



No.134 September 2006

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Report of August

New members 8 Total number of adults training 65 Total number of children training 68

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 26th August

<u>Shodan</u>	Mark Frost	<u>6th Kyu</u>	Duncan Mitchell	<u>2Y6</u>	Myles Frost
	Heather Wood	<u>7th Kyu</u>	Urs Bating	<u>2Y5</u>	Murray Davis
	Kanako Yamaguchi	<u>9th Kyu</u>	Neal Mathew	<u>2Y3</u>	Matt Carpenter
<u>1st Kyu</u>	Christopher Swinton		Justin Harris	<u>2Y1</u>	Mark Petersen
	Matthew Pethig	<u>4Y6</u>	Lee Stemm	<u>S1</u>	Ryan Slavin
	Mark Davies	<u>4Y2</u>	Jason Williams		
	William Harper	<u>3Y7</u>	Albert Lu		
<u>4th Kyu</u>	Helly Conroy	<u>2Y11</u>	Sam Gray		
<u>5th Kyu</u>	Brent Jones		Eagle Kao		

Events in October

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- ♦Saturday, 21st 1:00pm~
- ♦Shinsa training starts from 14th Saturday.

2. Hajime Class

- ♦28th Saturday 1:00pm~
- ♦Please note that we will have no regular classes on this day.

2. This Month's Holiday

- ♦Dojo's Holiday 30th Monday

A bit of knowledge for Aikido

The key to hurtless ukemi

It was at the most severe season of winter in Japan, February 1986. The tatami mats at the Headquarters were so cold, like ice. In the cold dojo, here I was grabbing shite's hand following the training manual. At the moment I grabbed his hand he turned with a strong spinning power and knocked the back of my head heavily to the mats almost trying to break my head into pieces. My sight distorted for a second and got the focus back again. The impact of it was as if my frontal lobe was smashed against my back of the head and bounced back to its position. It was only the first technique. In no time my body temperature rose and sweat spurted out, in the cold air. Somehow I had to stand up and grab his hand again for the second one. Exactly the same thing happened in an instant. I held his hand again like crazy for the third time. My head was smashed hard without an inch of hesitation. It was going to last for ninety minutes and I never felt this kind of threat to my life ever in my nineteen years life, then.

During my high school age, I was training boxing at a professional gym and gained fame as one of the best boxers in my local region. As I became quite famous among the local young gangs for my strength in fights I got bigheaded. I visited the Honbu dojo, very traditional place, for the first time with the bigheaded attitude in a gang fashion. The Shiho-nage's I was receiving were the baptism in their way to take the insolent young man down a peg. Besides, the person who was baptizing me with Shiho-nage was Mr. Takeno, so called "Yakuza Takeno" who prompted Kancho Sensei to say, "He is such a pain to have, like a Yakuza," when he entered Yoshinkan as a new uchi-deshi 18 years before. Later on, I heard he himself was very scared of his seniors receiving similar sort of baptism when he entered the dojo. Well, I was facing the crisis of my life and I was desperate to protect my head to survive.

Firstly, I chose a natural way of protection, resisting his technique to slow down the speed and to weaken the power, by stiffening my body, which was a rather natural reaction of animal instinct. I think most people have tried this way too, to protect yourselves from powerful techniques. This way of reversing shite's power is very effective only if uke's strength is greater. But if uke's strength is smaller than shite's, the strength uke put into also reverse back to oneself on top of shite's technique and the hardened body hits the mats even worse. As a result, I received a devastating blow to my head without mercy.

My head was pounding more than worse at this stage. But now, shite-uke-kotai. I surely appreciated this moment when I was able to rest my head for a while, but at the same time I was determined to get one back at him even though my level was only a beginner white. I cut down the Shiho-nage lock with my whole might and found him easily falling backwards just like a tumble doll. He absorbed all my force like being a sponge, as if I had no power at all. "Shit!!" (Sorry for my bad language but I was young then.) I had one more chance on the other side. This time, I was making sure I gathered all my strength to put it into one motion. Again, he rolled himself backwards as if he was practicing backwards ukemi by himself. "Damn it!!" The difference in strength



between him and me was too obvious, like a baby and a grown-up man. Now, shite-uke-kotai, again. I screamed with terror in my heart.

Since my first method did not work, I thought of copying his method, forming myself into a sponge-like body. But this time, my loosened body was badly blown away backwards, even worse than the first method. I smashed not only my back, head but my neck got whip lashed. Here, I lost the control of my neck. I barely stood up and found my sight lost the focus. I still had to grab his hand for the other side even though I had no more method to protect myself now. I crashed my head again and lost all my energy and morale. It was too obvious from others' eyes that I got a concussion and I was told to sit down being taken out of the class. It was an absolute humiliation. It was a picture of "A bad boy lost by a Yakuza man."

I narrowly escaped this time with my body being in one piece. But it was not the end of my uchi-deshi training, of course. The chance of trying techniques on Takeno Sensei would not come often but the chances of taking his uke would come thousand of times ahead. As I could not bear smashing my head each time getting concussions I had to do something about my uke skill.

"Go back to the basics," this is an effective theory in anything we learn when we need to break through a difficult hurdle. The primal principle of Aikido is controlling opponents by using their own force. When we are pushed we redirect the power of opponents where we can use it to our advantage by either turning or pulling backwards, contrary to our instinct. When we are pulled we have to restrain our instinct of pulling back but move forward with the pulling strength of opponents to apply a technique. This is the basic Aikido principle. Kiichi Hogen (a genius military strategist in 13th century) explained this principle simply in a poem;

**"Welcome it, when it comes. Let it go, when it leaves.
Harmonise it, when you are confronted.
One plus nine is ten, two plus eight is ten,
Five plus five is also ten.
Harmonise any and everything by this mean."**

This principle can be applied not only for shite but also uke.

I tried to fight back against Takeno Sensei's harsh technique from the fear by putting my strength into my body to make it rigid for the first method and I tried to loosen my body by weakening my physical strength for the second. In both ways I was smashed to atoms. Then, I thought that the principle of being a good uke is the same principle of riding on the flow of a river but not swimming against the current. Uke has to control his body to surrender himself to the current, at just right speed not too fast, not too slow either in a furious torrent or a slow stream. The ability of judging and determining the strength of current is the ability of harmony. And, when you can conform your body movements completely to what your brain has judged, then you can do uke without any fear or harm.

For instance, with Kote-gaeshi that shite tries to throw uke away in the distance by shifting his body weight widely. It is a scary technique for uke being thrown far with shite's full power. Uke naturally becomes intimidated and stiffens his body leaving his weight backwards, as he wants to be dropped near by if it's possible. Contrary to uke's expectation, shite gets desperate to make the technique work locking uke's wrist harder and putting more strength to throw him farther. As a result, the damage to uke is worse. What uke should do is simply going with the flow of shite's movement by stepping in forward to the direction shite pulls. Then, the kote-gaeshi lock gets looser and the shite's pulling force and the speed of uke's movement get balanced out, leading uke to do just a normal zenpo-kaiten ukemi. This is the harmonised ukemi riding on the current.

I trained this uke principle into my body thoroughly, by tediously repeating the movements that go against the human instinct. This is the reason why I was able to survive ten years of uchi-deshi life without any major injuries at all. The first uchi-deshi lesson with "Yakuza Takeno" taught me, physically without any verbal instructions, the power of Aikido and importance of the skill of uke in the first place that led me learn the skill of harmony. All thanks to Takeno Sensei's merciless first lesson!

I hope my episode is going to give you a hint to learn a harmless ukemi for you, to keep enjoying Aikido training.

OSU

Michiharu Mori