



No.214 June 2013

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/dojofb>

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<b>May Report</b>					
New members 4		Total number of adults training 65		Total number of children training 42	
<b>Results of GetsureiShinsa on 24<sup>th</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup></b>					
<b>Jun-Nidan</b>	Michael Bannah	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Mark Cocquio	<b>5Y11 step</b>	Brent Weston
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Gareth Badcock		Tim Bishop-Kinlyside	<b>4Y11 step</b>	Matt Carpenter
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Sean Keogh		David Abbott	<b>2Y9 step</b>	Murray Booth
	Kent Windress		Wikrom Tang	<b>2Y5 step</b>	Cameron Blake
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Viraphong Phounesana	Thomas Murden	<b>S5 step</b>	Dominic Hogan	
				<b>S4 step</b>	Darsy Darssan
<b>Events in June</b>					
<b>1. Sogo Shinsa</b>			<b>2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training starts, Friday 14<sup>th</sup> 7:15pm~</li><li>• Steps, Friday 28<sup>th</sup> 7:15pm~</li><li>• Shinsa, Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> 1:00pm~</li></ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Queen's Birthday – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June</li><li>• Dojo Holiday– Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July</li></ul>		

## Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

### Shodan

I occasionally hear the question pop up; 'Does {martial art x} work on the street?' If I am honest I have to admit that I really don't care if Aikido works on the street. What I have come to learn through training and my experiences at Brisbane Yoshinkan is that it works for me and on multiple levels. So if it can work for me, then potentially it can work for anyone. If you work, it will work. But let's rewind a little...

I first discovered the Brisbane Yoshinkan Dojo almost by accident; during the chaotic process of moving house I had an urge to investigate if there was an Aikido Dojo within my new local area. I had made a couple of abortive attempts in other styles of Aikido over the years, but never got beyond a few months training and a grading or two. In hindsight, I knew there was something I wanted from training but as I was unable to pin down specific detail - I inevitably quit. My interest however was reignited by the website for the Dojo and considering it was mere minutes walk away I knew it was time to give Aikido another go.

I believe that first impressions count and when I turned up for the beginners course I was immediately impressed by the Dojo, Sensei, Shuko and the students themselves. I found the first few classes taxing; I hadn't been active for some time and most classes I wound up so exhausted I couldn't remember right from left, which was frustrating for me and I imagine also for Richard, Lee and Lawrence who put me through those initial beginners classes. I never let my lack of ability or frustration put me off though and after the beginners course continued training as often as I could.

Gradually the challenges of my first classes were replaced with other new difficulties such as the Japanese language, dojo etiquette and an increasing number of techniques. I began to enjoy training more and more though as time went on, despite the increasing intensity and I also started to research Aikido outside the Dojo, stumbling across articles and videos online. One night as I left training I noticed 'Total Aikido' a book on sale at the counter and decided to buy a copy. Sensei informed me that I could probably purchase it cheaper online and my reply was, "But I want to read it tonight!" It was only as I started reading that I noticed the photos of



Sensei demonstrating many of the techniques in the book; I was somewhat aware of Sensei's history but discovering this book made that history real for me in a tangible way.

I remember reflecting soon after my first awkward gradings that for some reason, which I couldn't really articulate, I felt like the Dojo could be the something I had been looking for out of Aikido. I stopped thinking too much about stuff like that and just attempted to commit myself to the training. Leading up to my 3rd Kyu grading was probably the most difficult time at the dojo I remember; physically but also mentally and I had to concentrate to keep up the effort for a fortnight plus the grading. I consider myself fortunate in that I had Cameron, Joel, Mai, Justin and Tony as training partners and they were already well ahead in their own training so that was a huge help to me in passing my own obstacles to brown belt.

I then had the opportunity to participate in the Dojo's 17th annual demonstration; I had felt it was beyond me the prior year and still wasn't sure what to expect, but gave it a try and had a great time. It was encouraging to see everyone train hard up to and then on the day to put forward their best demonstrations. Although it was only my first demonstration, I could still perceive that everyone's Spirit was high and that made it an awesome day. I even managed to surprise myself by winning an award!

The training toward Shodan was difficult, but the foundation, assistance and experience that I had received through my earlier training and gradings held me in good stead and I now knew that it wasn't beyond me, although I knew again there was another step up again to get there. I have Kaido and Cameron to thank for helping me with the new techniques this time around and also Brent and Joe for pushing me to what I thought was a limit and then beyond. I also learned something from Lee and Murray one night at training; something specific was preventing me from learning a set of techniques and they provided me with a different way of looking at it. Not a different way of performing the techniques but just a phrase: 'Why don't you look at it this way...' I've learnt that sometimes it's these simple things which can have a large impact on your Aikido. Greg was also there training hard with me at both Jun-Shodan and Shodan which made the whole time somewhat less daunting; congratulations mate, we all know how hard you have worked toward this and you deserve your rank. Thanks also to Lawrence for wishing me luck on the day as I was preparing to step onto the mat, I wasn't nervous until then! ;)

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you to everyone I have had the privilege of training with on my journey to Shodan and also to all those I haven't and may not have the opportunity to train with; the Dojo is what it is to me because of all the students past and present who have trained here and help build this Dojo which we can all enjoy today. I especially thank you Sensei and Shuko, I'm sure I could not have made it without your support. My intention for now is to train at the Dojo as often as I'm able to; I have come to appreciate the training, the ritual and the people here. I'm not sure where life may lead sometimes; my partner Kerstin and I have spoken about moving overseas and who knows? She is open to that possibility and so am I, so we may end up there in the future. If that is the case I can assure you that once the boxes are unpacked, I will be seeking out the nearest Yoshinkan Dojo and that is because of Brisbane Yoshinkan.

OSU!!!

**Matt Hede**

## Coffee Break

### Sharing some *uchi-deshi* life episodes

There was a daytime class called "zagaku" (seated-learning) once a week while I was working as an uchi-deshi at the Yoshinkan Headquarters in Japan. "Zagaku" was the class taken by Master Gozo Shioda giving us lectures about life and attitude in general or at the dojo - more like a religious sermon with Zen riddles included



for ninety minutes without a break while we were in the seiza position. The members of the class were all uchi-deshis and well trained tough policemen from the riot police course.

Master usually began with preaching about the daily attitude and behaviours tediously for half an hour to start with. The way he talked was so quiet in a flat tone without any exciting manner that made us feel as if it was going forever and our focus was locked on the pains of legs as his boring sermon could not take our minds off the pain. It was pure torture for those who struggled from being in seiza. On the other side, those who had no trouble sitting in the seiza position, like me, had to suffer from fighting against sleepiness, keeping the posture desperately without falling forward or backwards or even sideways; you know, our bodies were always very tired from the utterly hard training. After about half an hour Master suddenly starts asking questions pointing his finger to anybody saying "What do you think? Tell me your opinion." He spoke about half an hour on and on covering several different stories yet he did not mention about which part of his lesson he was questioning for. Besides, our brains were going totally dumb from either awful pains or sleepiness that did not help us give an appropriate answer to satisfy Master. The quiet pressure from Master was enormous and his way of picking us like Russian roulette gave us cold sweats adding more torture to this severe training.

Our answers were sometimes totally out of context and we usually kept stammering without knowing the goal. Master did not say anything back directly but listened silently to all the stupid answers. The question time was about twenty minutes long having a few students picked and when he was satisfied with seeing enough struggling from his students he moved on to continue his flat speech for the rest of the class until the time was over. Although we were not in trouble at the class by giving Master inappropriate answers we got scolded badly from the senior uchi-deshis afterwards. Both silent pressure from Master during the class and frightening rebuke from senior uchi-deshis afterwards were quite terrifying for us to take.

When finally the class of agony was over we had to stand up from face-to-partner positions and rush to the line-up position at the back of the dojo to bow to Master to end the class. This usual routine of the class, however, was not usual or easy any longer after ninety minutes of non-stop seiza. No matter if our legs were painful or not, everyone's feet and legs were numb as a result of the human body mechanics. At the loud call of "Seiza!" Master turned round to face to the shrine at his own position and we were meant to run and line up in seiza as fast as possible but it was chaos; some are screaming/groaning from the pain, some are trying to stand up but ending in falling over, some are crawling disgracefully, some are dragging their injured leg from a bad tumble...it just looked like a battlefield. Well, we all eventually reached the line up position and somehow finished the bow and then Master who was sitting in seiza for the same time as we did and should have received the same gravity stands up smoothly just as usual and leaves the dojo briskly without a hint of awkwardness. Well, he was truly the Master. We, definitely not masters, collapsed and flipped over on our back and kicking our legs clumsily to release the pains and numbness straight after Master had left the dojo.

Here, I being the lowest ranked uchi-deshi had to rush after Master into his room to serve him a cup of tea. Whenever I went in his room, there he was waiting impatiently leaning his body forward in an excitement to hear the report about how everyone was suffering. The old man did not care how much his students understood/learnt from his sermon at all but he wanted to know excitedly how comical the scene in the dojo was after he left, as if a child wanting to find out the result of his mischief. Being his uchi-deshi we were expected to answer him in accordance with what he wished to hear to make him happy; describing the scene precisely sometimes or expressing the picture exaggeratedly with comical remarks at other times. For example, if I reported "Everyone is in pain," then he would not be happy finding it too simple but if I described the scene "There are heaps of cockroaches on their back fluttering their legs," then he would get excited repeating after me "Ah! Heaps of roaches!" Well, uchi-deshis had to harmonise with Master in any circumstances at anytime and this was a part of learning his Aikido. Being able to read his mind and training a sense of tactics/strategy between him to act in perfect harmony in daily life was the key to becoming his *uke* whom he liked to use at the demonstrations. When we were able to take his uke in the way he wanted us to move that made the demonstration look more graceful - then we had less chance of getting injured while receiving his powerful techniques and absorbing his technique more.



The biggest character of our Yoshinkan founder, Master Gozo Shioda, was his childlikeness, I think. He had a sense of fresh childlike character though outside was old that was his most outstanding charm attracting many people. This character was notable when he demonstrated. He enjoyed his Aikido very much when the technique worked on his uke beautifully well and seeing the expression of amazement with happy feeling from his uke. As he got happier he was full of smiles and accelerated his technique with more power and more variations one after another, and he talked happily about techniques more and more with jokes and gestures. But when his uke had no expression on his face then Master got grumpy very quickly and he either changed his uke immediately or performed a violent killing technique on him giving enough damage to change his uke. Well, he was a pretty honest person in that way, he could be easily happy or easily upset. The purpose of demonstration for him is not like winning a match but for the audience to understand the greatness of Aikido and therefore an uke who could not harmonise with Master failed to fulfil his task not contributing to the way he wanted to show his Aikido. Most of the uchi-deshis were quite sensible to read Master's thoughts and we were able to tell by observing even a technique if he was irritated by his insensible uke or if he felt uplifted with excitement. We often looked each other sharing the same opinion silently while we were on stand-by at the demonstrations.

Serving Master at daily life was also difficult too. For instance when there was a phone call on a day off at the dojo, you know young uchi-deshis were living there. It is usually an enquiry but if the person on the other side spoke in an almost inaudible voice like a senile old man then it could be the Master. The sharp uchi-deshi replied "Osu! I am ..., sir!" instantly and he passed the test. But if you answered "Who is calling?" or "How can I help you?" without recognising him then Master labelled the person as whom he could not rely on to be a useful disciple. Even if you recognised him the next step was still difficult. He would say "Ask him to do that tomorrow," and you should never ask him who he is and what is that. There was only one reply, "Osu! I've understood! I will pass on the message, sir!" Then we had to ring the top uchi-deshi to report the call and seek desperately for his instruction. Uchi-deshis should never question Master.

Whenever Master was out and returning to the dojo all the uchi-deshis had to wait in a line at outside of the dojo entrance to greet him on each occasion. He gets out of the car and asks you "How did it go?" If you stammer for a moment without understanding his demand then you have been labelled instantly as a dull-headed gloomy person by Master and he would hardly talk to you - for a while at least. Master disliked gloomy, depressing and dark personalities or slow thinkers without quick wit. Knowing his preference from hearing conversations between him and other senior uchi-deshis, I always tried to respond to him in no time as happily and brightly as possible even if the answer was off the point. That was the secret of well-tuned harmony to build a pleasant relationship with him.

As time passes and experiences in working as an uchi-deshi get accumulated we acquire ability to assume what Master's "it" or "this or that" means; if it is about Aikido, someone, technique, event his favourite sports of Sumo or baseball or any others. It is hard to explain the feeling of it but we just knew what he meant from the shortest word as "ah~" and were able to reply to him with an appropriate answer immediately. Strangely, our level of Aikido progressed according to the level of harmony with Master in general and it pushed up uchi-deshi's Aikido into an utterly different level to those of general students'. "Aiki that is life," was absolutely true there. Master trained us not only on the mats but the training in daily life by being with him cultivated both senses and sensors needed for Aikido.

If you are interested in knowing about him more there are books called "Aikido Shugyo" and "Aikido Jinsei" written by him. I simply wished to share some of the episodes about him that only uchi-deshis could share just as a coffee break for you to enjoy.

OSU!

**Michiharu Mori**