

NEWSLETTER

No.323 July 2022

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info> Facebook: <http://bit.ly/dojofb>

June Report					
New members 4		Total number of adults training 32		Total number of children training 31	
Results of Sogo Shinsa on 1st July					
7th Kyu	Hannah Fahmi	4Y9 step	Murray Booth	3Y3 step	Louis Chatfield
9th Kyu	Atau Ishigaki-Gilbert		Cameron Blake	2Y4 step	Danielle Gravalin
		3Y3 step	Dean Jones	2Y1 step	Martin Fernandez
Events in July			2. This Month's Holiday		
1. Getsurei Shinsa			• Dojo's Holiday: Monday 25 th		
• Training starts, Friday 15 th 7:15pm~					
• Steps, Friday 22 nd 7:15pm~					
• Shinsa, Saturday 23 rd 1:00pm~					

Demonstration at Nissan Arena

On Saturday 28th May, we held an Aikido self-defence demonstration for a bodybuilders' event at Nissan Arena. I would like to say a big thankyou to MW, a dojo student, who was the host of the event and invited us to demonstrate. He kindly offered us an opportunity to promote the dojo and Aikido.

I asked six black belt dojo students to participate in the demo and I left them to think and decide what techniques they would choose to show in a self-defence style of Aikido. They began practising hard towards it about a month before, however, one of them caught Covid a week prior and they had to change partners and formats. Although the time was limited and they could not see each other as often as they wished due to their work commitment, their performance was excellent and expressed Brisbane Dojo style of Aikido fully. I was very pleased and proud. So, thank you very much for your great performance! I meant to demonstrate *tasu-dori* but because there was not enough space to move around, I gave up my plan. As others already performed great self-defence techniques, I did not feel it was needed to do more, but I had to do something. So, I did show my Aiki-waza in the hope that someone would appreciate it fairly.

I uploaded the demo videos on YouTube being proud to show them to the world of the high standard of our dojo and its students. The next day, Richard came in and said, "You had thousands of people in the audience!" to my surprise. Well, the truth was that we had a basketball game going on our right side and Tae Kwon Do competition on our left where lots of the cheers and shouts were echoing. If online viewers thought that in the video it seemed we had thousands of people in the audience watching, they were unexpected effects! If you have not watched the video, please enjoy watching the top-quality Aikido with a virtually large crowd of spectators!

OSU,

Michiharu Mori

NEWSLETTER

COFFEE BREAK 2: Aikido in our world

“I nearly died last night”, or at least it was ‘last night’ at the time of writing this article. But I’m not overly concerned as this is now the third fatal accident I’ve avoided. But what is important is my belief that without aikido I wouldn’t have survived the first encounter, let alone two more!

I NEARLY DIED AGAIN LAST NIGHT, AND AIKIDO SAVED ME!

I won’t bore you with all the details of each near-death episode, but I’ll briefly relay the second time I nearly died and detail to you last night’s encounter when I almost died for a third time. It’s true what they say, motorbikes are dangerous, or perhaps the people surrounding them on the roads are the most dangerous element to riding them. After all, humans are the variables that are often most difficult to control in any situation, right? But here’s how I nearly died last night, and how aikido yet again saved my life.

After leaving the dojo on my way home from training as usual, I pulled out onto an almost empty Caloundra Road heading into town on a seemingly deserted Monday night. I sensed a car entering from my left about 50 metres ahead, coming out of the Rollerdrome skating ring. I moved over to the right lane to allow for his/her possible merge into the left lane, yet the speed at which they entered provoked a sense of caution in me. The car sped onto Caloundra Road and traveled across the left lane and into the right lane seemingly without any idea that I was coming. As a result, I was heading for the rear-right side of the car or, alternatively, off the road and down the embankment into trees. Either way, it wouldn’t have ended well for me at 70 kilometers per hour.

Now, I know it sounds wacky to say, but what did take place in a matter of seconds slowed down dramatically for me and I felt like I had an eternity to work through this problem. Firstly, I avoided a skid (the opposite of what I did in #2 near-death experience, where I purposely made my bike skid to survive – I’ll explain this later) so that I wouldn’t end up under the wheels of the car as its rear bumper approached my front wheel from my left. So, I had to break heavily, but not allow the bike to skid or slide sideways. Therefore, I braked heavily on the front brakes and minimally on the back so that the weight transferred forward onto my front wheel. I came up off the seat, placed weight into my feet on my pegs and readied myself to jump either onto the car beside me as it approached or throw myself into a roll to the right and down the bank; neither of which I would have enjoyed! However, the alternative to the jump meant I had to ease the bike to the right and maintain a course along a width of road about the same as the white line – there is next to no road on the other side



NEWSLETTER

of the line on this particular stretch of the road. On the other side of this strip lay my doom in the ditch! The car never deviated, it just kept coming and coming and it was all up to me to avoid and blend my deceleration with the car's acceleration so that I could time an avoidance of maybe 5cm tolerance before my front wheel moved behind the rear-right hand side of the car as it sped off ahead. I remember my exhale as I did this. It was long and controlled and the low-pitched and audible woahhhhhhhhhhhh was a long and controlled part of this exhale. But It all came together.

The car sped off oblivious ahead of me and I made my way home. I remember taking stock of whether I was rushing with adrenalin or not, or whether my nerves were affected at all, and to my surprise... I felt nothing! Not one emotion at all, just a calmness and a smile. I smiled to myself all the way home at the fact that yet again I would wake up and enjoy another day on this Earth. I guess as I look back on this now, I was experiencing a sense of gratitude; all that I went on to experience that evening especially (and into the following days) was heightened by this sense of gratitude. But more importantly, I've come to accept the fact that my time here is fragile and may be gone in an instant. This I continue to remind myself every day and recall this sense of gratitude so that I can face inevitable death (even if it comes tomorrow) with a smile!

The time before this (#2 near death experience), only a few years ago, I was again riding my motorcycle home from training when I came up a hill and over a rise towards an intersection only a couple of hundred metres from home. As I approached the intersection, I noticed I had the green light and accelerated. Yet I was confronted by a car turning across my path, and about to T-bone me. Again, time slowed down, I braked heavily on the back brake and purposefully put the bike into a skid so I could flair out the back and make greater space for the car to move past before I hit it. Again, on this occasion too, I came up on the pegs ready to jump. But this time forward, over the car and into a roll ('hopefully' a nice front roll 😊). In reflection, my subconscious must have assessed the roll not necessary, and the skid was enough. I avoided the accident again with about 5cm of tolerance as my tail slid out to the side and I regained it at the instant the car passed. The Japanese have a saying for this kind of tolerance: *Yoyuu ga nai*, roughly translated as 'no margin' or infers 'no margin for error'. But in fact, I believe my aikido training allowed me to increase my margin (yoyuu) and avoid disaster. You might think this strange, but I attribute my life in all three dramatic events (2 of which I've described here) to aikido and my consistent training, especially in jiu waza. And here's why.

The first reason is related to reaction. In aikido we have **jiu waza** (freestyle techniques). It is an aspect of aikido training where a practitioner must deal with an attacker or group of attackers who come at you repeatedly at the timing and speed of their choosing with the intent to hit or grab you. Your control over their choices is minimal, but the control over their effect on you and the environment in which you exist is at your disposal. My reaction in the motorcycle events above were no different to the way I approach my jiu waza training. When the attacker fully commits, I react. I have full control over the timing of my reaction, the way in which I choose to move my body in relation to the force coming at me, and the attitude which I adopt at the most crucial time. That

NEWSLETTER

said, this reaction is not governed by conscious thought, but by subconscious action, and it is only achievable after years of 'programming', or in other words 'training'.

Therefore, the second reason why aikido training can aid in positive outcomes in near-death experiences relates to the subconscious response to aggression in the context of jiu waza. The subconscious, automated, 'true' reactions in jiu waza contexts usually consist of entering with a strike (*atemi*), turning to off-balance (*kuzushi*) the attacker, or even dropping out of sight and the line of conflict. These actions in response to a single attacker's or group of attackers' aggression, like my reactions in the motorcycle episodes above, allow the aikido practitioner to increase the margin for error (*yoyuu*) by moving with confidence at the last possible moment with the 'right' action. That is, if you move too soon you run the risk of being hit or placed in a worse position, further out of your control, and if you move too late you are definitely hit and have no time for your body to select the adequate response. Interestingly however, the success of this training is determined by whether your attacker (*uke*) has 'your best interests at heart', meaning, they come at you committed and authentically. You cannot acquire the necessary principles of self-preservation through jiu waza training if the attacker(s) are not authentically trying to hit/harm you. So, when you train as *uke* in jiu waza with someone and you feel that you are 'doing them a favour by going easy on them' and not hitting them, or at least not showing them where they could be hit, you are in fact retarding their development; you're hindering their ability to acquire these necessary skills through authentic practice of these principles I outline here. Yes, safety is important, but nothing grows in the shade! You must become comfortable with being under pressure and feeling uncomfortable if you intend to grow.

The third reason is the need to feel comfortable with dangerous things coming at you at speed. This level of comfort is only afforded when you actually practice with dangerous things at speeds just beyond your ability and increasing incrementally all the time towards a natural flow of aggression. I guess I learnt this lesson very early when I was told as a kid by my father to 'train as you play and play as you train'. Therefore, if you expect to perform at a level beyond the effort that you are willing to apply to your training, then you are sadly misguided. Training at a level that pressures you to admit to things that you are not good at or find challenging will over time reap rewards, despite the discomfort; it will allow you to be authentic and, as a result, to not panic or tense up in high pressure situations across a diversity of contexts. For example, when a car is about to run you off the road or T-bone you at 60-70KM/H, or even when a semi-trailer moves across your lane to squash you and your motorcycle against a guardrail at 80 KM/H and you are asked to act instantly – accelerate or brake: one option will lead to life, the other to imminent death. This was my #1 interaction with death on a motorcycle. In this instance I chose to accelerate, and I came out the other side again with my 5cm of tolerance! (*yoyuu ga atta!*) Blending timing to suit speed in which an object/person is coming at you dangerously is as important in *budō* as it is in everyday life.

The fourth reason why I believe aikido specifically saves your life in difficult situations beyond the dojo is in its ability to build confidence in you to possibly roll out of a bad situation - confidence in

NEWSLETTER

your *ukemi*. Over time, if you commit to training with people who will always throw you completely with all that they have, you will become used to receiving heavy G-forces on your body. As a result, you will develop the confidence to yield when necessary and roll out of anything. Aikido teaches you this providing you search for it. I distinctly remember one particular time training jiu waza at the Brisbane Dojo with Emmanuel Economides, I was uke, and I was attacking with everything I had. As Emmanuel would increase the intensity of his throws, I would be energized by this and spring up faster each time coming at him even harder. This would then in turn create a feedback loop that continued to the point where I remember losing every care in the world... I lost complete attachment and surrendered everything to my attacks. As strange as this might sound, I remember thinking that I was happy to die in that moment as there was no level of intensity beyond what I was experiencing that could hurt me - I felt absolutely nothing and time stood still! So, what does this mean? If you want to reach a stage where you have absolute confidence in your ability to roll out of almost any natural level of motion, then train in jiu waza with people who will throw you with everything they have!

So why do I think aikido is particularly good for self-preservation? Well, it is one of only a few martial arts that allows you to blend with forces and not meet them head-on. Aikido's capacity as a blending art is priceless. I guess this is why Master Gozo Shioda was adamant that 'aikido and life are one' (*aiki soku seikatsu*). Moving forward, this recent near-death experience has made me think even more deeply about the benefits of jiu waza, and the need for people to practice this regularly despite their level of training. Therefore, above all the other benefits of jiu waza – cardiovascular health; bone density increases; agility development; etc. – I believe it develops you in ways you might not realise until called upon in times you are not planning to experience!

Osu!

Ryan Slavin