

NEWSLETTER

is this: we can get through challenging situation no matter how they present themselves. We find out we are stronger and more capable of what we think we are. This approach, this resilience I believe is largely down the cultivation of one's spirit through the leadership and teaching of Sensei Mori. On that note it must be acknowledged that whilst I may think the last few years have been a challenging period for myself and others I train with, I believe it has been a greater challenge for Sensei Mori and Shuko-san in these uncertain times and so again I thank them deeply for their commitment to keeping the Dojo up and running.

With the intermittent closure of the Dojo and lockdowns it also led me to find another word, **Mujo** or 無常. A relatively small word but with a meaning far bigger than it would suggest. I will encourage you to seek out the word and reflect on it. To me, it puts balance to the world in a simplistic way. This word I believe can be applied to both good things and bad, that neither is permanent. And so when faced with a challenging time, such as lockdowns, we know that they will not last forever. Conversely, knowing that our own ability to train as much and as often as we would like will also not last forever either, time passes, and life gets in the way. I think awareness of this should inspire us to train more, and to train with more **Seishin**. Because there will be a time when the heart and mind want to, but we will be unable to.

In further reflection on the journey from Shodan to Nidan I have looked at the Aikido journey as a whole thus far. In the beginning we are taught our techniques in parts, segments broken down into individual details, at that time it all seems unconnected, and as we progress, we learn that one thing leads to another, and eventually the whole technique is achievable. This, in my view, reflects life. Or to paraphrase another's famous phrase: *Aikido is life and life is Aikido*. My Aikido journey has led me from where I was to where I am, different stops on the way to a destination unknown. On the lead up to the Nidan grading I decided to work on my weaknesses - well one of them at least 😊. I decided that during the grading training sessions I would focus on my Jiyu Waza training. Similar to my training for Shodan I knew there would be a lot of sweaty and exhaustive sessions ahead. At this point, I would like to pause and thank all the people who Uke'd for me during the training sessions as I know that doing back-to-back Jiyu Waza sets for all of second class is way more challenging for Uke., so thank you. On making the decision to take the Nidan grading, the takeaway was clear, regardless of how much we prepare and train, on the day, you keep going regardless. So on the day of the grading, despite the intensity of the moment, the **Shugyo** 修行 kicked in and when I felt like I was going to collapse, I soldiered on to the end (albeit with a somewhat fixed gi). In considering phrase **Ichi go Ichi** 一期一会 I realise that we only get one time of doing things. In a grading we will only be presented with a set of circumstances that are unique to the moment— be it the 30-degree Brisbane heat and humidity, the aches and pains we awake with on the day or the nerves of performing in front of our Sensei and our peers. Regardless of how we feel our grading performance went we should look back and cherish those challenging occasions. In my case my Nidan grading was me, for a truly memorable occasion. That said, the Nidan grading led me to a moment of

NEWSLETTER

discovery that I would not have recognised but for the grading. I am grateful for that moment as it will drive me to improving. The actual “thing” that manifested itself I will keep that to myself for now, until I overcome it or share it with you the next time I am invited to write a piece for the newsletter. And so as I mentioned above, and as with Taiso where we chant ich-ni-san-shi, everything leads to something else.

Finally, I look forward to training each day, whenever I can. I look forward to returning to Seiza which I now find somewhat more challenging due to a current knee impediment. Nevertheless, Seiza is a time to reflect – and not only to master the cramp you might get or burning in the ankles. It is a time to empty the mind before training. With regards to training I don't know if my Aikido has improved between Shodan to Nidan and I can only be guided by those I train with by tuning into their responses and feedback. Shi'te can only improve with an Uke and without the two there is nothing to harmonise. And so, I thank all those I have trained with over the years to help me arrive at my current level. I would also say to anyone that hasn't been training for a while to come training and give me some feedback, and to those who I may not have trained with me, come and give me some feedback too. To those people I have trained with who maybe overseas I look forward to us training again one day and hope you and your family are heathy and well. – Salute! To those that randomly find this newsletter via a search engine come and join us for a session and let us all progress as people and Aikidoka. And, whilst somewhat left field, as with the 275 bricks I have faced and counted on too many occasions whilst in Seiza, it is the bonding of the bricks and cement that keep the roof above us where it is – so I look forward to training with you all soon.

Finally, returning to less esoteric thoughts, to Sensei, I thank you for our discussions at the counter but more so, thank-you for putting up with my random questions on all things and reminding me of the following: 日々是好日 😊

Osu !!

Louis Chatfield