

NEWSLETTER



No. 188 April 2011

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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March Report						
New members 11		Total number of adults training 77	Total number of teens & children training 40			
Results of Sogo Shinsa on 25th & 26th March						
Godan	Emmanuel Economidis Richard Diehm	Jun-3rd Kyu	Ira Seidenstein Roger Yang	8th Kyu	Vladimir Roudakov Janna Malikova	
Jun-shodan	Peter Hills Genevieve Sargent	4th Kyu	Simon Horn Steve McKewin	9th Kyu	Comila Roebuck Duong Thai Lisa Milne Dominic Hogan	
3rd Kyu	Rebekah Webb Tony Starkie Cameron Blake Mai Bui Justin Charell Joel Delaney	5th Kyu	Indrawan Candra Kumala		4Y3 step	Matthew Watson
		6th Kyu	Vinicius Fernandez Shonelle Rutherford McKenzie Lange		3Y3 step	Lawrence Monforte Ryan Slavin Aarjaun Burch
		7th Kyu	Steven Slaveski Matt Hede Izaiah Fergusson	2Y7 step	Joseph Stuart	
				S4 step	Jocelyn Fergusson	
Events in April						
1. Getsurei Shinsa		2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 8th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 15th 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 16th 1:00pm~		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easter and Anzac Holiday – Monday 22nd ~ Tuesday 26th				

A bit of knowledge for Aikido

Progress in Aikido

I, at the age of twenty-years old, received Shodan at the graduation assessment of the 22nd Senshusei course (known as the riot policemen and uchi-deshi course) in December 1986. Three months later, I was told by Master Gozo Shioda to take the 2nd Dan test. Well, the official fastest period to become a 2nd Dan after receiving Shodan is usually one year. So this order from the Master sounds as if I was demonstrating extremely high ability in Aikido or that I was a genius in martial arts. The Answer is "No".

The background of Master's order was that the Yoshinkan Headquarters kept receiving constant requests from the Indian-Japanese Association to dispatch an Aikido instructor to Calcutta in India. India is not a gorgeous resort country, you know, and not one of Master's uchi-deshis volunteered to go. The troubled Master hit on a good idea that the youngest uchi-deshi who was only new would not dare to say "No" to his order. Besides, the youngest uchi-deshi had a reputation of having nerve and he would survive in the third world, he thought. There was one problem with the Master's idea though that a rank of Shodan in the martial arts field was far too low to teach in an overseas country representing the dojo, and therefore I ended up taking the 2nd Dan test in a rush so I could be sent to India.

When I arrived in India news reporters were waiting to interview me. Prior to the interview, a responsible official from the Indian-Japanese Association who was travelling with me from Japan told me not to speak a word. Well, while I was forcing myself to keep my sickly smiles without a word he introduced me to the reporters saying I was a twenty-five year old professional Aikido instructor with the rank of 3rd Dan. At that moment I realised the condition of the request from India was that they



wanted a professional Aikido instructor holding at least the rank of 3rd Dan and aged over 25 years old. Though I got 2nd Dan just before I left Japan, my honest rank was one third of what they wanted and my experiences both in Aikido and life were short by five years. I was in a state of shock to know the reality that I was not worthy at all to be invited by the Indian government.

I, despite of the loss of my confidence in Aikido, still had to be at the dojo as the invited instructor. A few days later, when I was at the mixed Japanese martial arts dojo where I was meant to teach Aikido, a Judo student came to me to check out what I was teaching. He questioned me as to whether Aikido used a knife in training when Judo did not. Because the question was within my knowledge I was pleased to answer "Yes!" with a proud look and I continued with more explanation that Yoshinkan Aikido offered good training for knife skills both in offensive and defensive styles. As he listened to my answer he demanded that I demonstrate my defensive skill against a knife attack – it was a challenge. The situation got tense suddenly. I was representing Yoshinkan Aikido and it meant that my failure – the possibility of being knocked down by his attack – was the failure of the school itself. People in India would label Yoshinkan Aikido as an impractical martial art. It was a fateful moment for my future and also Yoshinkan's, I thought.

As I mentioned earlier, my experiences in Aikido were still very limited with only two years length and that meant I knew only basic movements and basic techniques. Though I trained hard in Senshusei Course, the so-called 'Hajime' class style (very intensive and hard training) I never practiced any of the applied techniques in a practical and realistic way. The low level of my Aikido made me feel insecure to take the challenge of the Indian male. I did not know many of Tanto-dori (techniques of disarming a knife) yet except six basic ones and I did not feel confident of using those techniques at all. In disregard of my dismay, the challenger grabbed a Tanto in his fighting mode. I had no time now to be perplexed.

My first focus was on how he grabbed the Tanto as the way that an attacker holds the knife limits the pattern and angle of attacks. At the same time, I closed the distance daringly to avoid giving him more options of fainty and waving his knife before he actually struck. It had a risk but it was easier to handle his attack by limiting his movements. He held the knife with the blade's side down (the same as our shomen-uchi or yokomen-uchi grip) and it meant he had only two ways of attacking by pulling the tanto over his head to strike downwards or pulling it to his chest to strike sideways. At the next moment, I saw him pulling up the knife towards his right head and as he did so I stepped left-side forward to block his arm (like a yokomen-uchi block.) Thereafter my body moved very smoothly to perform an Ude-garami (arm-elbow lock) with full strength that was my newly learnt favourite technique. The technique had to be done thoroughly, hard and without mercy. If I put a soft technique on him he would keep coming back to challenge me until he won with no sense of fear either to me or to Aikido. Well, he was a Judo student and had no idea how to uke an Aikido technique. So, he fell very naturally and hit his temporal area onto the mats violently. My thought was proved to be right and he never came back to try me out again. Besides, to my surprise, he spread the story about how he was beaten to all of his Judo friends with his amazement at Aikido techniques. I gained high respect from them thereafter.

The incident reassured me about the quality of my Aikido training in the previous two years. I never had a chance to use a technique outside of the Aikido classes and I did not know my realistic ability. Since Aikido does not offer a competition it is hard to know if one is getting stronger with improving skills and it is hard to judge if one is stronger than others. Many people do give up learning Aikido because they cannot feel the achievements in their progress to keep them motivated. The two years of basics I went through was very valuable. I got excited and looked forward to my Aikido ability in future after I practiced harder to master more advanced techniques.



Well, I have been training Aikido for twenty five years this year and I think sharing my experiences in progressing in the Aikido level that I went through might be beneficial to your Aikido journey.

The period from when I got my black belt until becoming 3rd Dan I pushed myself to the limit of what my body could perform physically. I trained each technique as fast as I could move using all of my muscle strength in each movement, the emphasis was on speed and power. I always made sure to move faster than other uchi-deshi members and police students. As I tried hard to reach my body's limit in speed and power I realised that I could not progress any further or deeper in my Aikido skills. This is just a common knowledge that young people in teens and twenties can demonstrate the highest performance in sports as most sports depend on power and speed. Sports players deteriorate in their ability after the peak in their twenties and then they retire. People comment on the players that they were great when they were young. But my Master was different. He was even more amazing after he hit seventy years of age.

What I came up with as the next focus point was the way of using hips. 'A' senior uchi-deshi always said as if he was chanting, "Hips are the key!" So, I concentrated on using my hips, pushing them forward instead of using my muscle strength every time I applied a technique and I began to feel something was improving. I started to enjoy studying Aikido from the principle perspective dreaming of getting closer to the Master's supreme world. This was around my 3rd Dan. By the time I graded to 4th Dan I began to realise that focusing only on hips did not give me a solution to progress a deeper level of Aikido but interlocking hips and limbs was the key. I studied the mechanisms of how each of my body parts was linked and relations between mine and my training partner's body parts. I was analysing each technique separately in its principle and mechanism but one day while I was practicing a technique I had a flash of insight that all the techniques were the same in the end.

I finally hit the entrance of the Aiki-waza world (ultimate Aikido technique using Aikido principle without one's physical force or joint locks) after I passed 5th Dan. I had to study Master's movements, lines and timing in detail to figure out why that kind of technique was possible. My focus shifted to form a centre line being sensitive to each of my body parts, more to consolidate them all into one solid mass instead of linking them. I began to perform one or two simple Aiki-waza's at last and that gave me great joy and fun in my Aikido world. I sometimes did not want to fall asleep being scared of losing or forgetting the sense of my body that enabled me to perform Aiki-waza's.

You may think I am a psycho... But I get pressured in my dream by an Aiki-waza that I saw or received from my Master, but one I had not performed by myself yet. It forces me to perform and I can actually do it when I have the sensation in my dream. This experience happened to me not only once but many times through my 6th and 7th Dan phase. What I have realised now is that the ultimate Aikido techniques work on a bone structure and that is why Aikido can be so effective to big people (although they have big muscles, Aikido can neutralise it as Aikido works on their bones) with a small amount of strength. My focus of training at this stage is 1) uniting uke's body parts into one solid mass, 2) solidifying my body and bringing it to nought freely.

I believe that no one can improve in anything (work skills, sports, martial arts, studying, etc) by just doing it as a routine even if you are sweating hard, but we have to use one's brain and figure out how to aim for better results. One's improvement in anything is determined by how much he/she has struggled both intellectually and physically, I think. I would like to pursue my Aikido diligently with lots of thinking and struggles aiming my Master's Aikido called "godlike technique," even one step closer. I will be pleased if this article can provide you some reference for your Aikido learning.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori