

# NEWSLETTER



No.126 February 2006

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

## Report of January

New members 2

Total number of adults training 60

Total number of children training 43

## **Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 28<sup>th</sup> January**

<u>Jun-3<sup>rd</sup></u>	Greg Smith	<u>8<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Narelle Smith	<u>2Y6 step</u>	Paul te Braak
<u>Kyu</u>	Amy Hughes	<u>4Y12</u>	Brendan Stuart	<u>2Y1step</u>	Murray Davis
	Koray Karanfilci	<u>step</u>	Frank Barletta		Myles Frost
	Mark Coleman	<u>4Y3 step</u>	Brent Weston	<u>S2 step</u>	Chris Neucom
<u>5<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Robert Austin	<u>4Y1 step</u>	Matthew Watson	<u>S1 step</u>	Mark Frost
<u>8<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>		<u>3Y7 step</u>			

## Events in February

### 1. Getsurei Shinsa

- Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> 1:00pm~
- Shinsa training starts from 18<sup>th</sup> Saturday.

### 2. This Month's Holiday

- **Dojo Holiday** 27<sup>th</sup> Monday

## Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

Taking my Aikido Shodan examination in December 2005 was something I have wanted to do for many years. So I am pleased to have an opportunity to present a short article on my Aikido experiences so far.

Having tried several kinds of martial arts in various different countries, I can confidently say that we are all fortunate to have the Aikido Yoshinkan Dojo in West End. This Dojo has the most qualified instructor to be found almost anywhere and offers a structured syllabus with rigorous examinations. It sets a high standard that I have not seen anywhere else and there is openness about the teaching here that is very precious.

Not all Dojos are like this!

Actually I began to study martial arts around the age of ten when I was taken to Judo classes. I continued to study into my teens and even now my ukemi still show signs of early Judo training.

Later in Taiwan I studied Shaolin boxing for a couple of years. That was a lot of gymnastics and a great deal of beating of the forearms against timber poles to make them hard. I made a lot of progress in strength and fitness but more or less ruined my neck and left knee doing acrobatic neck springs and over-arching the back. I also smashed up some of the nerves in my forearms trying to make them hard.

I was first exposed to Aikido in Canberra briefly in 1988 and again in Taiwan in the early 1990s. I trained Aiki Kai style and made some progress, but because of the constant moving around was not able to grade very far.

In China in 1989 I studied the basics of a Chinese boxing style relatively unknown in the West called the Ba Gua (Eight Trigrams Boxing). Training in Ba Gua had me pacing out an octagonal shape in the bottom of an empty swimming pool in Beijing for almost a year. I lost my teacher for part of that time when he got into a fight with rival whose family had taught him another very old style called "Xing Yi" Boxing. My Ba Gua teacher got a couple of broken ribs and had to stop teaching for a while. That training was eventually cut short when we had to leave China in June 1989 after the Tiananmen Square massacre.



In the mid 1990s I studied simplified Taichi in Guangzhou in Southern China and traditional Yang style Taichi in Beijing. In Beijing many of the best teachers were so egotistical that they were nearly impossible to study with.

I studied a lot of different styles over the years but because I was always moving I was never able to stick at any one style for long enough to properly learn any of them.

So after all this moving around over many years I have reached a number of conclusions about martial arts training. One of these has been that you cannot afford to dabble in different styles – you have to master one style to make progress. Fiddling in different things, even if it is not by choice, mostly doesn't result in much learning.

Another conclusion is that Aikido itself is probably the best martial art to learn. I can't really comment on Karate, Judo, Taekwondo and other popular Japanese or Korean styles except to say they all seem to be competitive modern sports that have made radical changes in the original tradition to suit modern tastes. Aikido still retains much of the old style of training – in Aikido they did not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

A lot of people like to compare Aikido with Chinese martial arts. Actually Aikido, or earlier forms of it came to Japan from China more than one thousand years ago and some of the old Chinese styles do have similarities with modern Aikido.

But from my experience in China and Taiwan I know it is very difficult to find learning conditions even close to what we have here in West End Aikido Yoshinkan Dojo. The trouble is that many of the authentic Chinese styles lack system or syllabus or standards. Also many of the real techniques were only taught within families or by long established relationships with teachers and students. Sometimes several students of a teacher might only get one technique each and be sworn to secrecy so that no one except the teacher knew all the techniques. Consequently Chinese martial arts in my experience are a pretty unreliable sort of undertaking for most people – especially those living in Western countries.

So my final conclusion is that we should really appreciate the value of what we have here in the West End Aikido Yoshinkan. I have seen so many Aikido Dojos in Australia, Hong Kong Taiwan and Mainland China and none of them are even close to the standard we have in our West End Dojo.

For me it was very nice to finally have had the chance to study consistently in a good Dojo and reach a Shodan grade in Aikido.

I hope this short essay will encourage you to appreciate the value of our Dojo in West End and to really train hard knowing that we have the best teacher of the best martial art there is.

OSU!

*Murray Davis*

## Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

As I was approaching my shodan grading I spent some time thinking and reading about what it means to have a black belt. The stereotypical (western) view of what a black means initially came to mind - the expert to be feared. Moreover, I kept thinking how wrong this view was.

Now I appreciate that to have a black belt means that you have taken the first step towards learning how to learn. I also realise that there is so much more to learn. When I was younger my father told me "The more you learn, the more you realise how little you actually know." This saying has proven to be right so many times in my life! I think this saying is important to remember when training. It helps to maintain a state of mind that is similar to that of a beginner's.

# NEWSLETTER



In this state, our minds are like a sponge ready to absorb any and all information. Maintaining such a state of mind enables the maximum learning efficiency with training. It helps keep our training sincere and ensures that we don't close our minds to the lessons that are to be learnt through training... even if we are taught these lessons by those that are junior which is the case more often than not. So in reality I think gaining a black belt is more like gaining a state of mind that enables a more complete degree of learning - even if it seems like there is an infinite amount to learn.

I remember once reading in a "sharing the feeling of black belts" article, about how our reasons for training change over time. Like most people (at least I think most people), I started my aikido to learn some skills that might prove handy in a self defence scenario.

Initially I thought that my reasons for training would never change. This is still true in a sense. However, rather than the reasons changing I think I am adding new reasons to my original ones. When I first started training my reasons were all about the physical side of things... exercise, fitness, practicing techniques and movement in general. I hadn't really thought too much about the kind of relationships I would form with my teacher and with my other training partners. Which, looking back was rather stupid.

Now one of the main reasons I train is to experience and further develop the friendships that I have made through training. I didn't expect to find the great sense of community that exists in the dojo. Prior to training I had a few friends express the opinion that martial arts are anti-social. I couldn't understand and still can't understand their reasoning. Obviously they misunderstand martial arts in general and I can now honestly say to them that they are completely wrong. Of all the things I do in life, aikido training is one of the most social activities.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all my training partners for helping me learn and feel aikido techniques and also for providing a strong community that is great to train with. I would like to thank Mori Sensei and Shuko-san for providing such a great dojo to practice aikido in. Finally I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Sensei for showing me the gift of aikido. I sincerely promise to polish my aikido stone so that it can shine as brightly as possible.

OSU!

*Myles Frost*