

NEWSLETTER



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AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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

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

April Report					
New members 3		Total number of adults training 57		Total number of children training 40	
Results of GetsureiShinsa on 26th & 27th					
4th Kyu	Stephen Cuthbert	5Y10 step	Brent Weston	2Y2 step	Joel Delaney
7th Kyu	Viraphong Phounesana	4Y2 step	Ryan Slavin	S5 step	Steven Bannah
8th Kyu	Emil Pop	2Y12 step	Michael Bannah	S4 step	Dominic Hogan
	Emmanuel Pop	2Y10 step	Peter Hills	S3 step	Darsy Darssan
Events in May					
1. Getsurei Shinsa			2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training starts, Friday 17th 7:15pm~• Steps, Friday 24th 7:15pm~• Shinsa, Saturday 25th 1:00pm~			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dojo Holiday– Monday 27th		

Sharing the feeling of Black Belts

Shodan

It is difficult to condense the feelings of the past 7 or 8 years, since I first walked into the Brisbane Yoshinkan Dojo, into a couple of pages. I am acutely aware of a profound sense of joy as well as gratitude and humility when I think about the journey to get here. I had until relatively recently given up on training and in addition to my reference after the last demonstration, I would like to acknowledge how I was given a second chance at a happier life and to try for Shodan. The two outcomes are inextricably linked.

A fair few of you know the story of how I was virtually disabled by arthritis and how Sensei introduced me to Tenrikyo and how, despite the incredulity of my doctors, that has allowed me to train in this fantastic dojo again. To me, it is quite a story and my recovery fell within the realms of the impossible as far as I was concerned. Eagle Kao referred to a train of thought that I am a subscriber to now, in a newsletter some time ago: Do what Sensei suggests in life and things go better and more harmoniously. I recall Brendan Stuart in another newsletter, suggesting that Sensei is a hard example to follow. Very true and from my perspective, a huge understatement! ☺

I don't claim to fully understand what happened to me, my doctors don't understand it either but there are a lot of things I see and hear about in Mori Sensei's Yoshinkan Dojo that seem impossible for me to understand and yet they happen anyway. Any hope of getting a black belt in Aikido or any martial art had faded approximately 6 years ago and still seemed impossible less than a year ago. I read a lot about Spirit in the newsletters that come from the Aikido students here. There are a lot of references to controlling one's mind to achieve the most out of life, to be grateful and to help others in harmony; all things I too have learned about from Sensei both upstairs and in the Dojo. It seems to me, that the upstairs and downstairs in the Dojo are closely related. I remain majorly grateful for both environments and stunned that such a place exists in Brisbane.

I developed a healthy speech impediment when I was quite young, which got worse as I grew up. There were many moments of despondency in a life affected by disability and I mention it as an example of hardship that needed overcoming and I needed help in overcoming it. We all seek a happy life I think. We certainly get our challenges along the way and that was a big one for me. A lack of belief in purpose of things, joy or happiness perpetually infiltrated my being for a long time. A noisy mind was and is my constant challenge. I eventually overcame the stutter in my thirties and can say that the joy I feel when I talk freely, it sits like a smile deep within me. To change ones' self to overcome learned negative mind behaviours does create real joy.

I had always suspected that martial arts would help me with my speech impediment but I am a lazy soul and I needed a catalyst to drive me to training; After testing my face on a special forces soldier's fist and coming off

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second one night outside a bar in South Africa ☺ , I took an opportunity to learn Kung Fu at age 18 from the Doctor who fixed the gaping hole in my lip. I studied with him for a few years before he left to go home to Belgium from South Africa. Before leaving the country, he gave me a book on Aikido as an example of a great martial art. The book showed photos of a little old man (who I came to know as O'Sensei) flinging people through the air with hardly so much as a touch and talked a lot about Spirit. The tone of the book touched me deeply. I really wanted to learn Aikido right away but a lack of a training facility in my home town prevented this. I took up Karate to fill the void left by my Kung Fu teacher and stayed with Karate for a few more years, including while travelling overseas myself.

It was not until I was contemplating a move to Brisbane in 2004 and the perceived ties that I imagined that Australia had with Asia and martial arts, which I missed as a result of a break from training for a while, that I searched for Aikido in Brisbane on the internet. I could hardly believe my luck when I found Mori Sensei's dojo. There was a direct and short tutelage line back to O'Sensei. I signed up once I had settled in Brisbane, the next year.

A couple of years in and arthritis interrupted my training at 1st Kyu level. As I mentioned, I gave up on Shodan and ever training again. Fortunately for me, Sensei and Shuko-san never give up and here I am, marvelling at the journey that has brought me round again for another go. I am deeply grateful.

Like most students that hit their forties, I suspect, the debate about why we train enters my head now and again. It is not easy and sometimes scary to regularly come to a place where a black belt is going to measure your body's resistance under a few G's of impact stress testing ☺ With the battles to overcome speech problems and arthritic pain testing me in life, it does seem to me now that pain in its many forms sometimes invites us to change for the better. One hopes that the pain is manageable. I read once that O'Sensei referred to how human beings develop in a similar fashion to iron that through forging and exposure to heat, cold and hammering is transformed into razor sharp steel. I don't know that I will ever exhibit such fineness of character but I would like to try and I am very lucky there is a Dojo like this that exists as an agent of that change. Sensei's example seems a long way off from me but when I do as he instructs and when I train, I seem to feel happier and stronger with less pain in my joints. I am able to cope with stress in a better manner and I am more confident. I think I managed the stress of my Shodan grading well in my mind (finally!) and am chuffed with that. I hope I have the strength and capability to follow Sensei's example to train for a while yet. I look forward to having the best of me join you all on the mats.

In my opinion this Dojo has really fine black belts and students that set a high bar with a Sensei that exemplifies the Spirit I first saw in that book on Aikido. It is also my perception that Sensei's teaching is consistently transmitted through his students; evidence is revealed on the mats as well as in the newsletters. I try to remember this teaching regularly in my day to improve myself in life and on the mats. I hope I too can transmit it to others as effectively.

Given that I have spent a number of years climbing to base camp ☺, there are a lot of thanks to be offered to the many students that have helped me along the way. Special Thank You's to Lawrence for pushing this Madala body beyond my perceived limits and for your friendship, to Brent W for spending much needed time with me before my grading to improve my technique and for effective advice like 'just keep turning up' when I first started here, to Mai, Lee, Kaido, Cameron, Richard, Ryan, Jason W, Jason E, Emmanuel, Brendan, Joe, Amy, Simon N, Matt H and many other students, past and present, who have all (even though you may not know it) inspired, encouraged, cajoled and dragged me towards Shodan in so many ways over the last interrupted 7 years or so. Thank you very much. I hope to learn much more from you and help others like you have helped me.

It goes without saying, Sensei, that I am deeply indebted to you and Shuko-san for my second chance at Aikido training and for much more. Thank you also, Sensei and Shuko-san, for your welcoming attitude and the many lessons in your amazing Dojo. It is a privilege and a joy to train here. My Aikido skill has a long way to go but I hope I have taken a first step on a fantastic journey.

Thank you Kym, for your ever-present support. I rely on your strength.

OSU!

Greg Smith