

NEWSLETTER

No.268 December 2017

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: yoshinkan.info Facebook: facebook.com/AikidoYoshinkanAUS/ Twitter: twitter.com/YoshinkanAikido

November Report																																	
New members 1		Total number of adults training 50		Total number of children training 46																													
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 17th & 18th																																	
Jun-Shodan	Kerry Nicholson	3Y10 step	Murray Booth	S4 step	Neale Windress																												
4th Kyu	Rebecca Qiu	3Y1 step	Joel Delaney	S3 step	Charles Delaporte																												
7th Kyu	Zoran Kazovic	2Y12 step	Andrew Crampton	S1 step	Greg Burley																												
8th Kyu	Jonathan McConnell	2Y2 step	Viktor Ovcharenko		Louis Chatfield																												
9th Kyu	Koby Scarff	S5 step	Lily Crampton		Duong Thai																												
Events in December																																	
1. Sogo Shinsa			3. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class																														
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 1st 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 15th 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 16th 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">♦The dojo is closed from 23rd to 26th, and is open on 27th to 29th, and is closed again from 30th December to 2nd of January 2018.																														
2. Children's Class Holiday through X'mas and New Year's Day			♦DECEMBER & JANUARY																														
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No children's class will be held during school holidays. The last day of this year's children's class is on Thursday the 7th December. The first children's class in the New Year is on Thursday the 25th January 2018.			<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>31</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr></tbody></table>			S	M	T	W	T	F	S	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23																											
24	25	26	27	28	29	30																											
31	1	2	3	4	5	6																											

Sharing the feelings of Black Belts

Godan

Like my grading in September, this may be the last of my articles and so I'm feeling the pressure to deliver some insight and words of wisdom.

So much has changed in the 9 years since my previous black belt article and yet so much is still the same. This year marks my 19th year at the Dojo. Many people have passed through the dojo in that time. Of those people I've made so many friends and I'm grateful for each and every one of them. I think I've made so many friends because (in general) Aikido seems to attract a certain type of person and the shared experience of our Aikido journey binds us together. Those people enjoy developing themselves and working with others (dare I say harmonising) to achieve their goals. Whether you joined Aikido for the purpose of learning self-defence, development of self-confidence, discipline, patience, humility or because you saw a YouTube video of Sensei performing Aikiwaza and thought – 'Wow that's cool!', the people who continue training at the dojo all have similar traits. These are things that we all identify with and it draws us together.

Some of these aspects are:

Respect – Our respect for one another allows us to train such that we aim not to harm each other and to strive for harmony in our techniques.

Love of technique – if we didn't love the technical aspects of Aikido then we would perhaps do another "blunt force trauma" martial art like Muay Thai, Karate or Tai Kwon Do.

Peace – a love of the peace that you get when concentrating on learning and executing a technique or taking uke during a jiyuwaza. A sense that everything else falls away.

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Discipline – Having the discipline to keep pushing yourself through intense training (hajime), a grading (whether it be yours or taking uke) or a regular class after a hard week at work.

Improvement – a drive to improve yourself, particularly after having seen Sensei execute a technique throwing or controlling someone effortlessly.

Joy – the feeling you get when you execute a technique well or equally when you've taken uke for Sensei and you are able to stand again, after an explosive or powerful technique, ready to attack again.

Patience / Perseverance – Aikido is not a martial art for the impatient. You won't be proficient in a day, nor an expert in a year, nor a master even in 10. To become proficient takes time. Don't try to rush it. Practice as much as your life allows. Enjoy the experience.

Humility – This allows us to continue to make mistakes and learn from them. Without humility we stop learning as we are too proud to realize that we still make mistakes.

During my many years of practice, I've been involved in and generated so many stories. I thought I'd share a couple with you (the rest are probably too lewd to be put on paper) and the lessons I learned from them.

- When I first started Aikido I was 21 (in 1998) and played a lot of basketball at the time. In much the sports attitude, after a game I would promptly strip off my sweaty singlet and cool off without a shirt on. I promptly found out that doing so at the dojo was strictly against etiquette. There are many points of dojo etiquette to navigate – please try not to be upset if you are corrected, just learn from the experience and try not to make the same mistake again.

- One of my early gradings (perhaps my first brown belt) I invited my family to come and watch. This also happened to be the first grading I've heard of where one of the students was sliding into Kamae, got his (second smallest) toe caught in the mat and ended up with a compound fracture. My brother used this as the excuse to never come again.

- In a similar period, a group of Japanese students were visiting the dojo. A tall brown belt student (nicknamed Skull for his shaved head) was taking uke for one of the students after class. I'm unsure whether our student was resisting the smaller Black belt's technique, wasn't ready or wasn't capable but he ended up with a broken forearm. This is a warning that whilst resisting as an uke can sometimes be used as a teaching tool, it can also be dangerous. Basic technique is meant to be practiced in a somewhat relaxed manner (in execution not attitude!). Whilst junior ukes often think that resisting will reduce the impact on your body (ie. Protecting yourself) or that relaxing is not 'how it would be on the street', a relaxed uke is less likely to get injured.

- Not long after this I had become fast friends with one of my grading partners (Stuart) and his wife (Connie - also a student). We would frequently have dinners, train out in parks and on occasion go out to clubs. We were so excited about Aikido that we made a dance out of it (think Kihon dosa to dance music) and the Hiriki-no-yosei (1) drinking move. During this period I also travelled to ski in the mountains in various countries and swim on foreign beaches. In many places I took the time to do Kihon dosa, thinking that I was likely the first person to do so in each of those specific locations. Let me tell you - it was particularly difficult in ski boots! I enjoyed my training so much that I wanted it to be with me wherever I went.

- In 2003, a group from the dojo went to Melbourne for a seminar held by the head instructor at the time, Inoue Sensei. We were invited to attend the seminar and for our dojo to perform a demonstration. We had a great time and learned a lot, both by working with other students and to the perspective of other Senseis. Incidentally this was one of the first demonstrations where we performed the second version of Tanto Soho and Sensei performed the "new" Jo Soho. When we first arrived we were invited to Joe Thambu Sensei's dojo to see a grading that would be presided over by Inoue Sensei. Unaware of dojo etiquette, a (brown belt) student of the

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time (Dan) wore his hat into the dojo. Sensei Jo took great offense to this. It was a simple mistake, that I (at the time) could have easily made and nobody from our group warned him (so perhaps nobody was that savvy). That evening was also memorable because whilst the students were grading for their black belts they were struggling to understand the correctly pronounced (and at speed) Japanese technique names being called. After many repeats (I was feeling bad for both students and teacher), one of the senior students who spoke Japanese (and had trained in Japan) had to 'translate' to the Australian-Japanese versions of the technique names.

- One time where I did follow protocol was during a junior grading with Richard Sensei as my uke. I finished my Jiyu Waza in the corner of the dojo near the back door when Sensei called 'Yame!'. I had my back to Sensei and was blocking Richard's line of sight (and hearing apparently). I dropped my guard and Richard proceeded into the next Shomen Tsuki - straight into my solar plexus! My stomach didn't like that so I promptly turned to Sensei bowed and ran out through the back door to empty the contents of my stomach into a poor pot plant. I then returned to the mat bowed back in and completed my grading. I guess discipline and etiquette were well learned by that point. From that point I learned that you should never drop your guard even when 'Yame' is called.

- During another trip to Melbourne for a seminar (this time being the sole representative for the Brisbane dojo), I learned a great deal about ukemi and confidence. The seminar was held outside Melbourne in a YMCA style camp where all the students lived together over a long weekend. Each night we had a few beverages after dinner and this led to the inevitable conclusion of Aikido 'Tomfoolery'. A challenge was sounded as to who would go out into the car park and perform Zenpokaiten-Ukemi. I had previous experience outside of Aikido where being egged on to do stupid things always led to disaster, so I was standing at the back of the (large) crowd looking on as several senior black belts performed their whisper quiet ukemi on to the bitumen car park. I remember thinking 'there's no way I'm going to be that stupid'. However someone saw me lurking in the background and soon the gauntlet had been thrown down. 'Jason you are the only representative from Brisbane here, come show us how to do it'..... At the time I was maybe Shodan (at best Nidan) and my confidence in ukemi was not high enough to be tried on solid (possibly back-breaking) surfaces. But being young, I bowed to peer pressure, put my drink down and moved forward. I wasn't confident in throwing myself forwards and so I asked a 4th Dan (Jon Marshall Sensei) to throw me. So we settled on Kote-gaeshi (1) and he executed it perfectly. I went flying through the air and landed with a loud smack (imagine a whip cracking). What had hit the ground was my hand, it took the impact (and had the gravel imprint to show for it) as it was supposed to - rather than my back. I rolled out of the throw and was no worse for wear. I was astounded that my ukemi had worked so well outside of the 'well cushioned' environment in the dojo - particularly since I was probably the best part of 120kg at the time. From then on my confidence in ukemi grew quickly so that the impacts to my body grew less over time (barring Sensei's special Irimi-zuki with leg sweep of course!). Confidence plays a big part in taking uke without injuring yourself.

- Whilst discussing ukemi with Sensei following this trip he said that to improve my ukemi I should strengthen my stomach muscles. I couldn't imagine what he meant at the time. However, looking back, I now know what he means. I thought I'd pass the wisdom along for you to digest (pun intended).

- In 2005 a group from the Dojo went to Japan for the 50th Annual All Japan Aikido Yoshinkan Demonstration where Sensei was to feature. It was an amazing trip. We trained at both the Honbu Dojo and with Takeno Sensei (now the head instructor of Yoshinkan) in Yamanashi. One of the things I learned in Yamanashi is that each Sensei has something different to teach. Sometimes a slight variation, sometime a slightly different explanation, sometimes an entirely new technique using the same basics. Each Sensei teaches things from a different perspective and often have lessons that resonate differently with each student.

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One of the things that has stayed constant during my Aikido journey is the dojo. Regardless of the colour of the mats (blue, red, (blue again) or green), Sensei and Shuko have been there day and night to help students achieve their goals. They have positively influenced so many students' lives, including my own. Both Senseis been great teachers and have given freely of their knowledge (even when Sensei has had to explain a concept to me for the 3rd time – who am I kidding – 10th time), compassion and patience. **Thank you** both for everything you have done for me and the dojo.

Thank you also to all of my kohai (juniors), senpai (seniors) and ukes who helped me develop myself through Aikido. Aikido would be impossible to effectively train by yourself, so without **you** none of my progress would have been possible. Hopefully I have also has a positive impact in your journey.

With the confirmation of my 5th Dan grade, my journey is not at an end, but another step forward has been taken. Whilst I may not be able to continue to devote the quantity of time to training that I have over the past year, I hope to continue my practice until I can throw Brent with my Little Finger. I suspect this will mean a long number of years in practice. J

OSU!

Jason Williams