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AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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<b>September Report</b>					
New members 2		Total number of adults training 56		Total number of teens & children training 41	
<b>Results of Sogo Shinsa on 23<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 24<sup>th</sup> September</b>					
<b>Nidan</b>	Dennies Delos Santos	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Duong Thai	<b>4Y5 step</b>	Matthew Watson
<b>Jun-Nidan</b>	Kaido Mori	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Dominic Hogan	<b>4Y4 step</b>	Matt Carpenter
<b>Shodan</b>	Matthew Ryan		Nana Hayashi	<b>3Y7 step</b>	Lawrence Monforte
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Kyu</b>	Cameron Blake		Ryuta Hayashi	<b>3Y6 step</b>	Francis Hollingworth
	Justin Charell	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Sunny Yeh	<b>3Y5 step</b>	Aarjaun Burch
	Joel Delaney		Vincent Yeh	<b>2Y11 step</b>	Alastair Wilkinson
Mai Bui	Jamie Povia		<b>2Y9 step</b>	Joseph Stuart	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu</b>	Matt Hede	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	John Rolfe	<b>2Y2 step</b>	Peter Hills
<b>Jund-3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu</b>	Simon Horn		Joshua Rolfe	<b>2Y1 step</b>	Jocelyn Fergusson
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Kyu</b>	Steven Slaveski		Majid Momeny		
<b>Events in October</b>					
<b>1. Getsurei Shinsa</b>			<b>2. Hajime Class</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training starts, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> 7:15pm~</li> <li>• Steps, Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> 7:15pm~</li> <li>• Shinsa, Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> 1:00pm~</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> 1:00pm~</li> <li>• Please note that we will have no regular classes on this day.</li> </ul>		
			<b>3. This Month's Holiday</b>		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dojo's Holiday - Monday 25<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>		

## Sharing Sensei's experience & knowledge for Aikido life

### Evolution in Aikido skills

I assume that some students might have wondered or are confused from what I teach because what I say can be different each time and in each situation even with a same technique. If you have experienced the situation, please do not worry as I am not teaching something wrong but there are two reasons.

The first reason is my way of teaching. For instance, if someone is not using enough strength then I say "more power!" but if someone is forcing with too much strength then I say "do not use strength." If someone has a tendency of adding an extra step then I say "no step" but for another person I might say "one big step." When you hear the words only without looking at each situation the words are contradictory to each other. Although it makes perfect sense to me as I know each student's habit and progress and I can offer the right advice each time, the problem is when a student applies my exact word to other students without having a whole vision. I often hear that students use the phrase, "Sensei said," and I speak in my mind, "Yes, you are right but no...not for his case..."

The second reason is my progress in Aikido. If a technique never changes then it is dead. The living technique can keep evolving. I appreciate that you progress your technique as you train diligently and so do I. This is the biggest reason for what I show and what I teach may keep changing.

We can see how Master Gozo Shioda's Aikido was like fifty years ago in "Aikido" – a documentary film about Yoshinkan Aikido released in 1962. It is very interesting to see his style at the early stage



of Yoshinkan. His movement and line was still very rough and coarse and showed power that was not much focused and he had to rely on his muscle strength. For instance, he was lifting his shoulders up with his elbows wide open and then he was pushing Nikajo lock as hard as he could. Sankajo was the same; you could tell how much force he was using from his face. Uke was in pain as his wrist was thoroughly twisted. But I wonder if we can accept this as a technique. It was even more obvious in his basic movement. When he performed Hiriki-no-yosei (2) as he shifted his body weight back and forth his body parts –feet, hips, arms and hands – were all separated and nothing was integrated.

A good example of explaining the level of Yoshinkan in the 1960's is "Hanmi-handachi Katate-mochi Shiho-nage." The technique that our brown belts need to learn for preparing to become a black belt, was recognised as something very advanced that only Master was able to perform. The technique then was treated as more like "Aiki-waza" level compared with the present time. If you time-travel to the 60's at Yoshinkan Headquarters with your skills and knowledge you have now you will be respected as a great master. Surprise, isn't it?

Another ten years had passed in the 1970's, 'kuro-obi-kai (black belts only class)' started. I hear that what they practised at the beginning of this class was 'a finger strike' to uke's neck. Students had no idea of focused strength yet and they simply kept poking each other's neck with their whole strength, giving a squashed groan from the pains. They practised the same technique (can we call it a technique?) over and over for one hour and they lost their voices completely with their neck swollen extremely. How savage is that?!

It was after the 80's that Master's technique as well as the Yoshinkan style got more sophisticated. The muscular force was not a major cause of the technique any more but more from forming the centre line. This last ten years of Master's life made him a legend of Japanese martial arts and his technique was called "divine technique." I was very blessed with my fate that I was training as his uchi-deshi through this period. For me, he was always godlike from what I felt/saw and the fact even he had a premature stage gives me a sort of relief. He said, "A supreme level of Aikido is open after you become seventy, there is no limit." Well, it seems we have to wait until we reach seventy to enter the genuine world of this art.

I received my 5<sup>th</sup> Dan back in 1993, a year before Master passed away, and I felt I was hitting a wall. Since my rank as well as my position at the Headquarters was getting higher any of my uke's, either young junior uchi-deshi or general students, held respect to me (nothing wrong with it,) and they made sure to take nice and smooth uke movements for me. It means that they were so obedient to my shite movements that I could not feel whether my technique was truly effective or not. I sort of lost a means to judge my own progress and I feared that my potential for growth in Aikido was going to end because of my status. It was this timing that my father suggested to me to quit and go overseas.

I was pretty confident with my skills holding the uchi-deshi level 5<sup>th</sup> Dan. However, opening a dojo in Brisbane taught me that the power of Aussie males was far beyond my experiences in Japan. I had to improve my skills to stay as a Sensei. We can find out if our technique is truly effective or not by trying a technique on someone bigger or stronger than oneself. I felt that teaching as a Sensei at each class was like a grading test for me by students since I started my dojo.

I was rather tall and strong in Japan and I did not realise that I was taking advantage of my size in technique. For instance, Nikajo lock. It was a simple technique that bending uke's wrist and elbow to a certain angle then just cutting down the lock that never failed before. But when uke's weight is lots heavier than you by more than 20-30 kilos it is not easy to perform a 'simply cutting down the lock.' I had to gather all of my aligned strength from my rear foot, leg, hips, back, arms and hands that formed the centre line. This is just an example and it applied to each joint lock I had to perform.

# NEWSLETTER



Since the dojo was new no one knew what the uke was meant to do and if the technique did not work no one kindly moved. Each class was great training for me to develop the power of centre line.

I had to change some movements too to adjust to the power of Aussies. For example, Ken-dori Jiyu-waza. We are meant to block the arm first to apply a technique. I found it far too dangerous to block the thick arm of Aussies that had so much force with the cutting motion while having a bokken. I, having a lot thinner forearm bones, had a higher chance of getting them fractured, I felt. So, my movement eventually changed to avoid any direct collision but just closing in the distance at angle, using an Irimi step, and then perform any techniques thereafter.

Talking about avoiding any direct collision, Master said that he learned the essence of circular movement from gold fish that never crashed into each other in a small fish tank. I did not get this and kept a little interested in this concept. Again, because I was superior in the body size in Japan I was able to move uke with my motion without having difficulty. Here in Australia I found moving a heavier/bigger person was very difficult. For instance, Kote-gaeshi (2) movement. We need to move uke backwards in a wide angle using the energy of shifting shite's body weight. But we tend to pull uke by the force of arm and having a heavier uke, you cannot move him at all. What I realised was that the way I use my head, the heaviest part of the body, was the key which was the same principle as the way the gold fish used its head. When we rotate the head first then shite's body naturally involves uke's body in a circular flow and uke loses his balance without resistance. Well, There are endless details to talk about what I realised and developed in my Aikido skills.

Talking honestly, when I look back my technique at the early stage of Brisbane dojo, my techniques relied on muscular strength though I held 5<sup>th</sup> Dan rank. Therefore, I am very pleased that I can recognise so much changes and growth in my Aikido in the last sixteen years since I opened my own dojo. For that reason, I cannot stand watching any videos/DVDs of the past demonstration that I looked confident in demonstrating whatever I wanted to show. But they all look so immature from my current eyes and I am too embarrassed to watch myself. I always watch the previous year's demonstration to challenge and overcome myself in the following year. This is the way I can keep advancing, I think.

What I would like to ask you, especially to the black belts level students, is to keep studying what I teach and the points that are emphasised at the current time since what you learned before might be different to what I am teaching now as I progress in my Aikido. Please keep updated with new information I provide keeping a flexible attitude and mind to absorb freely without being afraid of changing.

The fascination of Aikido art is enabling a small man to beat down a big man. I, being rather weak and thin in Australia, had to learn the essence of Aikido principle that I could have never learnt if I stayed in Japan. It means you, all of my students, pressure me to grow and improve my Aikido. Opening the dojo in Brisbane was the solution for breaking down the wall I was confronted with at the Headquarters. I thank all of you, my fellow Aussie students, from the bottom of my heart for maturing me consistently!

Osu!

Michiharu Mori