

NEWSLETTER



No.165 May 2009

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Report of April

New members 4

Total number of adults training 67

Total number of children training 49

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 23rd & 24th April

Jun-Shodan	Urs Battig Dennies Delos Santos	8th Kyu	Trevor Carsas Jocelyn Fergusson	2Y1 step	Mark Coleman David Shepley
Jun-3rd Kyu	Wayne Harris	9th Kyu	Ricky Truong		
6th Kyu	Choi, Sukchul Ryan U Cabuang	2Y9 step	Michael Bannah	S4 step	Robert Austin Kaido Mori
7th Kyu	Brenton Bills Nicholas Korpela	2Y3 step	Francis Hollingworth	S1 step	Kris Anderson

Events in May

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- Training starts, Friday 15th 7:15pm~
- Steps, Friday 22nd 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 23rd 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday

- Labour Day 4th Monday
- Dojo's Holiday 25th Monday

Sharing the Feeling of Black Belts

Shodan

First things first. Huge, Massive thanks goes to my wife Vicki(Vic) for her support of my Aikido, not only for myself but for my kids.

Vicki also pours her heart into the dojo as well; she is a patient Aikido widow.

Vic has never said that I shouldn't go to a class, in fact Vic is the one that makes sure I do go if I ever feel that I'm overloaded with work, or simply feel like it's all too hard, she understands how Aikido is medicinal for me.

I would never have made it to Shodan without her.

I also need to thank my kids who I'm very proud of, Beth, Marek and Brittany, they are the reason we are an Aikido family.

The kids started almost 6 years ago, and have rarely missed a class, this has been demonstrated by Marek's kids black belt and adult 3rd kyu brown belt; the girls have also trained hard and are only three gradings from their own black belts in kids class.

Voluminous thanks goes to Mori Sensei and Shuko San for their gift to all of us that come to the dojo (on and off the mat), through Sensei's leadership and guidance we are all privileged to be able to learn and train at a peerless dojo.

Upon entry to the dojo Shuko's smiling countenance is always there to boost us up along with her caring words and actions, both on and off the mat.

If it wasn't for Sensei and Shuko's continual support and guidance I know I wouldn't have been able to make it Shodan, let alone 9th kyu, they helped me climb my own personal mountain in the very beginning, I can now see the extensive vista of Yoshinkan Aikido spread before me, although the horizon is still a long way off.

In many dojos around the world learning Aikido is still considered a mystical process that requires intense personal study of a Sensei at a distance, we are lucky that Mori Sensei gives us a balanced environment to learn Aikido in; we get the best of both worlds with Sensei's traditional approach that has been enhanced by his own real world uchi deshi experience, allowing us easy access to his knowledge of Aikido and the power at it's centre.

I have had many and varied ukes in my journey, and they have all tested, pushed, led and guided me to being able to make it to Shodan; not only the many white, brown and black belts that blazed the path ahead, travelled alongside, or kicked me up the backside, but also the treasures in the kids

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classes that Shuko and Sensei have allowed me the privilege of helping to train.

I continue to strive in my Aikido to have the relaxation and enthusiasm of the kids, and the spirit and precision of the adults.

There are many that I can name from the dojo that have all played their parts in helping me to Shodan, both on the mat, and prior to that as I fought to have the courage to step on the mat in the first place.

Thank you all, I really can't thank you enough.

Looking back at my grading certificates I saw that all told it has taken me 3 ½ years to get to Shodan from my 9th kyu grading, not as long as I had thought, but still longer than I had expected; this is mostly due to my travel commitments for work.

What I have learnt though is that it was a journey that I needed to take, a journey that doesn't end at Shodan.

As a family we first stepped into the dojo 6 years ago this July; the main reason was Vic and I wanted to give our children a foundation for their lives to allow them to be able to deal with crisis, both physical and within themselves.

I also started on the mat tentatively not long afterwards in late 2003, but due to work commitments and my own procrastination I only did a couple of classes.

In February 2004 my work got the better of me and I took 6 months of stress leave, in the subsequent 18 months I did a few classes of Aikido, but I was always there watching my kids on the mat.

Although I didn't do much Aikido, I do credit the fact of being physically in the dojo as often as I was when off the mat to helping me rid some of the baggage that had contributed to my time off work.

To this day Aikido is still my refuge from stress, the simple act of walking through the draped curtains on the front doorway sweeps away any worries or angst I have had during the day.

We all can be noisy on and off the mat, but the dojo is a peaceful place for me, all my worries lie gagged and bereft of influence on the footpath outside.

Aikido has also helped me smooth the rough edges off my zeal for intellectual stimulation.

Many of us are physically exhausted and sweating profusely when we finish a class, but that is fleeting in comparison to the mental workout I always receive from class.

My father said to me recently that Aikido is the only interest he and my late Mother have ever known me to persist at for any length of time in my entire life, this is especially true as I am the proud owner of a five year old's attention span.

My parent's observation is borne out in the fact that Aikido has never bored me.

I think that this is because although the practice of Aikido is comparable to an iceberg, more below the waterline than above; to my mind Aikido is more of an Antarctic ice shelf, still with hidden depths below the surface, except it also has a great expanse or breadth above the water.

The depth is present across all the techniques, kata/kihon-dosa and grading curriculums Sensei has gifted us, and the breadth is present in the many variations that each technique has to offer, and the techniques we still do not know that we will all experience when we are ready to earn them.

So remember when Sensei demonstrates a technique we need to observe carefully and earnestly, for there are many nuances to the techniques that at first blush seem minor, but end up being as defining to the technique as the more obvious movements; this high level of awareness is a skill that I continually have to work on and is always a pleasant challenge in every class.

One of my main goals as I cross the yūdansa threshold is to not beat up on myself for my failings during gradings.

I still don't plan on winding back my expectations, as my goal is to have the "perfect grading", at least to my own satisfaction; this may be a long way off or even continually out of my reach, but if I look to this old saw "shoot for the eagle to bag the pheasant, so you don't eat crow" as the force behind my training and gradings, I can at least be confident that I have done my best.

To me Shodan is the start of a long, long path on a mind bending journey, I have many things to learn about Aikido and about myself, that I'm positive that Aikido will draw out of me; not the least of these is to relax more, use my hips and not my arms, maintain harmony with uke or shite, and work on my balance in conjunction with my centre.



If we do these things I believe that the techniques will burrow their way into us, we just need to maintain our spirit to guide them in; this requires us to do more than just having an always-ready Osu and a strong Kiai.

Recently I started reading a translation of three books written by two Samurais during the Azuchi-Momoyama and early Edo periods, titled "Soul of the Samurai" by Dr Thomas Cleary. The edited quote below is from the first book, "Martial Arts: The book of family traditions" (by Yagyu Munemori, Zen Sword Master (1571-1646), pages 23-25).

It describes the path I'd like to take on my Aikido journey.

"In all things, uncertainty exists because of not knowing. [...] When the principle is clarified, nothing stays on your mind. This is called consummating knowledge and perfecting things. Once there is nothing on your mind, everything becomes easy to do. For this reason, the practice of all the arts is to clear away what is on your mind. [...] When the object of your study leaves your mind entirely, and practice also disappears, then when you perform the art [...] you accomplish the techniques easily without being inhibited by concern over what you've learned, yet without deviating from what you've learned. This is spontaneous accord with learning, without subjective awareness of doing so. [...] When you have perfected all sorts of exercise and built up achievement in cultivation of learning and practice, even as your hands, feet, and body act it does not hang on your mind"

OSU!
Mark Coleman

Nidan

Recently we found out that that our son Jack had some gross motor / fine motor issues and low muscle tone. My suspicions were confirmed when the Occupational therapist said "Yes, it's hereditary and from the Dickenson side of the family!" Little Jacko has struggled with sport, though is keen to start Kid's class this term. I have no doubt his coordination and core strength will greatly benefit from his involvement. His attempts at Taiso (Class warm ups) at home make me laugh every time. His Nan is currently altering his Do Gi (training uniform) transforming an ALDI bargain into something that fits a little kid. I too will be starting Kid's class this term as one of Shuko's helpers. As Shuko put it "I am about to learn the Art of Patience" Bring it on!

Well here I sit writing this article a Nidan (second Dan), nearly five years after I completed my Shodan (black belt) grading and initial newsletter article of Feb 2004. The reality has not sunk in yet; I guess the great sense of achievement I feel is balanced by the need to grow into it.
Aikido & Wellbeing

Although today's busy times leave most of us struggling to balance life and health, Aikido has helped me put things in perspective in many areas of my life. I began training in the beginning of 2001, and struggled with shift work and attended mainly general classes (few senior ones). I too have struggled with coordination and in particular my sense of direction (I have played the Irish card to death defending this one!), but seriously Aikido has helped me get my capability more in line with my ambition through training with individuals like Matt Carpenter, Evan Chapman and Lawrence who attends every class with purpose, these guys have skills that are only equalled by their patience.

When I spend time with some of our more recent students I see the frustration with the constant structure which is typically Japanese. When we bow then move from four mats to two mats, then close distance then briefly do a technique riddled with different angles it's a brain strain to say the least. That aside when it all works the feeling of "kicking a goal!" shines through. I guess what I'm trying to say is all that moving back and forward, up/down and around is about awareness of space, an essential skill in order to perform freestyle Aikido. I encourage all new students to attend the second class of the evening once you are familiar with the basics, there's a lot of support from

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senior belts on offer. Still a shift worker albeit on a better roster, I now aim to attend the Dojo on average three times a week. I supplement my training with short Gym sessions (30-40mins) and have never felt better. My diet too has improved as it's harder for me to entertain my love of imported Beer if I'm at training. It's no surprise I've shed a few kilos in the process.

Harmony -V-Ego

The key to it all is mind set, a balanced approach (or managing the blow outs, were all human!) is what I've learned from my Aikido training. If Uke (attacker) and Shite (defender) don't put equal effort into a technique the Harmony and balance is lost. It's just as important to be able to handle a technique as it is to do the technique. In other words Aikido promotes an "it's not all about me (commonly known as ego!) Environment". Ryan Slavin put it perfectly our Dojo works on the philosophy "If we all share our skills everyone will improve their level".

Ego inhibits learning as nobody wants to be out done or to lose. I look forward now to improving my Uke(partnering of person doing the technique) and am keen to spend more time on junior grading, in order to help juniors get it together, when it comes to errors during a grading I could have written a thesis. Jason E once said to me "Our grading system is a master stroke of Sensei's". I not only share this opinion, but believe that the ability to grow ones' skills in small steps (monthly grading's) keeps the mind as well as the body active and promotes personal growth. In recent years I've put my hand up for more tasks outside the Dojo than I ever would have considered. When I look around the Dojo's senior students, I do not believe this to be an accident! Aikido is about non-competitive growth on and off the mats.

Practical Aikido

I have heard people say that Aikido is choreographed, martial arts answer to "So you think you can Dance!" To those people I say "Yoshinkan Aikido is compulsory for the Tokyo Riot police for a reason, it works". Often I am asked the "have you ever had to use it?" question. Until recently I have always said "Verbal Aikido; many times though physical Aikido seldom". Recently, at Work I encountered a woman who was as under the influence of drugs / alcohol dressed in leathers and not having a bar of anyone's attempts to calm her. I came to the aid of a colleague who was looking pretty uncomfortable with her advances. I decided I'd give my Communication for Compliance training a go, giving her lots of empathy offering her a seat, and assuring her all would be well. Out of the blue she grabbed my wrist (cross grip, aya mochi style). I reacted without thinking (stepping around her 45 Degrees and set up a Nikajo) placing her in a very gentle version of the 2nd control. I used half the force I would have with a beginner, and the most amazing thing happened! She sobered up, instantly becoming more compliant. Though she did have a confused look on her face, I left her sitting down waiting for her belongings to arrive. My next encounter came soon after when two staff from another agency one male and one female struggled to get her in hand cuffs. When I reiterated this story to sensei, he said "now you are a Martial Artist" I take from this that Sensei meant that I reacted without thought and used no more force than was necessary.

In closing thank you to all of Brisbane Yoshinkan for making the Dojo a fantastic place to develop ourselves. A special thanks to Sensei and Shuko for bringing Yoshinkan Aikido to Brisbane. I have yet to see the unparalleled dedication Sensei shows his students in any other part of my life. I cannot remember (1 week holiday in Japan aside) the last time I showed up for training when Sensei was not there taking the class.

OSU!!

Greg Dickenson