



May Report

New members 3

Total number of adults training 66

Total number of children training 42

Results of Getsurei Shinsa on 30th & 31st May

Jun-3rd Kyu	Christian McFarland	8th Kyu	Andrew Crampton	Y2 step	Emmanuel Economidis
4th Kyu	Roland Thompson	9th Kyu	Sai Kiao	4Y8 step	Lawrence Monforte
5th Kyu	Niklas Casaril Jared Mifsud		Ross Macpherson Sandy Lokas	S5 step	Vladimir Roudakov Janna Malikova
7th Kyu	Charles Delaporte Daniel Tagg		Pol O Sleibhin Pedro Gouvea	S4 step	Lu Jiang
8th Kyu	Victor Ovcharenko		Lily Crampton		

Events in June

1. Sogo Shinsa

- Training starts, Friday 13th 7:15pm~
- Steps, Friday 27th June 7:15pm~
- Shinsa, Saturday 28th June 1:00pm~

2. This Month's Holiday of Adults' class

- Queen's Birthday –Monday 9th June
- Dojo Holiday –Monday 30th June

Coffee Break

My excuse –differences in culture

A few years ago, a partner of an acquaintance of mine began training at our dojo. She happened to be right next to me during the warming-up at the second or third lesson. When Koho-ukemi practice started she was struggling to get up herself as is very normal for a lot of beginners. Had I not known her personally I would not have paid any attention but because she was someone I knew, I tried to encourage her with the intention of making her feel more enjoyment, feeling sorry for her dealing with the hard exercises. I smiled at her, full of spirit for service and said "Come on, you can do it!" We finished the exercise happily together and I was pleased that I was able to support her. I simply wanted her to enjoy the activities in the class, though training was tough for a beginner. Contrary to my satisfaction of believing in my behaviour of caring for her with kindness she, as she was leaving the dojo after the class, said to my wife Shuko at the counter; "Mori Sensei laughed at me!"

What?! I was so upset when Shuko told me this and she added that her friend was trying to ease her feeling saying "Don't be upset, it is just a Japanese joke." NO, it was not even a joke, but my sincere care trying to comfort her feeling and meaning to relax her tension. This happening reminded me of an event at Shudokan Dojo in Melbourne back in 1994 before I opened Brisbane Dojo. I was examining a lady for her black belt grading at one of their Sogo Shinsa. She was demonstrating a very high standard in basic techniques and everyone knew she was excellent. Yet, one mistake in Jiyu-waza made her lose her sense of tension or she simply got panicky and she began laughing loudly while she continued performing her Jiyu-waza. Well, I never saw someone laugh during a grading and if it happened in Japan, it would not have been acceptable and she would have been scolded severely by uchi-deshis. But this happened in a country outside of Japan where culture or standard of general behaviour were expected to be different. So, though I was feeling little irritated I laughed with her to be polite in the intention of not giving her pressure but giving her opportunity to perform good Jiyu-waza, covering up her mistake for her best grading result. Now you can guess what she said after the grading. Yes, she told everyone that Mori Sensei laughed at her during her grading!

NOooooo! It was a huge misunderstanding. For Japanese people laugh/smile/grin (but may appear to be a smirk for you) is a way to break the ice, or to relax other people, or to express our friendship. I often heard that Western people did not feel pleasant when they saw Japanese tourists smirking (though it meant to be smiling from the perspective of Japanese people) without any meaning. Well, it has a meaning for us by expressing our innocence and expressing to you that we are not your enemies. Although there are no ill intentions at all, our way seems to cause people to feel ridiculed and gets us into trouble instead of making friends, on some occasions. I was the

NEWSLETTER



same and I was not being mean at all. I was quite surprised to realise that we can cause misunderstandings so easily when we are brought up in different cultures.

When our mother countries and cultures are different our way of greetings varies too. "Hello. How are you?" is the most common greeting used in English spoken countries and I am often asked "Ogenki desuka?" politely which is the direct translation in Japanese from people who have studied Japanese. However, we do not ask "How are you?" in daily conversation in our culture, but only when we haven't seen someone for a long time then would ask "How have you been?" I think that the differences are due to our historical backgrounds. Japanese were originally an agricultural people and three hundred years of Edo era built up the foundation of the current Japanese culture. The Edo government prohibited its people from moving their lands and therefore villagers knew each other thoroughly well for more than three generations. They all knew about each other's families, relations, personalities, health conditions and any other issues that happened, living in the same village. So, we did not need to ask how you were, which sounded rather silly, but instead they talked about the weather that was more changeable and important for them being farmers. On the other side, Westerners were originally hunting people so that their everyday life was pretty changeable moving after prey and it could be quite dangerous travelling into new lands, not like the peaceful environment of farmers. Then, asking "How are you?" was natural for them as their condition and state could be very different day to day. I suppose that it is absolutely natural that people's way of thinking, use of words, manners and customs are different according to the background of their countries and histories.

Another thing I was troubled by was that Australian people sought positive comments after their gradings. I was used to the Japanese way that people were just happy by receiving the results, either passed or not and they understood that they were not good enough if they failed. Here, people often ask me how they were when I hand out their certificates. My answer was usually "No problem" but that made some confused and I heard one comment that it did not make sense to him. Well, we in the martial arts field hardly praise students for their performances in Japan as we believe we are never good enough. Only the techniques we admire and praise openly are those of masters. So, when we say "no problem" to judge the performance of students it means their performance is appropriate for their level, but there is a lot more to improve. If they did not meet the expected level then there is a problem, you know. Thus, I meant saying "no problem" was a positive comment. But now, I try to remind myself to change my words for reducing the confusion of students by saying "Good!" or "Very Good."

The trouble I caused was not only at the dojo from the differences in culture. One of them was from the difference in manners. As a child when I visited my grandmother some decades ago, she offered me a cup of green tea. Green tea was of course very hot and I drunk it with a loud sipping sound to cool the tea sucking it with air. The vigorous act of the child seemed to appear very pleasant for my grandmother and she praised me, saying that the way I drank tea was so enjoyable. I, who almost never got praise from my parents or from any other people, was very excited and making a loud sipping sound became my habit whenever I had something hot. It was all fine as long as it happened in Japan as we accept sipping sound as a good manner when we eat or drink. Back in 1994 when I was travelling with one of Shudokan dojo's students visiting other dojos to hold seminars we became good friends as we spent about a week together both on and off the mats. While meeting with many people I often dwelled myself on drinking hot coffee, not understanding or speaking English very much then. There, of course, I was making loud sipping sounds every time I had the cups as I did not know that this was a very rude manner in Western country. Thanks to my ignorance and kindness of people not mentioning that it was not acceptable, I kept doing it through the whole trip. Guess what happened! The Shudokan student began making a loud sipping noise whenever he had coffee too, thinking it was cool, as he had a high respect for me. It was all fine while he was staying with me, but he got in a big trouble when he went back to his home where his new girlfriend was waiting for him. Later on, he told me that he had a massive fight with her just because of this new habit he created, because of me! He was forced to promise her to stop mimicking the silly Asian man to keep the relationship.

I have been living here in Australia for nineteen years, yet I have lots of things that I am ignorant about that may have been causing people to feel unpleasant. Still, my intention is to harmonise with this land and its people to spread the world of Aikido. So, please everyone, teach me and guide me whenever you see I need to be well educated.

Osu!

Michiharu Mori



Letter from Japan

Dear Mori Family of the Brisbane Dojo,

I hope this message finds you guys doing well. I am sure everyone is training hard in the great atmosphere of the Brisbane Dojo.

I wanted to express my gratitude and appreciation for the time I was there with Tomoko in early May. Because of my lack in confidence in my Japanese, please allow me to write in English. I kept wondering what I should say, and before I knew it, it had already been almost a month! I apologize for my embarrassing delay.

In the 3 days we were there, I was able to experience a little bit of everything in the dojo. From Kid's classes and white belt testing, to intense jiyuwaza training with the Yudanshas and watching the black belt tests. I tried to see every part of the dojo and absorb as much as I can.

Tomoko and I were greeted by the entire Mori family as soon as we entered, and this was a complete surprise! In Honbu, you rarely meet the headmaster. Thank you for such a warm welcome and making us feel at home (though I was a nervous wreck!).

The training had great energy and intensity. The Aikido level was outstanding. What I liked most was how the students would actively help each other out. Whether it was a white belt, or a visitor such as myself, a black belt would come running towards me if I was confused about where to go. It showed a great sempai/kohai relationship, and to see foreigners doing that was refreshing and nice to see.

Thanks to Kaido's constant help and kind patience, we somehow kept up with the first taiso and following tsuki/keri exercises. I feel honored to have met Kaido. It is nice to have a bond together, since we are both Japanese who grew up in a country away from Japan. Already he is a great Sensei with the right balance of encouragement, gentleness, and plenty enough mastery of Aikido. I am sure he will be even greater if he continues! I will treasure our brief time together.

I'd also like to thank very much Shuko Sensei for making us feel welcome, and letting me join the Kid's class. I was so surprised how gentle the kids are! The kids in Honbu are much more rowdy. The magic of Shuko Sensei's Aikido lessons. The game of Janken was brilliant, when the loser must stand strong in Kamae when pushed. I actually tried this in Honbu, but failed. I will try again. Thank you also for teaching us a lot about the Brisbane dojo, its history, and the difference between the culture of Australia and Japan. This was very important for me to learn and I am grateful.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Mori Sensei. A true example of an Aikido Sensei. Being with him, I felt his huge presence, but at the same time he felt like an uncle to me. He was calm and down to earth. I carefully watched him and saw that he sets perfect maai in everything he does. Whether it is training, conversing, or simply walking along the street, he never seems to clash w/ anything.

In his superb techniques, I felt the all the years of his aikido life. Very elegant and powerful, it was sensational to be his uke. One of his irimizuki felt like a sudden ton of bricks, but he did it so effortlessly. I loved every second of it. I was privileged and honoured to feel his Aikiwaza. I heard that he rarely does Aikiwaza unless it is for special purposes. The best was when he threw me with his finger. This was simply amazing, and I have never experienced it before. It made me realize how low level I was and how far I was away from the top. Thank you for the encouragement and mentorship.

Every student Tomoko and I met were so friendly and warm. It's like one big family. Everyone described how great Mori Sensei and the entire Mori family are. I told each person that he/she is lucky to have such a Sensei. In Japanese culture, usually they would deny and say, "iie, iie." But in the Brisbane dojo, they all gave me the same answer, "I know!"

Thank you once again for taking the time for allowing us in the Brisbane dojo at a very personal level. I really cannot express how grateful I am, and how touched I was from the experience. With the motivation and passion I received from everybody at the Brisbane dojo, I know I must continue to train diligently and keep working for my aikido life ahead. The Brisbane dojo is a great role model, and I will look back at my experience there from time to time. I would love to go back there again for a longer period of time, so I can really study the ways of the Brisbane dojo. But right now, it is my duty to make Honbu Dojo better, through all the ups and downs. Until next time, I wish for the Brisbane dojo to prosper even more, and continue contributing to many lives as the way it did for me, with the art of peace.

Warm regards and with spirit,

Tepei and Tomoko Yanagihara