

NEWSLETTER

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AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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January Report					
New members 3		Total number of adults training 48			
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 27th & 28th					
Jun-3rd Kyu	Louis Chatfield	9th Kyu	Van Morris	2Y3 step	Dean Jones
7th Kyu	Darren Evans				Andrew Crampton
8th Kyu	Avinash Premnath	5Y11 step	Jason Williams	S4 step	Kerry Nicholson
Events in February					
1. Getsurei Shinsa			2. This Month's Holiday		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 17th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 24th 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 25th 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo's Holiday: 27th Monday		

Coffee Break

My hairstyle

A high school aged girl asked me a question at the counter. It was nothing to do with techniques or spirituality. She asked, "Why is your hairstyle like that?" Well, although I wanted to answer her there and then, the ponytail becoming my style had too long a history behind it. So, I just laughed it off then. Yet, I thought to myself that her honest question was something everyone else might be thinking too. And here I am, writing the answer as a coffee break article. If you are not interested with such a personal topic as my hairstyle(!), please disregard this article.

Let me start with my high school age. I was quite an ordinary young boy who was keen to make myself look cool. So, it was my morning routine to set my hair into a trendy fashion after the most popular rock musician, spending half an hour everyday. Oh, I was very particular about my appearance at that time. However, the freedom of deciding my own hairstyle was taken away on the day I entered Senshusei Course at the Yoshinkan Headquarters. I sort of knew that my medium long hair was not suitable for it and I did have a haircut beforehand. But it was not good enough. I was scolded and sent to have a haircut straight away. I ordered a hairdresser to do a quarter inch crew cut haircut, but begged him to use a pair of scissors instead of hair clippers. It was the smallest rebellion on my part and my pride to not use hair clippers, as I felt a hair clipper was for a child but not for a cool man! The poor hairdresser, he was very troubled.

In Japanese culture, it was a custom for apprentices to have a crew cut haircut in any field and to be treated as nothing of importance. I kept the same hairstyle for three years until my saviour appeared. Yasuhisa Shioda, the third son of Master Gozo Shioda, came back from England after a few years of his assignment to spread Yoshinkan Aikido. Surely, he was influenced by Western culture and told other seniors that it was nonsense to force young uchi-deshi to have the crew cut haircut. Yay, I was rescued.

There were only two hairstyles uchi-deshi had at the Headquarters. One was a so-called 'Yakuza style', the slicked back hair, and the other was a so-called 'Sushi-chef style', the short crew-cut hair. Both had one's forehead clear and they were the typical martial artist hairstyles. I did not choose either of them but a common general young male's hairstyle, having my fringe long covering my forehead. I liked it as I did not look like a typical martial artist. But, here was the problem. Whenever I left Headquarters to teach Aikido to

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other places people did not recognise me as a martial artist and it was a disadvantage since I could not gain instant respect when just showing up. I was aware of it.

In 1995 I moved to Australia to open my own dojo. Right, here I became independent but had nothing, losing the position title of Headquarters. Firstly, my wife and I went to Melbourne where my Aikido friend, Joe Sensei of Shudokan, lived while we were waiting for the appropriate visa. Whenever I introduced myself as a martial artist everyone looked at me in doubt. I felt this was a disadvantage for my career and visited a hairdresser in St Kilda where we stayed. I was meaning to order the short crew-cut hair, one of the martial artist's hairstyles, but when I saw a lady who was working there I changed my mind. To me, she had a cool short haircut, back and side clipped short and her fringe stood up spiky. So, I asked a male hairdresser to cut my hair like her. The next moment, to my horror, he put his manly bearded mouth right next to my ear and whispered, "Don't you worry. I'll make you beautiful..." in such a sweet feminine voice. It was my first encounter to meet a gay man and at the same time, I realised that the cool lady was a lesbian. Well, he was she and she was he! It was a shock for me, a naïve Japanese young man, to be welcomed into Australian culture this way.

Anyhow, I kept this shorthair for a while but it was such a bother as it needed to be cut so often to keep the style. I thought it would be much easier to have the slicked back hair, just a matter of putting in lots of gel. This worked fine for some years and I did look like a martial artist with dignity, I believed. One day, however, a female student was having a chat with Shuko at the counter and said, "Why does Sensei have his hair slicked back? Elvis Presley is not a trend." Ok, so people were thinking I was a fan of Elvis Presley looking at my hair... I was not after a rock musician look, despite how legendary he was, I was after a budo-ka look with dignity!

Furthermore, when an important student from Joe Sensei's dojo visited here, as I knew he was coming, I welcomed him politely and humbly with my best smile. Despite of my kind hospitality, he looked puzzled and said, "Where is Mori Sensei? Joe Sensei told me to greet him first." Well, this was not his fault and it was not only him who could not find me, anyway. I had to think of some sort of a symbol that could tell people I was the instructor of Brisbane dojo. The answer was having long hair like a samurai. So, I let my hair grow into a ponytail. This worked quite well. I stood out among my students and it became much easier for visitors to recognise me. Even when I visited Headquarters' 50th anniversary demo in Japan, many people who wanted to see me looked for a ponytail. Finally, I reached the hairstyle that gave me the look of a martial artist and worked as a trademark of the instructor of the Brisbane dojo.

My concern now is something I cannot avoid. I am in my fifties now and due to nature I will lose my hair steadily as I age. Is the last option I have to have a skinhead? As I was wondering, I saw the new president of America, Donald Trump. He was in the news not only for his radical political measures but for his hairstyle too. Because his forehead was getting bald he was pulling his back hair to the front against its will. That was an idea, I thought. Well, I can try pulling up my ponytail to the front when my top gets exposed. As I imagine this hairstyle, I can not help but grin and wonder how the high school girl would comment on my hair then...

Osu!

Michiharu Mori