



No.224 April 2014

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

Dojo: <http://yoshinkan.info>

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March Report

New members 3

Total number of adults training 58

Total number of children training 40

Results of Sogo Shinsa on 28th & 29th March

2nd Kyu	Dean Jones Stephen Cuthbert	6th Kyu	Thomas Gilbert	4Y11 step	Sam Gray
3rd Kyu	Kerry Nicholson Sandra Contreras Wikrom Tang	7th Kyu	James Thai	3Y12 step	Kaido Mori
Jun-3rd Kyu	Viraphone Phounesana Laura Allen	8th Kyu	Charles Delaporte Daniel Tagg Don Butler	2Y9 step	Cameron Blake
5th Kyu	Christian McFarland	9th Kyu	Viktor Ovcharenko Andrew Crampton	S5 step	Simon Nordon
6th Kyu	Comila Roebuck		Marian Camilleri	S3 step	Vladimir Roudakov Janna Malikova Lu Jiang
				S2 step	Andrea Troncoso Salas

Events in April

1. Getsurei Shinsa

- Training starts, Thursday 24th 6:00pm~
- Steps, Friday 2nd May 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 3rd May 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class

- Easter Holiday – Friday 18th ~ Monday 21st
- Anzac Day – Friday 25th

Sharing some thoughts of Black Belts

Shodan

So how do I feel now that I have achieved becoming a black belt in Yoshinkan Aikido? Well to go back and retrace my steps, I had already acquired two black belts in other styles of martial arts over 30 years, but something still felt like it was missing. When I got my black belt in Yoshinkan, I can honestly say it was the most significant of all, for I really do believe I personally discovered a more meaningful way of life. I am so thankful for the stepping stones that over the years lead me here, to what I consider a happier more disciplined style. It was what I was searching for.

I can't remember how it happened but in 1992, I was introduced to a little old English man called Harry in his late 70's that was still teaching under a style called Aikido. It proved to be far removed from the style I had learnt over the last 20 odd years in Karate that's for sure! I turned up on that first day of training to be greeted by a happy elderly man who barely came up to my shoulder in height. That very first training session fascinated me, and I was totally blown away that this gentle old man could throw me around like I was of no weight at all to him. I'm sure I could see a faint smile on his face as he proceeded to wipe that aggressive karate training out of me in that very first training session.

At the time I was still teaching at my karate school, but was drawn to continue my new found way with Harry in his backyard dojo as I embraced what I thought was a very clever style. After all how could a man of this age be so frustratingly good! From this moment on I was rewriting my martial arts as I knew it, and looked forward to my treasured friendship and training with Harry over the next 6 years, before sadly this wonderful man passed away. He trained me right up to the end. How could this be, he was 86! But this was, Aikido.

My stepping stone from that small shed in his back yard, led me to Yoshinkan and the right road on my journey of what was to come. I had read an article in a 'Blitz' magazine on Sensei Mori at Yoshinkan in Brisbane. Although it was an hour's drive there and back from where I lived, I was intrigued and keen to learn from what I thought looked to be a great option in furthering my Aikido.

From the very start I was welcomed into my new dojo my Sensei Mori and his family, and met some wonderful people that trained there. Coming from a background of an aggressive and ego driven style martial arts in what

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was karate, it was truly wonderful to discover a calmer and more meaningful way of training in harmony. It all just fit in so right with who I wanted to become. I had found where I wanted to be.

Now, here I am all these years later, and I would sincerely like to give thanks to all those that helped me in developing such a wonderful style. Genuine friendships were formed.

I also found great comfort in Tenrikyo that has got me through difficult times offering me and my wife healing, compassion and love for the greater understanding of life.

Of course the moment that brought me my greatest achievement of all in my martial arts journey, was a couple of days before Christmas 2013 when I proudly received my rank of Shodan from Sensei Mori, and I knew I had found Bushido.

May each and every one of you that have offered your help, friendship and kindness on this journey of mine, know that I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

OSU,

Tony Starkie

A little more knowledge for learning Aikido

Endless learning and developing in Aikido training

I sometimes see black belts lose their focus to keep training, not being clear as to what their next task/challenge is to improve their skills in Aikido. As everyone knows, we have lots of techniques to practice and memorise until achieving the level of black belt. That gets us all busy working hard to remember each step, grip, lock, angle and more details through white and brown belt stages. Once you have mastered all the techniques reasonably well enough by getting through Brisbane dojo's unique grading syllabus (which keeps increasing!) and around the time you reach the 2nd Dan level, the real Aiki world can begin. I believe that you are strong enough then as a martial artist to be able to use the skills on the street if you need, but that is not the goal as an Aikido practitioner, from my perspective. I hope that sharing part of my Aikido journey and some insights provides you with a few hints to help you to set your own tasks and challenges, in order to deepen your Aikido knowledge.

I still cannot forget the shock I felt when I received an Aiki-waza (Aiki-waza is any Aikido techniques without basic joint locks or throws but using its mechanical principles which appear to be more magical) from my Master, the late Gozo Shioda. I held his thin wrist with my whole strength intending not to make him move an inch but I was blown away at the next moment when the old man twisted his withered wrist a little as if it was nothing. I had no idea what happened at all... He said, "Do not fight against the opponent's strength. Go/harmonise with it." Well, his words were too fairy like and very much outside of my understanding. He also said, on another occasion performing the same sort of technique, "Now, his mind is entering into me," and his uke was thrown flat on the mats as the Master shook his body slightly up and down. How ridiculous is that!? It made no sense to me.

Of course, I tried. I tried and tried and tried to perform something similar to what I felt. But nothing happened. So, I sought some advice from my senior uchi-deshis. One told me to focus on my hips. Well, I followed his advice and studied different ways of using my hips desperately for a while. The other told me to focus on my knees and toes and I worked hard on that too. And the other murmured in the low voice, "Look at yourself in a mirror at night and you will see a white centre line appears and that is the clue..." I did not follow this advice, standing in front of a mirror at night searching for a glowing white line, as he appeared to me just a drunk man, although a foreign uchi-deshi called him a genius...

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I am a person who hates illusions and absurd ideas but appreciates anything realistic. I wanted to understand the magical Aiki-waza more scientifically with mechanical explanations. I have been training Aikido seriously, full of twists and turns for nearly twenty-nine years, and I finally began to grasp the world of Aiki-waza. Well, you probably don't believe me, but the most precise word to explain the technique is "feeling." In a way I can finally understand what my master meant but not in the way I wished, as I never liked the fairy expressions... Although explaining things in words is very limited, I will try my best to offer some advice for our black belts to study Aiki-waza, that you all wish to learn.

'Solidifying' is the word that I feel is the first condition to begin the Aiki-waza (it is my current thought and may change as I practice more.) I think the best technique to experiment the Aiki-waza is the Kokyu-nage from the Hiriki-no-yosei (1) position, which is in the Jun -3rd Kyu syllabus. You need to let your uke hold your wrist as hard as possible, not just grabbing you but with their whole strength. It is then is very difficult for you to move the uke generally. However, that is the essential element to perform the Aiki-waza, solidifying uke's body by neutralising all the joints. When uke holds you with whole strength his muscles get all tight and contracted so that the body itself gets closer to become a solid substance with no floppy parts. Then, you need to fill the chinks of joints (wrist, elbow, shoulder) connected between you and your uke to lock them completely and solidify his body thoroughly by adjusting your wrist angle where the contact is made, using your hips, knees, toes and whole your body. Once you can make your uke's body locked into one solid substance then it is very easy to knock him down with a tiny amount of strength –pushing, pulling, forwards, backwards, whatever.

This Kokyu-nage is suitable for getting a clue to Aiki-waza, for learning and developing the sense of feeling your uke's body, its mechanism and strength as well as how your movement and force travels to his body. The second best technique is Ushiro-ryote-mochi Aiki-nage where you need to solidify the uke's body in the first movement, when you turn your body 45 degrees, dropping your body weight to lock uke's body through his grip on both your wrists, while keeping the uke's whole body solidified/locked until you finish throwing. Well, I know that your question here is how to 'solidify' your uke's body. This is the part where I cannot explain how to, other than through your accumulated experience from the years of devoted training.

I think that the syllabus of Aikido training is very well designed to advance your skills of Aikido. You know, you learn Kamae as the very first thing, when you start Aikido, to establish your sense of the centre line. Then, Seiza-ho, Shikko-ho, basic movements to strengthen your centre line as you move and you learn basic joint locks to understand how joints get locked to restrain someone's body through both performing and receiving techniques. Next, you learn more advanced techniques when attackers are in motion to train the sense of right timing and to judge the right distance to apply techniques. All the information you collect through this training, over years, gets accumulated in your body to develop your senses, as long as you are focused to absorb the information you collected and are not just spending time on the mats. These senses you develop are the only method to 'solidify' your uke's body. That is the start of Aiki-waza. In this sense, no one needs to be genius to perform Aiki-waza and anyone can do Aiki-waza with years of diligent training.

We all need to have a current clear task/challenge to focus on for our training to be more efficient and not training vaguely, if we wish to improve. I have mastered the ways to 'solidify' uke's body, my own body and two bodies together into one solid piece when there is no motion. Now my current challenge is how to apply this skill in motion when uke is attacking freely in Jiyu-waza style. Basic joint locks in motion are not difficult to apply but Aiki-waza in motion, without the time to adjust the lock of connected point, is very challenging. These endless challenges are why training can have meaning and we can then enjoy training Aikido forever. Well everyone, we shall all try to expand our Aikido world at each person's level, together as the family of Brisbane Yoshinkan Aikido.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori