



August Report

New members 2

Total number of adults training 59

Total number of children training 51

16th Annual Demonstration Awards

◆ Jiyu-waza

1st Award

Ryan Slavin & Lawrence Monforte

2nd Award

Kaido Mori & Peter Hills

3rd Award

Joseph Stuart & Cameron Blake

◆ Aubrey Bannah Award

Kaido Mori

Justin Charell

Cameron Blake

Joel Delaney

◆ Renzoku-waza Award

Brandon King & Shaun Mcanzie

Events in September

1. Sogo Shinsa

- Training starts, Friday 9th 7:15pm~
- Steps, Friday 23rd 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 24th 1:00pm~

2. Children & Teens' class Holiday

- ◆ Teens' classes are closed from 17th Sep to 4th Oct. Class resumes Wed 5th Oct.

3. This Month's Holiday

- ◆ Dojo's Holiday - Monday 26th September

Sharing Sensei's experience & knowledge for Aikido life

Senshusei-geiko known as Hajime class

I have an elder brother by two years and I was always competitive with him, just as normal being a young brother. One day, he bought a pocket book about Kyokushin Karate, nothing serious but more out of a mere interest. When I saw him reading the book I decided to buy a martial art book too but not the same style. So, I went to a book shop and one book appealed to me with its title, "Beat down a big man, Aikido." I was only thirteen years old then and all the older students at the school looked a lot bigger than me and scary, more like adults than children. Well, the title was very attractive to me. Though I never knew about Aikido or the fact that Aikido had several different styles, the book I chose was written by Gozo Shioda, a pure accident. I had no idea at that time that I was going to be his last uchi-deshi to learn Aikido directly from him five years later and become the 18th Shihan of Yoshinkan, and what's more, running a Yoshinkan dojo here in Australia away from Japan as my lifelong career.



What stood out in the book to me was about the Senshusei course. The passage “ten selected riot policemen out of toughest men with other martial arts black belts qualifications get well punished through the roughest training style, and after they survive the nine month course clenching their teeth –tears, vomiting, knocked down, forced to the limit of one’s body –they become Aikido experts when they graduate” was very impressive. I simply wondered what kind of training could make the toughest men vomit and, for some reason, I felt I would like to try out when I became eighteen (the fittest age I thought then.) I vaguely dreamed of becoming a master of the art.

Well, it was just a temporary excitement from reading a thrilling book and the young boy forgot about it soon, being too busy with playing his favourite sport, baseball. But I gave up playing baseball when my eye sight weakened sharply and my ability to sense the ball declined rapidly at the same time. So I lost interest. I needed some other activity to keep me fit at the age of fifteen and began boxing simply because the boxing gym was only five min away from my home. I found out I was pretty good at it and ranked at the top in my prefecture within the year. Again, however, my eye sight prevented me from going to further competitions in the national precinct due to the possibility of losing my eye sight. The regulations of the youth boxing association didn’t allow it.

I personally did not have any interest in martial arts or fighting, talking honestly, but it was my father who recommended that I learn Aikido as my after-school career. My father, working as a Tenrikyo minister had an idea of sending me overseas to spread the teaching, and he thought that Aikido would be the best means to extend the essence of teaching since the philosophy of Aikido went along with the teaching very well. His idea of sending me overseas to live and mastering Aikido as my life career was both out of blue to a young country boy, but I liked the challenge and I chose the unique path.

As I said, my father came up with the idea but it was the idea only without any information or instructions for me to take. So, I had to research the art from scratch. There was no internet yet of course and the books were the only resource for the information. I then found out there were several different styles in Aikido and all the headquarters were located in Tokyo. The first step to Aikido was moving to Tokyo.

The major styles of Aikido were Aikikai, Ki Society, Tomiki and Yoshinkan. You may be surprised that my first option was Ki Society as it offered a proper school education not the uchi-deshi system. The education course was for two years that qualified you to be an instructor as well as a Ki therapist to cure injuries and illnesses. The second option was Tomiki style as the receptionist on the phone told me they offered the best training to be strong. The third option was Yoshinkan and here I recalled my memory of reading about the Senshusei course. I headed off to see all the options in order to compare and choose the one best suited to me. Tokyo, however, was a huge city for a country boy and its transport map was like a most complicated puzzle of ten big spider webs. I spent hours and hours and the only headquarters I found was the Yoshinkan. It was my fate.

I went in and inquired about the Senshusei course. As soon as I mentioned the name “Senshusei-geiko” the welcome-beginner-atmosphere changed in a second. All the men in



black belts from the office (uchi-deshi's as well as Sensei's at the time) gave me a sharp stare and assessed me checking me from my head to my toes. I saw them exchanging glances with sneers. They all agreed that I was another young idiot who would not last the severe training even for a day. People who applied for the Senshusei course were usually experienced Aikido practitioners who had been training for a few years at least and they wished to take the course, being determined to become an instructor, loving the art so much. I was one of the very rare cases who did not know anything about Aikido but just left his country home without any other purpose. I somehow got approved to start at the 22nd course though receiving cold looks (it is the 47th course now.)

Joining in the Senshusei course as a general student meant I agreed to be treated as an apprentice uchi-deshi and I had to live at the headquarters. Besides, we had to get our heads bald. Well, imagine being locked up in a dirty and smelly room with some other males and all heads being shaved was just the same as life in jail. My other high school friends who went to Tokyo got highly sophisticated and they looked cool from the eyes of our local friends. In my case, I just looked like a prisoner by moving to the big city Tokyo and I felt so miserable being laughed at by my school friends.

Right, about the actual training side now. It was purely frightening at the start because we did not know what to expect in the course. The first one week was the hardest physically and mentally as we did not know the class structure; if the first exercise, say 'Hiriki-no-yosei (1) would last for the rest of the ninety minute class?, how many Koho-ukemi (falling backwards and standing up immediately) we had to keep going for?, how long we had to be in the seiza position with our eyes shut?, etc. We felt nothing but absolute fear at each class.

But eventually, we found out the class was very well structured; one basic movement out of six for the first half an hour, one basic technique out of sixty for the second half an hour performing as fast and as correctly as possible with the instructor's "Hajime" calls, and muscle work out(s) of the day for the last half an hour. It was easier mentally by knowing the patterns of the class but it did not mean it was easier physically.

The class was deathly hard. Posing at Hiriki-no-yosei (1) position for many minutes gave us unbearable pain and burning in our thigh muscles and knees would shake desperately before they jumped up and down against our will. The training you would never be able to accomplish by yourself but you can push through only because everyone else is doing it. By forcing to exceed your personal body limit further, more each time, your body gets toughened beyond your expectation. Repeating the same technique more than a hundred times at least in half an hour both being shite and uke, not just practicing it but moving as fast as you can with full strength each time as the instructor calls you out "Hajime! Hajime!" at the timing as the fastest pair comes back to the kamae position. And this is why Senshusei-geiko is called Hajime class in Australia. You lose your sense of balance by getting up and down so many times in high speed and you still try to face to your partner. But as soon as you face your partner that is the start of another go... Through this type of training you learn a technique by your body but not by your brain. The worst part of this training for me was the evil odour from your partner's gi. Summer in Japan is hot and humid, and our gi's that absorbed plenty of men's sweat and saliva never quite got properly dry from the previous day. The half-dry gi's and full of germs stunk. Still, it was this training method that sharpened our technique and



movement dramatically, a totally different level from the other students training in the general class only.

Once our body got extremely worn out from the Hajime training, the muscle work out was waiting for our pumped-up body. It could be; five hundred times Koho-ukemi, hundreds of times of Shuto-awase (striking your forearm against your partner's as hard as possible), on and on frog jumps, endlessly repeating Yonkajo locks to each other, or simply just being in seiza... There was an exercise that strengthened abdominal muscles by lifting your straight legs up about two fists higher than floor and had to keep them in the position for many minutes. Master Gozo Shioda who was in his seventies sometimes joined in this exercise. While young Senshusei's were shaking their legs and stomach muscles with their faces twisted Master was cool as if he was just lying down relaxingly. He laughed at us loudly saying, "Young people these days are so weak." Our pride, especially all the selected riot policemen being well known as the toughest warriors, were all shattered. We were all determined to beat him in this exercise at least as we knew we had no chance to beat him in Aikido technique.

All the trainings and exercises helped us to build strong Aikido body. But not only that, we definitely gained strong confidence in ourselves after we completed this kind of hard training twice a day for nine months. All the graduates of the riot policemen say that they developed the tough yet calm mind that allowed them to deal with any dangerous and heavy police tasks, thinking nothing could be harder/worse than the Senshusei training. Surviving the Senshusei course meant more than mastering Aikido skills but trained our spirits more than anything. Graduating the 22nd Senshusei course surely gave me a confidence and pride to live as a persevering grown-up man.

Next month in October we will hold our annual Senshusei class known as Hajime class. As the class is held only once a year at our Brisbane dojo the class is longer than ninety minutes, usually about two hours. The class will be challenging for your body and soul but you will gain a great sense of achievement at the end of the class after surviving the extreme pain and stress. My intentions of holding the class is to make it strict and severe yet enjoyable and to provide a valuable experience in developing both body and spirit tougher and more enduring for any students who take the class. I encourage any level of student especially young people to participate in the class for tasting the true Yoshinkan spirit.

OSU!
Michiharu Mori