



No. 140 April 2007

AIKIDO YOSHINKAN BRISBANE DOJO

## Report of March

New members 5

Total number of adults training 61

Total number of children training 80

## Results of Sogo Shinsa on 24<sup>th</sup> March

<u>Shodan</u>	Greg Beerling	<u>Jun-3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu</u>	Robert Austin	<u>4Y8 step</u>	Lee Stemm
<u>1<sup>st</sup> Kyu</u>	Mark Coleman		Francis Hollingworth	<u>4Y7 step</u>	Brent Weston
	Greg Smith	<u>4<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Rob Lawrence	<u>3Y10 step</u>	Albert Lu
	Jim Stanley	<u>5<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Urs Batting	<u>3Y9 step</u>	Evan Chapman
	Koray Karanfilci		Lawrence Monfortev	<u>3Y3 step</u>	Eagle Kao
<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu</u>	Helly Conroy	<u>7<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Gabriela Scheufele	<u>2Y11 step</u>	Myles Frost
	Manfred Beyrer		Wes Farrell	<u>2Y5 step</u>	Greg Dickenson
	Greg Scanlon		Neil Jorgensen	<u>2Y1 step</u>	Kanako Yamaguchi
	Joseph Stuart		David Shepley		Lloyd Gainey
<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu</u>	Jamie Baker	<u>9<sup>th</sup> Kyu</u>	Akiko Nicholls	<u>S4 step</u>	Ryan Slavin
			Ngai Ghi		

## Events in April

### 1. Getsurei Shinsa

- ◆Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> 1:00pm~
- ◆Shinsa training starts from 21<sup>st</sup> Saturday.

### 2.Children's classes are closed through Easter School Holiday

- ◆No Children's classes from 6<sup>th</sup> Friday to 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The class recommences from 18<sup>th</sup> Wednesday.

### 3. This Month's Holiday

- ◆Easter Holiday Dojo is closed from 6<sup>th</sup> Friday to 9<sup>th</sup> Monday.
- ◆Dojo Holiday 30<sup>th</sup> Monday. But **WE ARE OPEN** on 25<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, Anzac Day.

## **Sharing some episodes of Senshusei training at the Headquarters in Japan**

As most people know I have recently returned from Japan where I did finally complete the Senshusei course and got my hands on a black belt. I will do my best to share with you what the experience was like and what I really got from it. This is a difficult thing to describe and even remembering it now sometimes I can't understand what I was thinking at the time.

I guess the first thing is the reason I set off on this mad adventure. Honestly, I'd just heard Richard and a few other people around the dojo talking about this course now and then. I never really asked about it or was that interested, nor did I ever read 'the book'. Whatever people around me were saying must have sunk in somehow because I found myself at the end of my science degree one day wondering when I was going to do Senshusei. I didn't think about it at all, I just knew I would. The thing is that I soon realised I couldn't live with that over my head so I had to go and do it straight away. I didn't have the money, it was not feasible in the least and I think Sensei nearly fell over when I told him. I swallowed my pride, asked my parents to help me out (which I really hate doing) and I went.

Everyone who has heard about Senshusei generally has the image of crazy hajime classes, bleeding knees and bruised forearms. That is true but to varying degrees and for my year it honestly was not so intense compared to what I have heard. Yes, the first month involved holding positions in hiriki no yosei and tae no henko with some guy yelling at me to get lower until my leg just gave out, after which I'd have to get straight back up into position. I did push-ups until my arms were just falling out beneath me, then did more. I did ukemi back and forth on the tatami until I couldn't even do it in a straight line any more from the dizziness and although my body wasn't even feeling pain anymore I knew I'd be properly bruised around my lower back the next day. I never passed out but sometimes I wanted to. There were hard parts in there and although they were not regular, they were still hard and I lived in fear because I would never know when something like that was going to happen. Doing it was actually not as bad as fearing it I found. I didn't have to think anything when I was doing it.

For me, the hardest thing at the start was just the constant tension. We had to clean and we had to do it really well. We had to be right on time in our dogi, ready for the morning "meeting", ready for shinkoku (asking permission to train from Inoue Kancho in Japanese and hoping you don't screw it up), ready for taio, in seiza ready for class. Everything had to be done fast and it had to be done right. Life in the dojo was just as difficult off the mats as it was on them, sometimes more so.



In the beginning I was informed that contrary to what I believed, I actually had no idea how to do kamae or any basic movements. Any ability I had was worse than useless and any technique I thought I could do ok was actually the result of all the tweaks and bad habits I'd put in to avoid having to use the technique at all. This was a little deflating but so began my quest to learn Yoshinkan Aikido...again. As the year went on, I really worked on fixing my bad habits and trying to get a solid base of pure technique. I could see what they were trying to teach the senshusei and so I forgot about how I wanted to do things or how I thought I could make it work and really just tried to apply only what senseis were telling me. This approach can only take me so far but I can't make the next level without it. If I was having trouble with a technique, chances were I had been told what the problem was before. I stopped trying to look for quick fixes to things and put the time into trying to do exactly what I'd been taught. Improvements were not always apparent and I spent a lot of time on things that did not seem to help much. Gradually I found that all these little things I was putting in place that were absolutely useless by themselves were starting to fit together and actually work. There were two things I learned from this. The smallest improvement takes a lot more time and effort than I think and it's also worth a lot more than I think.

Each person who does the senshusei course interprets it in a different way. We had two sewanin in charge of us who did everything to brainwash us with their personal interpretations the whole year. They were quite effective. In the end I realised that besides hard training, nobody there really has any idea what the senshusei course is essentially about or even if it has any application to the principles of Aikido. It has had input from countless people over the years and it continues to change. For me it was worthwhile and has helped my Aikido a lot.

These are the things about that year that will stick with me the most. I'll never forget walking up those stairs wondering what I was in for that day, making sure I was switched on and ready as soon as I stepped in even though I wished I was back in bed. A group of 13 terrified foreigners standing in a semi circle, focusing on keeping correct posture and saying OSU! at the right moment while a certain sensei a good foot shorter than any of us would spend 10 minutes imitating how ridiculous our technique looked and then show us ONCE how it is supposed to look. How Sonoda sensei threw a class of senshusei and regular students into an hour of mindless confusion, pulling out one ushiro technique after another for us to do with at least 20 pivots in each one and how one of my fellow senshusei, laughing like a maniac announced that he was starting to ENJOY the confusion. Sitting in seiza for 30-40 minutes after doing 3 hours of suwari waza that day already and fighting against the most intense and continuous pain of my life while keeping correct posture and showing no expression, or trying. Noriki sensei giving some crazy, heroic posture in the office when we were congratulating him for his promotion from shidoin to jokyo. How Higa sensei told David senshusei with a completely straight face that his hands were always shaking because his kamae had an 'energy block'. Murata sensei describing ki energy with regular references to The Matrix (only the first one) and X-men. How not one senshusei could ever hit Murata sensei in the head when he asked one of us to try even though he didn't actually move.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Sensei for introducing me to Yoshinkan Aikido and just being here to teach something that has taken so much effort to achieve. Thanks to everyone for showing me the ropes and for providing such a great training atmosphere. Every person who's been to Brisbane dojo comments on the friendliness of the students and it honestly is remarkable. It's an amazing place to train and I really am glad to be back. I'll do my best to share what I've been given and intend to stick around for a long time.

If anyone at Brisbane dojo ever wants to do senshusei, I will never recommend it because I would not want to be responsible. I'm always happy to answer any questions though. If it's for you, you'll know. I am really glad that I had the opportunity to put a year of solid training into my Aikido and that I've got a place where I can keep learning now. There is so much to Yoshinkan Aikido, so many directions I can take it and while some of it seems pointless and verging on ridiculous, it has improved me and my life. Yes, I also think it works on the street.

OSU!

**Lloyd Gainey**