



Report of May

New members 8

Total number of adults training 59

Total number of children training 83

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 26th May

Jun-Shodan Christopher Swinton 8th Kyu

William Harper

Akiko Nicholls

2Y9 step

Matt Carpenter

Kaido Mori

2Y4 step

Michael Bannah

Jun-3rd Kyu Lawrence Monforte 9th Kyu

Gregory Littleton

S5 step

Ryan Slavin

4th Kyu Urs Battig

Cameron James

S1 step

Aarjaun Burch

5th Kyu David Shepley

Mark Davies

Jim Stanley

Events in June

1. Sogo Shinsa

◆Saturday, 23rd 1:00pm~

◆Shinsa training starts from 9th Saturday.

2. This Month's Holiday

◆Queen's Birthday 11th Monday

◆Dojo Holiday 25th Monday

3.Children's classes are closed through School Holiday

◆No Children's classes from 23rd June Saturday to 9th July Monday. The class recommences on 11th July Wednesday.

Coffee Break

Traditional? stinky gi!

One day at the Headquarters about 15-16 years ago, I entered the dojo (the mats area) as usual, as the class time had arrived. A sudden dreadful stink attacked my nose on my first step inside the dojo that was filling the place; the stink that could not be possible in Tokyo, in a civilized country. It was either the smell of a group of beasts or the smell of piled-up-socks worn by labourers as proof of their whole-days valuable work. I felt like tapping my leg to show 'you've got me' as if an inevitable Nikaja was on me.

The smell was emitted from twenty uni students from Osaka who arrived on that day to start a training camp at the Headquarters. They were lining up in Seiza beautifully but all of their gi had no trace of being washed but were dull black and brown with lots of mould. What monstrous people they were! Being able to wear these gi and train everyday, I thought. Is this a new style of torture or a new-age discipline?

I sat down at my uchi-deshi spot with my eyes shut and tried to attain a perfect serenity of mind into a selfless state to gather all my concentration for starting a class, as usual. However, as you can imagine, I could not concentrate as my spirit was suffering from the extremely strong and offensive stink. Straight after we started the class, one of my senior uchi-deshi came to me and ordered me to take charge of the uni students' training while they were staying at the Headquarters. I wasn't told this until then. I was quite sure that he could not stand the killing-smell either and pushed the load on to his junior. He must've decided during the five minutes of seiza time, being wrapped by their beastly air.

I had to obey the order of training the uni students without having another junior to push the task onto. We started with *kamaes* as usual in Yoshinkan style. Then, *kihon-dosas*. Through practicing *kihon-dosa* they started to sweat and it made them fume with their sweat as their body temperature rose. "Oh, my God! Heaven's sake! Jesus Christ!" (Whatever expresses my despair in your language!) I was the one nearly fainting but not them who were meant to be receiving severe discipline.

Actually, while teaching their *kihon-dosa* it was ok, as I was able to keep the distance from them just pulling their belts down to lower their postures or fixing their hands or feet. Now, a technique had to be demonstrated using an uke. I had an ultimate level of selections since each of them carried the same level of weapon with them. I chose one with a great unwillingness in my mind and we had to go through various techniques they had to learn. The worst technique for me was the *Irimi-nage*. As you know, you need to slide/rub your body into uke's body fully contacted at a certain angle to make the *Irimi-nage* most effective. At the very moment when you feel you got the essence of *Irimi-nage*, that was the moment the fragrance of Mr. uni student got shifted to your gi. Now their fragrance was mine! I wondered whether I was able to keep my sanity until I could change my gi or if the ultimate stink was going to wreck my central nerve system.



In this kind of situation, I always appreciated my decision to choose Aikido and not Wrestling or Judo. We do not have as much contact in Aikido as Judo or Wrestling, where you need to grapple, wrestle or do groundwork with other men dripping and rubbing sweat on each other's faces and bodies. I, being fastidious about cleanliness who dislikes dirtiness or small creatures, could not stand them.

Ages ago in our newsletter, I quoted a counting song that 22nd Senshusei (a group of Riot Policemen sent to train Yoshinkan Aikido full time for a year) made. The third phrase of the song was "Thirdly, how ugly and disgusting our dogis that are thoroughly soaked and stinky causing my nose bent. But great! By this we meant, the *shihan* (instructor) can't come close to us." This song was made in the rainy season of Japan in June when the gi proved how bad it could smell. Students felt it was trying but it was a great blessing for them if it could keep '*Yakuza Takeno Shihan*' (Takeno Sensei was literally a demon) away from them. As I was training with them being a new apprentice, I used to sing this song together with other Senshusei then, thinking the song was so right. But now I was on the other side, Takeno Sensei's side. This was absolutely trying.

Well, after we finished the class during a break time, I went into their room to ask why they did not wash their gi. There must be a reason. They told me proudly that the dirtiness and stink of their sweat was the tradition of their Aikido club to show their manly spirits. It sounded like they believed the tradition was so cool! Yeah, all the other general students of their uni would avoid them or would not come close to them when a group of 10 to 20 men swaggered about the uni campus wearing extremely stinky gi with their black belts but that was not because of the fear but the physiological disgust. They seemed to misunderstand that people were scared of them because they got stronger from the hard training and they believed it was so cool. They reminded me of the story of "The Emperor's New Clothes."

I had to persuade them to change their faith of being cool, for my own sake! Firstly, I told them that being scared by other people through their appearance was not cool. Our master Gozo Shioda Sensei never looked scary or tough. He often teased himself about being so feeble as if he looked like an obstetrician (a typical derogatory term of a man being a sissy in the old days of Japan). However, the techniques he presented were amazingly strong and he was recognised as the best Aikido-ka in the world then. "This is cool. People who try to look strong and behave as if they are really tough are the third-rank *yakuzas*," I said.

Secondly, I told them about '*Bushi-do*.' Samurai strictly disciplined themselves to behave/act beautifully both in physical and mental aspects with any matters in any situation, following Samurai's principles. They always focused on their manners in detail, like the way of eating, dressing, tidying up around them, all about everyday life. For example, even though a majority of samurais were poor they always kept their clothes clean with nice, straight creases and maintained their hair neatly. Once battles started, they never showed fear towards death and kept everything in perfect order including the expressions on their faces even when they died, to lead the general of their enemy to think he was the great Samurai. That was the way they called beauty.

"Since we who train Aikido, a traditional Japanese *Budo*, must inherit the beauty of Samurai, you need to keep your training gear clean and show no fear towards any severe and dangerous techniques, maintaining your minds calm in any situation," said I to the uni students at the conclusion of our conversation in the awfully stinky room. I was successful in drawing them into my perspective of being traditional and cool, and with my great relief, off they went to wash their gi. Yes!, I won and I would be free from the killer-smell from tomorrow! How thankful I was!

Well, this was just a coffee break episode for you to laugh and to make sure that everyone maintains each gi clean, remembering we are inheriting the beauty of samurais both mentally and physically.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori