

NEWSLETTER

No.283 March 2019

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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

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February Report					
New members 1		Total number of adults training 44		Total number of children training 38	
Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 22nd & 23rd February					
Jun-3rd Kyu	Caitlin Baptist	5Y9 step	Matt Carpenter	2Y9 step	Roland Thompson
6th Kyu	Martin Fernandez	3Y3 step	Joel Delaney	2Y5 step	Greg Burley
Events in March					
1. Sogo Shinsa			2. This Month's Holiday		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 8th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 22nd 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 23rd 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo's Holiday: 25th Monday		

Coffee Break

Training to muster the courage

A terrorist attack happened in Melbourne in November last year. He exploded a ute and began to stab people around him. One died and two were injured. The very next day, footage of the attacker wielding a knife appeared on Facebook and I watched it with my son.

In the footage I saw the terrorist wielding the knife against two policemen and some bystanders. The way he was holding the knife was with its blade pointing downwards and he was attacking in the manner of Shomen-uchi and Yokomen-uchi; like Tanto-soho No.4 & 5. "Patterns of attacks do not vary so much. They are limited to only four to five varieties," said the great master of swordsmanship, Musashi Miyamoto. This is absolutely right. This terrorist was moving his knife only in two patterns, slightly Shomen-uchi or Yokomen-uchi repeatedly.

As I watched the video clip, I was thinking how Aikido-ka would deal with him. Firstly, the attacker closed the distance to his target. Then, he pulled up his knife either towards his head, or back momentarily before he swung it down. By seeing this the policeman stepped back following his instinct. But stepping backward against attacks like this does not change the imminent danger, that is, although it is effective to avoid a few attacks it actually induces more attacks. So, the terrorist closed in and kept brandishing his knife crazily while the police officer lost a chance to disarm him, placing himself in greater danger.

'Welcome it when it comes, let it go when it leaves', is the secret of Aikido, the ultimate way of harmony. In this case, when the terrorist pulled his knife backwards that was the moment to move forward to harmonise with his motion. If he pulls and then you pull back at the same time it does not produce harmony. Only if the policeman stepped forward to block the knife as it was retracted in readiness would the policeman be able to make an opening for disarming the terrorist. Since the policemen failed to disarm the attacker, they ended up shooting him. When we finished watching the footage, my son who worked as a security officer whispered to himself, "No chance going backwards..." Truly so, I agreed.

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I wrote about an episode in India in a previous article a long time ago, so I will not repeat it in detail but just briefly. When I was dispatched to India from the Yoshinkan Headquarters to teach Aikido to the Indian Police/Army there was just one dojo which was shared with Judo students. One day, a Judo student came up to challenge me. He picked up a Tanto from the weapon rack, saying "Aikido use this, right?" He was holding it with the blade downwards, just the same as the terrorist, and my focus was on the moment when he would pull it back to attack me. As I did not want to miss the chance, I closed in quickly. This movement from me made him feel pressured and he immediately pulled the knife towards his right head in the Yokomen-uchi line. In accordance with his movement, I stepped forward towards his right to block his arm with the knife in his hand. As I restrained his arm I performed *Ude-garami*, slamming the side of his head hard onto the mats (not too brutally to avoid earning his animosity, you know.)

Honestly talking, I was not convinced with Aikido and I was skeptical about my ability in Aikido until that day. As you know, you never spar in Aikido nor have matches. It was easy to judge my level when I was training boxing as it was very obvious from fighting results. However, because Aikido uses a method of training known as *kata-geiko* (form practice), I never felt I was getting stronger despite going through severe training. I was really amazed to find out that my body reacted accordingly in this kind of unexpected attack. This incident taught me how effective *kata-geiko* was in reality. However, my attacker was not armed with a real knife but just a wooden knife in this event. Even now, while I hold the rank of 8th Dan, I cannot say I am completely confident in my reaction against a real knife, whether or not I can move just the same as on the mats.

A long time ago during the Samurai era, it was a tradition to pass on the handscroll of the swordsmanship secrets to high Dan ranks. The one I saw in a book was the scroll of Yagyu-Shinkage-ryu which was a fully illustrated manual how to move against certain motions of opponents. The contents of handscrolls of secrets varied in styles; some were more technical manual, some had only names of people who succeeded to the style, as such. A secret scroll I thought was very unique had just a letter, "勇 (courage)" in it. Well, it is so true. No matter how hard we train, if our mind is not brave our body would not move the way we need it to, and no technique would be good enough in real combat.

The footage of the terrorist attack in Melbourne reminded me of this secret of swordsmanship. In our daily training we need to imprint Aikido movements based on the Aikido rationale into our bodies (our muscle memory) and nurture the mind of courage (strong mind which allows us to be calm and centered all the time). Then our training will produce the effect whenever we need it, encountering a dangerous and desperate situation someday.

OSU!

Michiharu Mori