

NEWSLETTER



No.103 April 2004

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Report of March

New members 7

Total number of adults training 77

Total number of children training 48

Results of Sogo Shinsa on 27th

<u>Shodan</u>	Matthew Watson	<u>6th Kyu</u>	Joshua McCormick	<u>9th Kyu</u>	Sho Hatai
	Julie Walsh		Jasmine Burge		Tim McGary
	Sam Gray		Mark Frost	<u>4Y3 step</u>	Richard Diehm
	Rosie Bannah	<u>7th Kyu</u>	Johan Brink	<u>3Y12 step</u>	Jason Sainsbury
<u>Jun-Shodan</u>	Michael Bannah		Myles Frost		Jason Palmer
<u>1st Kyu</u>	Craig Sargent		Marcus Lambinon	<u>3Y9 step</u>	Miki Yoshida
<u>2nd Kyu</u>	Tyrone Whelan		Matthew Paul	<u>3Y5 step</u>	Lee Stemm
<u>3rd Kyu</u>	Chris Zanelli		Dennis Lee		Brent Weston
	Paul Neale	<u>9th kyu</u>	Tzen Paredes	<u>2Y4 step</u>	Eric Kwok
	Murray Davis		Michael Ryan	<u>2Y2 step</u>	Shelly Hope
<u>Jun-3rd kyu</u>	Matt Carpenter		Nicholas Sholz	<u>S5 step</u>	Albert Lu
	Chris Neucom		Aran Dall	<u>S4 step</u>	Ken Carse
	Shingo Yamashita		Mark Wilton	<u>S1 step</u>	Eagle Kao
<u>5th Kyu</u>	Yi-Chieh Chu		Lloyd Gayney		

Events in April

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- ♦ 24th Saturday, 1:00pm~
- ♦ Shinsa training starts from Saturday 17th.

2.Children's grading test

- ♦ 3rd Saturday, 10:00am~

3.This Month's Holiday

- ♦ 9th-12th Easter Holiday
- ♦ 26th Anzac Day

Coffee Break

Last Samurai

Quite a lot of dojo students have watched the movie "The Last Samurai" and I enjoyed listening to their various impressions about the movie over the counter. I haven't watched it yet as I'd like to wait until the DVD with Japanese subtitles comes out. Most of their impressions were in twofold; it was impressive because it described the graceful way of Samurais very well, or it was unimpressive because it glorified the Samurais too much. I can't say anything about it of course, as I haven't watched it, but what I can say is that there are Samurais and there are Samurais, like wines and wines. When you compare a first-class wine and a low-class wine, you wonder if they are truly the same drink. So, there were genuinely great Samurais as well as some doubtful Samurais.

This time, I'd like to write a little bit about Samurais' culture from my shallow knowledge of Japanese history in this article.

First thing I realised was that Tom Cruise being an officer from America was impossible, because Japanese (Meiji, then) government actually summoned the officers from France during this period. The French Army was acknowledged as the world's top army at that time until they were defeated by the German Army a few years later. Japanese government simply changed its mind and summoned the officers from Germany after the war. Therefore Tom Cruise had to be either French or German, if it was based on the truth. In this connection, what Japan was learning from America at that time was the agriculture. If this was true, Tom Cruise had to be a farmer and the title of the movie was meant to be "The Last Farmer"...

The image of Samurai in Western countries according to magazines is a roughneck who was indiscriminate in cruelly killing civilians with swords or killing themselves by cutting their stomach which is well known as "seppuku" or "harakiri". Samurai held a peculiar privilege legislated in the then existing laws that was an "excuse for killing with a sword". This law was that Samurais had the privilege to kill someone when they were insulted or the honour of Samurais was harmed. The

honour was everything for Samurais and therefore they disciplined themselves strictly in their daily life as being honourable Samurais. But once their honour was disgraced they couldn't live with it but killed the person to wipe the disgrace. This is barbarous, of course. There, however, was a rule after the killing.

There was an implicit convention in the Samurai community that one had to kill himself by cutting his abdomen with his sword before he was taken to the court, once he pulled his sword out and caused trouble irregardless if there was any reason. Or in the case when two Samurais began to quarrel with their swords drawn, both of them had to kill themselves despite the justification of either side. The community of Samurai was very severe. Therefore most of the Samurais through 260 years of history didn't pull out their world famous Samurai swords and lived very peacefully. In fact, Samurais weren't barbarous or brutal but highly educated and they were sophisticated people.

There were four classes in the Edo society that were: Samurais; Farmers; Industrial Workers; and Commercial Workers in that order. Samurais were the top of the order and administered the country. Consequently, they had the responsibility to maintain the security and order of the country and protect a peaceful life for the people. Samurais were highly respected from the other ranks because of their strict discipline and constant endeavours. The tradition and philosophy of Samurais that were developed in 260 years of Edo era is called "Bushido (the way of Samurai, or the Samurai spirit)".

The sense of value is essential for people to live and it varies from person to person. The "American Dream" is a standard where the sense of value has a single purpose in life of gaining fortune for one's own sake. This way of life doesn't appeal to Samurais since living for one's own greed was shameful and wasn't a beautiful way of living, from the point of "Bushido". The standards for the way they lived their whole lives was a main subject of Samurais and their answer was 'a graceful way of life'. The standard of 'a graceful way' was to dedicate and sacrifice oneself for the public without personal greed. They were well trained from early childhood to work for the public; they were taught to study hard for the sake of the people, they were taught to train martial skills to protect the country, all without considering one's own interests. Their single wish was that their honour and achievement would leave their name in history. I very much respect the philosophy of Samurais, 'Bushido'. That they devoted their life for the public, as their peoples peace was their own satisfaction and they enjoyed admiring their own way of life.

Around 1904, the time of the Japan-Russia War, the name of Cavalry General Akiyama who fought in this war remained as the last Samurai in Japanese history, remembered for his philosophy and attitude. He left a famous saying:

In young age, an ambition of what you wish to do is essential.
In old age, what you have done is everything.
Man's life ends some day. It ends no matter how much you regret.
What is remaining after you are gone from this world? Money, things always vanish in the flow of time.
The only thing people remember and hand down from generation to generation over hundreds years is the trace of what he aimed for and what he achieved.

I read the saying when I was eighteen and never forgot. I kept reading these sentences of the last samurai over and over until it became my motto.

Well, we learn the spirit and skills of what Samurais left through our Aikido training. I thought it would be good to write a bit about the background of Samurais be it from my limited knowledge, just for your reference.

Michiharu Mori