



No.202 June 2012

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/dojofb>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/YoshinkanAikido>

May Report

New members 2 Total number of adults training 58 Total teens & children training 47

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 25th & 26th May

Jun-Shodan	Cameron Blake	8th Kyu	Joe Lin	3Y11 step	Ryan Slavin
Jun-3rd Kyu	John Rolfe				Lawrence Monforte
	Joshua Rolfe	4Y3 step	Lee Stemm	2Y12 step	Joseph Stuart
	Coby Stegman			2Y6 step	Murray Booth

Events in June

1. Sogo Shinsa

- Training starts, Friday 15th 7:15pm~
- Steps, Friday 29th 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 30th 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class

- Queen's Birthday – Monday 11th
- Dojo's Holiday – Monday 2nd July

A little more knowledge for your Aikido

History of Yoshinkan

Yoshinkan Headquarters in around 1985 was at its golden age; Master Gozo Shioda was still very healthy and strong demonstrating his proficient and mature Aikido skills freely, Yoshinkan Foundation was running well with many sponsors donating money that allowed the Headquarters to employ as many as ten uchi-deshis who were completely dedicated to the master and instruct Aikido, two top uchi-deshis were vigorous showing powerful Aikido skills. These blessed conditions raised the level of Yoshinkan Aikido high. Generally any other martial arts did not have these conditions and instructors had to have a job during the day to live and they were able to train only one to two hours two or three times a week. But these hours were not enough to achieve a professional level. The running system of Yoshinkan Headquarters was very rare and in a way it was a luxurious environment for uchi-deshis to master the art.

It was my third year of uchi-deshi life in 1987, I had to attend The Demonstration of Traditional Japanese Martial Arts to take Takeno Shihan's uke. There were various martial arts like Yabusame (the shooting of arrows by a samurai while riding horses), Naginata (long-handled sword), Shuriken (throwing star), Hinawaju (matchlocks,) and many more. Although all of them were demonstrated by instructors or masters, the perfection level was so low even I who was only a beginner uchi-deshi had to cover my eyes feeling too sorry to watch. After I went back to the Headquarters my master asked me to report about the demonstration. I hesitated to tell my honest opinion knowing I was only a green youth in martial arts but I did not know what else to say. So, I told him that I was surprised to see how poor their demonstrations were, being prepared to be scolded for my rudeness. Contrary to what I expected, Master laughed at my words loudly and said, "They are not professional."

What he meant was that other martial artists did not have enough time to devote themselves to training and the lack of quantity of training was fatal to be called a professional. He respected each martial art highly but it was a fact that practitioners could not spare enough time to master the arts. The Yoshinkan style was well known for its great quantity of severe training and its high quality of skills, and therefore we received high respect and a sense of awe from other martial arts. The name of Gozo Shioda was legendary that anybody who belonged to the martial arts knew and we, his uchi-deshis, were so proud of being his direct disciples always getting attention from other martial artists.

Well, that was the circumstance of Yoshinkan in Japan but it was not the same overseas. I travelled through Australia, USA and Canada in 1994 to research for deciding where to open my dojo and I visited different dojos in these countries. I was quite surprised to find many Aikido clubs wherever I went and many people knew about Aikido. Generally Aikido in



Japan was not a well spread martial art then though Yoshinkan was famous within the martial arts field. I never saw Aikido until I joined Yoshinkan as there was no Aikido club in my town that was usual everywhere in Japan. It, however, was different in these countries that I found Aikido club at every sports hall like PCYC but none of them was Yoshinkan. I was shocked at the fact that no one knew the name of Gozo Shioda though he was legendary in Japan. Besides, Aikido was almost sorted into a meditating club! It was a café in New Farm where a waiter asked me what my job was and I proudly said I was a martial arts instructor. He then asked which one and I of course said it was Aikido. Then he kindly corrected me Aikido was not a martial art as it was a meditation school using ki. Can you imagine how big my shock was?! I was so proud of being an uchi-deshi of Yoshinkan Aikido and I was treated highly as a martial artist back in Japan and here in Brisbane I was almost treated like a sissy. Well, we have to look at the history of Aikido and how it spread to the world to find out the background.

After World War II, GHQ of the American Forces banned martial arts from Japanese society regarding them as hotbeds of Japanese militarism. That turned the Japanese martial arts into the critical condition that they were to be extinct from Japan. For instance, Judo had many different styles until then. Newaza (ground techniques) based styles were common on the west coast of Japan and Tachiwaza (standing techniques) based styles were mainly on the east coast. Although martial arts were banned by GHQ Jigoro Kano who was the top of Kodokan style Judo was a member of IOC (International Olympic committee) and Kodokan was the only martial art officially admitted. Therefore Judo in Japan has only this Kodokan style that was good at standing techniques and the other Newaza based Judo travelled to Brazil and got popular there as Brazilian Jujutsu.

What happened to Aikido then? The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, withdrew from Tokyo to a countryside called Iwama in Ibaraki prefecture to avoid the chaos during WWII and he opened a self-sufficient facility named "Aikien" that was a complex of a farm, Aiki Shrine and Aiki dojo, being totally isolated, where he concentrated on maturing his Aikido that was combined with his faith in Omoto-kyo. His son, Kisshomaru Ueshiba, took over the Headquarters of Aikikai located in Tokyo but the facility became more of an evacuation centre after the war as many people lost their place to live after their houses were burnt down from air attacks. As a result Aikikai could not hold training at their own dojo for many years but supported war victims.

The transition stage to save Aikido as well as other martial arts from becoming extinct came when GHQ left Japan. Before they left, they ordered so called "Red Purge" to exile all the communists from any public institutions and private companies while they were active and that caused lots of terrorists to attack the institutions and companies as revenge. They needed to protect themselves from terrorism by establishing a new means of self-defence measure. The person who was called to be a group leader of martial artists to set up the new section was Master Gozo Shioda as he had experience in teaching soldiers at Nakano Gakko (Japanese army spy training centre) with Master Morihei Ueshiba before and during the war. As he visited many institutions and companies to teach Aikido his name was spread and so was Aikido itself. The biggest event that cemented his name among the martial arts world as well as the VIPs of the business community was winning the title of the best demonstration award with enormously high-support at the All Japan Martial Arts Convention in 1954. This event led Gozo Shioda to establish his own Aikido style, Yoshinkan, supported by many sponsors from the business community forming a foundation.

In 1962 Robert Kennedy (brother of President John Kennedy) visited Yoshinkan Headquarters and the movie "Aikido" featuring Gozo Shioda was released. These two events were well reported by media and it was the first time that Aikido was disclosed to the public. Yoshinkan led by Gozo Shioda was definitely the style that spread Aikido through Japan then. The tuition to Riot Police as a routine began in 1960 and the Senshusei Course (the course for riot policemen and instructors) formally started in 1964. The fact Yoshinkan Aikido was chosen to train Riot Policemen won a reputation for Yoshinkan as the effective combat style in the Japanese martial arts world.

The distinct aspect of Yoshinkan was its power and practical skills, and it was its advantage but also it was its disadvantage. To master this strong and strict art needed lots of time going through severe training. There was an unspoken assumption that anybody who wished to teach Yoshinkan Aikido outside headquarters had to accomplish the Senshusei Course with riot policemen spending full time, at least one year, and who wished to open a Yoshinkan dojo overseas was expected to become an uchi-deshi and to reach at least 4th Dan. As I felt the pressure of this unspoken rule I aimed for achieving 4th Dan when I joined. I do not know if this unwritten condition was a good thing for Yoshinkan or not. Achieving 4th Dan took five years at least being an uchi-deshi and that was not the condition many people could



accomplish. In fact, there were only a few that opened a dojo overseas before me and there were very limited numbers of qualified Yoshinkan instructors even in Japan then. Although Yoshinkan Headquarters was big it did not have many branch dojos or practitioners throughout Japan and the world due to a shortage of instructors.

The originator of Aikido, Aikikai, started to show signs of anxiety as Yoshinkan was more featured through TV and journals, holding lots of demonstrations and teaching at army bases, police academies and universities. It looked like Yoshinkan was growing at a rapid pace. However, though Yoshinkan developed the path to spread Aikido it could not dispatch instructors to teach when requests were made by institutions and universities. So, they contacted Aikikai as they were teaching Aikido too, of course, and Aikikai was able to send their instructors to respond to their demands. Aikikai focused on teaching Aikido for uni students and those graduates opened Aikikai clubs or taught at local schools and unis after they went back their home towns. It was very difficult for Yoshinkan style to be spread wide as Yoshinkan was too strict to permit practitioners to teach while Aikikai allowed its practitioners to become instructors after they received black belts training for only one or two years as a general student, not even as an uchi-deshi. They opened their clubs easily and gathered people who simply wanted to enjoy Aikido without being too serious in mastering the art. This way of Aikikai got accepted well in general society. Aikikai was the one spreading rapidly all over Japan and throughout the world after all.

I personally think that it is too early for anybody to start teaching Aikido after only a few years of training on a part time basis. It is from my experience that the training for a few years does not give us appropriate ability to teach as the amount of training is not enough to input Aikido movement as a second instinct into our body and to understand principle and mechanism of the art deeply enough. What I was surprised in overseas was that techniques of many so-called Aikido instructors were far from being effective and pretty poor but they looked confident teaching about "love, peace and harmony." Well, that is why the waiter at New Farm café taught me that Aikido was not a martial art. I remember that some students from Aikikai came to watch my demonstration in the second year of Brisbane Yoshinkan and they commented that mine was not Aikido as it was too aggressive... Well, to me who learnt Aikido in Japan where Aikido originated Aikido is definitely a martial art that offers very practical combat skills.

Yoshinkan after 1990 when IYAF (International Yoshinkai Aikido Federation) was set up, changed its traditional way of the unspoken rule. Any black belt practitioners of Yoshinkan in the world were able to become instructors by registering without becoming an uchi-deshi or visiting the headquarters. Until then, foreign practitioners had to train at the headquarters for a certain period at least, if not becoming an uchi-deshi, to be registered as Yoshinkan instructors so that Master Gozo Shioda was able to check any instructors' techniques and skills before they were spread. This change meant that Yoshinkan dojos and clubs set off to stretch out more but at the same time it generated a new problem. As Yoshinkan tried to spread its name more they began to give away ranks and titles easily. Say, an instructor who had 6th Dan in a different Aikido style got registered as Yoshinkan 6th Dan if he wished to change his affiliation even though his ability in Aikido was not guaranteed. Or even though one did not hold appropriate rank in other Aikido styles he was given high ranks if there was a political reason. This is the reason if you ever have questioned why high ranked Yoshinkan instructors were demonstrating poor level skills in youtube as such. This tendency was what Master Gozo Shioda was most concerned as it would lead true techniques to fade away.

I, who was called the last uchi-deshi of Master Gozo Shioda as I was the last uchi-deshi to take his uke formally, desire to leave the genuine Aikido of Master Gozo Shioda here in Australia. It is my dream that Japanese people need to travel to Australia to learn the genuine traditional Japanese martial art from Australians in future, though it was the huge concern that my master feared would happen.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori