it will be great experience for their development in the future." I was very honoured to be invited for my Aikido from so far away as Ukraine. My policy is that I would be happy to visit anywhere in the world, if my schedule fits, in the hope of spreading the 'real Aikido', the Aikido that is a very effective martial art, especially as we know Aikido can be regarded as a 'non-realistic martial art' by other martial artists.

Bogdan Chayka - the head of Senshin Yoshinkan Aikido, and I agreed to have a three-day seminar in October. He booked a flight straight away for me and I was pleased to feel his enthusiasm over my visit to his dojo. Well, it was still June and we had plenty of time to prepare. I was expecting busy months ahead both with personal and business matters. In July, a once in a life time event was happening: the top of Tenrikyo (my family religion) called 'Shinbashira-sama' was visiting my church. It was like the Pope visiting your home for Christians. So, my head was totally occupied with this special experience at that time. Once this was over, our annual demonstration was right in front of me. You know, as you get older, your brain cannot take too many things at a time and I was dealing with things one by one. Well, the demo was done with success and I thought I deserved a bit of rest. I rested two days, and then I had seminars for Nudgee College and Sogo Shinsa as upcoming events in September.

Before I know it, October was upon me. Yet I was calm as I had an experienced Poland before, and Ukraine was its neighbouring country. I thought I would be fine as long as I got my passport, flight ticket and my *gi*. Just five days before the departure, I was browsing the internet to get some information about the Ukraine and there I saw a line "No need of visa from Japan but some other countries may need to

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obtain a visa for entry.” I felt the blood drain from my face. I grabbed my son to help me research the visa information, and he told me that Australia was one of the few countries that needed a visa to Ukraine. It was impossible to get a visa in five days including a weekend. What a loss I was going to cause Bogdan for organising the seminar and for other students who would have paid their travelling tickets and hotel accommodation, I supposed. The world around me suddenly went very dark. I had to tell my wife...ask her to sort out the situation... Regrettably I told her what I found, and I was in a big trouble. I, a fully-grown man holding a rank of 7th Dan black belt, was scolded heavily as if I was a little child for neglecting my responsibility of preparing my trip.

Anyhow, she rang up the Embassy of Ukraine located in Canberra for help and was told there was no way to get a visa within that short period. I gave up and began to think for a way to pay compensation for Bogdan and other students. In the meantime, my wife was still reading the website of the Ukrainian Embassy despite being snapped at by an arrogant officer there guaranteeing her there was no hope. After reading long pages of visa text etc. headed by “Australia and New Zealand citizens need visa to enter Ukraine!”, very close to the bottom she found a line “visa on arrival” separate from the visa type section. There she found a way to get into the Ukraine without applying for a visa in Australia: I could enter if I had an official invitation letter from a legal entity registered in the Ukraine. There was hope!

My wife rang Bogdan for the first time as organising this event was done completely by emails until then. There was not much time left and knowing he would not read the email straight away we needed to talk to him directly. He answered the phone finally after many trials, “Great!” we thought. She began to explain the situation saying this was an urgent matter, but found Bogdan saying, “Oh, I do not know much English...Does Mori Sensei like beer? ...” “Urgent!!!,” she was desperate to get through the message while he was happily talking about a way to entertain me in broken English... Hearing these conversations at her back, I realised ‘V’ from Kazakhstan arrived at the dojo for his son attending the kids class. I went to call him, thinking both countries were part of the former Soviet Union until it’s end in the late 20th Century, and hoped both shared the common language. Lucky enough, ‘V’ looked after the situation very well speaking in Russian and explained the instructions for what Bogdan needed to do immediately if he wanted me to enter his country.

Well, I arrived at Kiev Airport seven days after the panicky day with the official invitation letter from Bogdan. Interestingly, I was assured by ‘V’ that there was no problem at all even if the letter did not work, as long as I paid US\$100 to bribe the officer. Nice advice! Fortunately, I did not need to bribe anybody and met Bogdan safely after about 39 hours of travelling and waiting. We got in his student’s car for what was meant to be a 6 hour drive to Lviv. After about two hours, a tyre got punctured and I had to wait one hour for RACQ (Ukrainian version) to arrive. Although the tyre was changed it was not quite right for the car and the car could not run fast, even though we were on a highway. Finally, we arrived at my hotel 12 hours after we left Kiev, 51 hours had pasted since I left home.

Bogdan welcomed me and treated me as best as he could. We arrived at the hotel just after noon and I was exhausted. Bogdan asked me what I wanted to do and I said, “please pick me up for dinner,” meaning to rest until then. The next moment, he said, “Ok. Let’s go for dinner!” and he took me out for “dinner” which he thought meant “lunch.” Well, you know my level of English, believe or not, I was the best English speaker there... Anyhow, I enjoyed my first day arrival without any further concerns, looking forward to the three-day seminar starting the next day.

The venue was in an old sports complex from the age of the former Soviet Union, located on a little hill that I had to walk up every time. The size was about our demo venue, the sports hall of Somerville House. The very first seminar I was asked to hold was for black belts only. So, I was meaning to do Aiki-waza class and expected at least 20 – 30 students. To my great surprise, there were only 4 black belts, 1 brown belt

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and 2 white belts waiting in seiza! Where were the Germans, Swiss, Spanish, Italian or other Ukrainians, I thought??? They were all Bogdan's dojo students. I had to give up my plan and taught something suitable for all the colour belts. I was quite confused what was happening there since I was expecting to hold similar seminars to those I had in Poland that had about 100 adult students and 100 children students. You know, I began to worry about Bogdan's financial state, knowing that calling me from Australia was costing him a lot.

Well, the next day seminar was slightly better, having about 40 children from his dojo and 4 adults from another Ukrainian dojo. I felt a little better, not for me but for Bogdan. I was feeling lots of responsibility to make sure my seminars were worth it for Bogdan, especially as he was paying from his private savings and realising these seminars were not making enough money to cover the costs. I did ask him some questions why there were no students from other dojos and the answer was "politics" which he seemed to find out only after he began to organise this seminar. From my understanding it meant several things. One was about power balance of instructors in Europe and another was about benefits of other instructors or students such as rewarding high ranks or status. Bogdan invited me only because he liked my style of Aikido and he was right, what I could offer was only Aikido but nothing more than that.

Poor Bogdan, his plan of having many students from various countries believing they wanted to learn Aikido from me failed. I felt so sorry for him that I was not popular enough to attract enough students. You know, if I was truly a famous Aikido master, Aikido students would have come no matter whatever politics were there. This experience taught me a lesson. Even though I am proud of my Aikido based on my knowledge from my teacher, Master Gozo Shioda, at the Headquarters and the experiences I earned being taught from my students at Brisbane dojo, I have been too lazy, not trying to make efforts to connect with people overseas who were interested in my Aikido. So, I now have my own account on Facebook and I try to communicate with anyone who likes my Aikido. I was neglecting this new SNS world, but now I have 1353 Aikido 'friends' in the world! Well, this might be normal for you, but this is a huge improvement for me.

I completed all the seminars and thankfully, all the participants and Bogdan were very pleased with me. I was so relieved and satisfied, feeling happy to leave for home. As the travel by car took far too long from Kiev to Lviv, Bogdan bought a flight ticket for me from Lviv to Keiv this time. I enjoyed looking at the beautiful scenery of the ancient city in the car on the way to Lviv Airport totally relaxed. Yet, as we got closer to the Airport, heavy fog started to block our sight suddenly. Oh no, no more trouble please! Unfortunately, my prayer did not work and we found no airplanes at the Airport. All the flights were not operating. A staff member rushed to us as we arrived and told me to give him my email address to send me a new ticket when my flight was rescheduled. Problems; 1) I did not know my email address, 2) they did not guarantee that my flight could be rescheduled or not.

To cut a long story short, you've read enough of troubles, I arrived home safely two days later. Many asked me if I would ever go again hearing about my tight and hard schedule. I reply, "Yes, of course, not only back to Ukraine, but I would go happily anywhere in the world as long as they want me to come for my Aikido." I did not write about Aikido at all this time but I shall write an article related with Aikido in the near future. Furthermore, please everyone welcome Bogdan as he plans to come to train at the Brisbane dojo in August this year.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori