

Samurai News from Honbu



**SUPERSIZED EDITION, including
La Tour de Nicholas, SHOCU GEIKO +
NEWS FROM THE BIG APPLE**



**ISF
AB
KTRR**

Issue 0027

August 2004

Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

On the second week of August, we hosted the Shochu Geiko seminar here at the Honbu. We worked on Shinkendo, Aikido, and the basics of Bojutsu and Tantojutsu. Some of the seminar participants also demonstrated in the Nisei Week festival on Saturday. The students walked to the demonstration area with big flags, adding to the feeling of festivity. The demonstration went very well; some students demonstrated techniques from the seminar. Mrs. Inoue, the organizer of the Nisei Week demonstration was very happy; she was thankful for the good quality of the demo and the number of students who participated. Afterwards, the students walked back to the dojo, trained for another hour, and then enjoyed a light dinner together.

An interesting story: an old man with a cane came up to me after the demonstration and asked me to sign three books; Crimson Steel, Kama, and Naked Blade. He had seen the demonstration long ago at the Hotel New Otani, and he came to the Nisei Week festival to watch the demo again. I am very happy and appreciate those people who love martial arts, even though they don't practice it.

On the first Nisei week demonstration that the Honbu participated in on the 7th, another man brought two books (Crimson Steel and Naked Blade) for me to sign. This man was also not my student and didn't seem to have any martial arts background. Lately I have had several people visit my dojo bringing books and asking for my signature.

I would like to thank all who participated in Shochu Geiko and the demonstrations during Nisei Week.

On the Move: One of my students, Hidetoshi Mitoma, stayed in Los Angeles for four years and studied Shinkendo for a year and a half. He will soon be teaching Shinkendo when he returns to his hometown in Kyushu, Japan.

Peter Lukacs from Hungary will be leaving soon. He stayed at my home for 2 months as Uchideshi Kenshuin, and will be bringing back Aikibujutsu and Bojutsu back to Hungary.



2004 Nisei Week demonstration

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Editorial

Thanks to everyone for the submissions; certainly I was very impressed by Lou Sensei's massive dojo news blast, which is very well put together.

It's also quite interesting to read articles from the students as well as instructors, and hear their perspectives on the ISF/AB/KTTR. Please keep it coming!

Submission note: Anytime you contribute an article, it's always good to have pictures to go along with it, or at least your own picture.

Shinkendo NY sent a plethora of excellent articles, so fyi we'll hold the other half for the September issue. Nicholas-san also is splitting his article in two, so we'll get the other half next month.

Re: Shochu Geiko, in lieu of a separate edition of the newsletter, we'll be posting pics (check the forum for instructions on how) to Saito san's webserver, thanks to Josh Slater for offering to host. To slake the thirst of the curious, however, I've put some pics at the end of this newsletter.

Many thanks to Arianne Condrick, Dedmer Sierksma of Martial Arts Institute at Hermosa Beach, and Jeff and Marlene Harris from the Mesa, Arizona dojo for their picture contributions!

Regards,

James Huang

From the 'Valley', aka Mashuu Dojo



Daniel Zahn and Matthew Lynch Sensei

My First Demo

by Daniel Zahn

We were told class would be different this Saturday. Instead of lessons, we were to go with our Sensei to the Honbu dojo in order to watch a demonstration and help out in any way we could. Our Sensei, Matthew Lynch-san, and possibly one or two of our Sempai would be demonstrating. The chance to go to the Honbu dojo, to see Obata Kaiso and to watch a demonstration was an opportunity I did not want to miss.

I brought all of my gear with me to class that day. I wasn't sure if there would be any time for training, but I generally show up early so I was sure I would have some practice time before we left. I probably only needed my normal bokuto for that, but I decided to bring my tachiuchi bokuto and iaito as well. This turned out to be the decision that would cause me to be much more involved in the demo than I expected.

The Honbu is an unexpected sight. Tucked away in the top corner of a small mall. No door and little else to indicate what goes on at that location. We walked around a small chained off barrier and beyond that was a large warehouse like area. My Sensei in front of me bowed in and I realized where I was. I could see Obata Kaiso on the mats and as I bowed in and entered I saw others I had seen in previous newsletters.

(cont'd on page 17)

Tour de Shinkendo, Part I

~ by Nicholas Lauridsen

This past spring, I had the opportunity to travel to Europe for this first time. After a couple weeks in England, I decided that it would be great to visit the Shinkendo dojo in Europe which Obata-sensei visited so often during his frequent overseas seminars. I ended up visiting five dojo in four different countries, and had such an unexpectedly wonderful time of it – due to the kindness and generosity of the Shinkendo sensei I met – that I am still deeply moved, and am inspired to share my experiences with the Shinkendo and Aikido community.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

While staying in Paris, I phoned Brent Hire-sensei, who welcomed me to visit his Amsterdam dojo at any time. Although I had been studying at the Suigetsukan dojo in Oakland (to which he has close ties) at times when Hire-sensei visited from Europe, I had actually never met him before (we both knew vaguely what the other looked like). After taking the train to Amsterdam and establishing myself in a “popular” part of the city, I went canal-hopping and bridge-walking (and bicycle-dodging) over to the Shinbudokan dojo, following directions off of the website. Upon entering the dojo, I was immediately reminded of Suigetsukan – Hire-sensei has attracted a robust



student following, and the atmosphere was friendly and cooperative. In a city as densely populated as Amsterdam, where living and commercial space is as scarce as it is in New York City, it has been difficult to find long-term dojo space; nevertheless, Hire-sensei has persevered with his vision, and successfully teaches bojutsu, aikido, and Shinkendo to dozens of dedicated students (some traveling all the way from Belgium). As the Chief European Instructor, he also holds regular seminars for the other shibu dojo in Europe.

I had only planned to visit for one class session, but Hire-sensei invited me to come back the following Saturday, so I spent the intervening time trekking around the city and the countryside, sparing a day for the amazing Keukenhof Garden at the recommendation of some students (there are pictures online at <http://homepage.mac.com/kennesten/tourdeshinkendo>). Hire-sensei devoted nearly all of Saturday to an extensive bojutsu and Shinkendo session, and treated me to a (very) late lunch afterward, giving me plenty of useful advice about places to visit in Germany (including his recommendation that I try some spätzle when I got to Munich). I was tremendously moved by Hire-sensei’s generosity toward someone who was nearly a stranger, and I was inspired to continue my tour through the European dojo.

(cont'd on next page)

Baden-Württemberg, Germany



I had the pleasure of meeting Hans-Joachim Deuser-sensei in 1997 or so when he visited the Hollywood Honbu dojo, and saw him again last summer when he visited with his student (now a shibucho) Wolf Peter Murawski-sensei. Deuser-sensei remembered me from before, and kindly extended an open invitation, should I ever happen to be in his neighborhood (southwestern Germany). It was really this invitation that inspired the idea of a dojo tour in the first place, so I have Deuser-sensei to thank for the wonderful time I had overall. Deuser-sensei is the Chief German Instructor, and several of his students have gone on to become shibucho, making Germany quite strong in Shinkendo – there are no less than seven shibu dojo – and an ideal place to continue the dojo tour.

Wolf Peter Murawski-sensei and Shinkendo Dojo Dresden

Deuser-sensei's student Marcel picked me up from the train station, and spent the day as my guide, touring me through castle ruins, small towns, and beautiful old churches in the area. That evening we met Deuser-sensei at the gymnasium where he holds his classes; after class, he took me to his house, where I met his wonderful family. Deuser-sensei ended up putting me up for the better part of a week; not only that, he created an itinerary for visiting the sights in the area (including a trip to Heidelberg), fed me at every meal, and took time out of his busy schedule to show me castle ruins and sandstone abbeys, as the Limes area (where he lives) is rife with historical structures and the vestiges of the myriad cultures that took root there. He also patiently indulged my fascination with the history of the region, providing his vast knowledge of events and inhabitants for which the Limes is famous (such as the Order of the Templar Knights and the Cistercian monks, among other things).



Deuser-sensei has had a long career in the martial arts, and I relished the chance to spend time with him – it was especially reassuring to hear his wonderful, compassionate views on budo and his idea of its harmonious relationship to the world. He really far surpassed any expectation of hospitality I could have imagined, and I would like to thank him and his family again for welcoming me into their home and showing me such remarkable kindness. After spending nearly a week with in Baden-Württemberg (during which I learned tidbits of German from his adorable children and got to hear his eerily precise LW&C Retsudo impression), Deuser-sensei sent me off with wishes for the best of luck as I continued my travels. I am extremely grateful to have had the chance to visit Deuser-sensei, and I hope that I can someday repay his kindness.

(to be continued in the next issue...)

My First Seminar

By Jason M. Leafy, Ryu Sui Kan Dojo, Utah, U.S.A.

I had always been interested in martial arts when I was a lot younger but my parents were unwilling to foot the bill. So it wasn't until I was 23 years of age that I decided to revisit this interest. I started studying Kung Fu. What else would you expect what with all the movie hype of Jackie Chan and Jet Li? I studied for about a year and a half until my wife Anita discovered that there was a dojo that taught Shinkendo about an hour from where we lived.

“Well,” I thought, “We have discussed going back to her Japanese roots.”

I didn't think it was a big deal to switch arts.

Little did I know how much I would change on the way to gain an understanding of Shinkendo. Even to the point of trying to integrate the 12 precepts into my everyday life and switching my career plans.

I just got back from my first Shinkendo Aikibuken seminar, hosted by Suigetsukan. What a blast! Obata Kaiso brought his wife Michiyo Sensei and his daughter Yoko Sensei to assist and demonstrate. I also met and worked with a lot of great students and instructors that train at Suigetsukan and other neighboring dojo. Thank you once more to everyone for looking after me during my visit.

During the Aikibuken workshop I was able to improve in my break-falls with help from Gina Rossi Sensei. I also worked with Jorin Bukosky Sensei on the new blocking techniques that were taught. As for the Shinkendo workshop, Lillian Sensei, David Wilson Sensei and Rebecca Wong Sensei helped me with several of the kata and tachi uchi—new to me and conceivably well-known to others.

I was able to come away with a lot of material to work on and a few stories that Obata Kaiso shared with us—such as the time when he was a live-in student and how he would clean the dojo and train. During that time he saw many outside students come to train along with the live-in students. It was just like the outside students that come to train with the live-in students here at Suigetsukan. I am looking forward to the day that we can expand Shinkendo here, it would be a great environment to bring to Utah.

Just think, I thought that switching arts was no big deal.

Jason Leafy is pictured on the left, with Kurt Johnson Sensei on the right



Obata Kaiso celebrates his 25th year in the United States - Shinkendo New York celebrates it's fifth anniversary.



With Obata Kaiso at our after seminar BBQ party June 28th 2004 Queens, New York Lou D'Agostino -Shinkendo New York Shibuchō

[Ed: This article is one of several articles submitted by the New York dojo. We'll include about half of them here, and the other half in the next newsletter! Many thanks to the New York dojo for all the great articles.]

The year 2004 presented our Shinkendo New York Dojo with many “firsts”. A great momentum began in the fall of 2003 and has continued steadily. Our dojo experienced growth in membership with many new students joining last fall, winter and in 2004. I am certain that the “Last Samurai” movie has given us all a boost in this department.

After the close of the first “I.S.F. Honbu keiko hajime” I wrote of many “firsts” that I have experienced with Obata Kaiso and the International Shinkendo Federation. In addition to performing two half hour demos this spring one at the famous Brooklyn Botanic Garden, our dojo finally had the honor and privilege to host Obata Kaiso for our first Shinkendo seminar held at our dojo. Added to this excitement was the bonus of Yoko Obata accompanying Kaiso to help and take her first trip to New York!

As my confidence and memorization of the basic Shinkendo curriculum are attained I realize that it would be a fine goal to learn the other samurai arts that Obata Kaiso instructs. During my two solo visits to the Honbu in February and April of this year, Obata Kaiso has slowly begun to introduce me to Bojutsu Tanrendo and Aikido.

One of my favorite videos of Obata Kaiso (hard choice indeed) is the Aikido tape that was produced in France some years ago. I had mentioned to Kaiso that it would be a good idea and relatively easy to reedit the audio on this tape. This has been accomplished with Kaiso narrating the waza, along with English titles.

During the planning stages of Kaiso's visit, Mrs. Obata and Kaiso thought that maybe we should try to shoot a video as well. It was decided to make two; Bojustu Tanrendo, and Ashisabakai videos.

This was accomplished on Monday the day after the party. The dojo was very hot as we had to turn off all fans and air conditioners during the shooting to cut down on extraneous noise. It was not easy as the dojo can get pretty hot in the summer especially when the doors and windows are shut. Not the most ideal conditions for performing martial arts or shooting a video. However Obata Kaiso and Yoko-san did a marvelous job in spite of the difficult conditions.

On Tuesday, I took Kaiso to the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, then to Sheepshead bay, Brooklyn for a great Italian lunch of Seafood and Pasta! On Wednesday we drove to Connecticut to begin the editing process which continued through Friday evening. Kaiso and Yoko-san departed Saturday afternoon to return to Los Angeles, Mrs. Obata, Mitch, Yukishiro and the honbu.



Brooklyn Botanic Garden



Kaiso "entertaining" us at RBY studios!

What had originally started out as a four day seminar, had transformed into a ten day stay and video shoot. My wife and I had the honor and privilege of hosting Kaiso and Yoko-san during this time and hope that we made everything comfortable and enjoyable for them during their stay with us. We had a great time hosting our founder and his daughter.

I must say I learned a lot about what it takes to "take care" of your master when hosting a seminar and have a new found respect for our "shibuchō" around the world. Just when you think you have it all figured out, the planning, delegating of responsibilities etc. There's always seems to be a couple or three things you forgot somehow.

I must thank our Shinkendo New York members for all of their help during the preparations for Kaiso and Yoko-sans visit as well as during, after, up to, and through the party. Your assistance was greatly appreciated by me and Terry. Last but not least a big round of applause is due my wife Terry, for cooking gourmet meals at all hours of the day and night, hosting, shopping, preparing and making sure everything was PERFECT!



Obata Kaiso- Two Sword- @ RBY Studio

Obata Kaiso would like everyone to know that the two videos we produced during his visit will be available in the coming weeks. Presently all editing has been completed and we are reviewing the finished product before ordering copies to be produced in both VHS, and DVD format.

The re-edited Aikido video will also be ready soon too.

Both Bojutsu and Ashisabaki Videos contain a very exciting introduction featuring Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata.

The Bojutsu Tarendo video has all of the kihon, kamae, mochikae, mawashi, as well as Bo ichi, ni, san drills and Kata ichi, ni and san. A step by step instruction in ippon- kumite, along with a solo performance of Bogyo and Kogeki are prominently displayed. Lastly, two views of Jugo are included.



Toshishiro Obata - SoShiahn Bojutsu Tanrendo

The Ashisabaki video is an especially welcome addition to the I.S.F. catalog of instructional materials particularly for members who may not have visited the Honbu recently and would like to know of the latest instruction that Obata Kaiso is imparting. There are also many of us that would like to have the best and latest reference materials in order to be sure we are “doing it right”

Obata Kaiso feels very strongly that a through understanding and mastery of ashisabaki is the foundation upon which all martial arts are built. Sensei demonstrates many of the essential and practical footwork patterns for Shinkendo kihon, tachiuchi and Aikido as well.

Additional ashisabaki include:

Kagigata-Jugigata-Masugata- Hishigata (diamond) patterns: Tatebishi-Yokobishi-Sotobishi.

Obata Kaiso demonstrates all of the above with: suriashi (shuffle steps) and sashiashi (follow steps)

During Obata Kaiso’s stay with us, SKD NY member Mike Mason worked with Kaiso at the computer to make grid outlines of the ashisabaki patterns. On the video each pattern outlines are displayed before the corresponding ashisabaki, and in some cases over-layed during the demonstration. Obata Kaiso feels that this approach will be a great aid in learning and understanding the key points of each movement that he wishes us to master. Front and Side views, as well as Sotai (with partner) are also included.

A bonus Tameshigiri performance by Obata Kaiso is also included and you definitely want this one for your library. Did I mention two sword tameshigiri too!



In addition to hosting Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata for the first time we thought it would be a great idea to present Yoko-san and Obata Kaiso with a gift. Our members chipped in for an ebony weapons set that included; a tanto, short sword, bokken and jo for both Yoko-San and Obata Kaiso. We were very pleased that our gifts were received warmly and enthusiastically.

At our after seminar party Obata Kaiso has us laughing hysterically when he thanked us for the "weapons" saying, "Thank you very much, we are hitting each other a lot!"

I was very happy and fortunate to receive two waxwood bukuto signed by Kaiso. One was in commemoration of Shinkendo New York's fifth anniversary and my first seminar with Obata Kaiso.

The other was to commemorate the 25th year of Obata Kaiso living in the United States.

Thank you very much Sensei!

Lou D'Agostino
Shinkendo New York
Modern Samurai Dojo



Samurai Arts Seminar
with
Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata
at
Shinkendo New York - Modern Samurai Dojo



Thursday June 24th through Sunday June 27th 2004

Shinkendo – Bojutsu Tanrendo - Aikido

June 2004 Shinkendo New York Seminar with Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata



By Christofer Cassuto

Although I have only been a part of Shinkendo training for a considerably brief period, I can say without the slightest hint of pretense, that I have walked among the ranks of warriors; and stood in awe of skills, and discipline of which I have only read until now. I have studied the art of the Japanese sword for three months under the magnificent tutelage of Sensei Louis D'Agostino; a man who has granted me access to his own extensive knowledge of the martial arts, as well as the honor of his friendship. Through his teachings, I find that I've grown not only in skill with a sword, but also in scope of the world around me; in that I see life through newly refined, and disciplined eyes.

Recently I've been granted the privilege to train with Kaiso Toshishiro Obata, as well as his daughter Yoko; both of whom I have come to hold in high regard. I find it a strange thing that regardless of how much one may hear of another's skill, or determination or wisdom, it never quite settles in until you look into that person's eyes and know it in your own heart. I spent a mere eight hours studying with a true master of the martial arts, and have gained knowledge that will remain with me throughout my life. Though sensei Obata spent the majority of our time together teaching us the finer points of armed combat, I was able to see beyond the wooden blade of my bokuto. I observed the seemingly effortless precision of his movements, the calm of his face, and the light balance in which he stood before us. I was awed by the ease with which he maneuvered his sword in lightning arcs, thrusts and parries, all the while questioning what my eyes had so fleetingly perceived. Upon the end of our time together I realized something which has since become so remarkably sacred to me.

The essence of Shinkendo, the true heart of a warrior lies not in skill with one's blade or fists, but in their desire and determination to unify the conflicting aspects within themselves. To reach a state in which one's body, mind and heart act in perfect harmony; eliminating inner conflict so that the warrior will in time be as void of impurity as the blade they wield. Praise be to extraordinary men and women, who have given me the honor of their skills and experiences, so that students such as myself may gain timeless knowledge within an ever changing world, and better understand what it is to be Samurai.

**Shinkendo New York Modern Samurai Dojo
June 2004 Shinkendo New York Seminar with
Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata**



By Shaffee Bacchus

This seminar was the second time that I have trained with Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata and I must affirm how grateful I am to once again have this opportunity. I would like to thank Obata Sensei and Yoko-san for their patience and kindness in instructing us, for their time and presence. I feel enriched, full of energy, and astounded by the easy manner in which Obata Sensei teaches the complex concepts of Shinkendo.

I am also thankful to Lou Sensei for his perseverance, dedication and commitment to always providing his students with the opportunity to grow and mature in the art of Shinkendo, and for always being there for us in so many ways.

As the time approached for the seminar there was a flurry of activity at the dojo and anticipation was high. We were nervous and wanted everything to be perfect. We all had questions and expectations. Presumptions abounded and myths of gruesome exercises of a thousand Suburi were heard whispered in quiet corners.

The lessons began from the very first contact with Obata Sensei, his quiet and inviting demeanor taught us that the true nature of a Samurai is honest, true and without deception, it is kind and filled with humility and respect for all life and concepts of existence.

Obata Sensei friendly disposition and methodology of teaching relaxed stiff muscles and made our minds receptive to his instructions.

His grace in martial art gave us the hope that someday perhaps the disagreements between mind and muscles will end and right and left will be distinguishable.

Shinkendo to me personally is an art that I practice in an effort to reshape myself, or perhaps it is to find my true shape. Ultimately it is to seek the truth about myself. Through Shinkendo I will face my deepest fears and darkest enemy. With Shinkendo I will cut away the ego and self to find my essence. The Shinken is like the blade in a sculptor's hand that is used not to form a shape but to free it from its confines. This is how I seek to understand Shinkendo.

Obviously, the road ahead is long, but it is not narrow and friends are everywhere. With every class that I attend I get that much closer, and with every seminar I get a glimpse of the truth.

Thank you Obata Kaiso,
Thank you Yoko-san
Thank you Sensei Lou.
Thank you all my brothers and sisters in Shinkendo.



Shaffee-san



“The Bacchus Family”

Journal Notes for June 2004 Shinkendo Seminar



By G. Konstantine Laskaris

June 24-27, 2004 marks the first time that Obata Sensei and Yoko Obata came to New York for a Shinkendo seminar. It was definitely a very exciting, busy and mildly stressful time for all.

It was really very exiting to prepare the dojo for Sensei's visit. We cleaned the place top to bottom. Wally went above and beyond and had his construction crew install lights, an additional air conditioner, and replace ceiling tiles. Sensei Lou purchased bamboo sheeting to cover some of the walls which in addition to Wally's efforts changed the look and feel of the entire dojo. Everyone chipped in one way or another and I feel that we were successful in our preparations.

Another major contributor to the dojo preparations was Shaffee-san . He tirelessly came to the dojo early and left late every day during the seminar to help clean and prepare the dojo for each days practice. Thank you, Shaffee for all of your efforts.

In preparation for the seminar, was also had a series of extended classes, prior to Obata Sensei and Yoko-san's visit. About a month and a half before the seminar, our usual 1 hour classes were extended to anywhere up to 2 hours, so that we would be sure to be physically and mentally ready for Obata Sensei and Yoko-san's visit. Our extra work and efforts definitely paid off.

We also spent time as a group rolling mats for tameshigiri. We came up with a good assembly line system so that we had many mats rolled in a short amount of time. Added to the excitement of the upcoming seminar was now the knowledge that we would be getting to perform tameshigiri, which is always a welcomed event! I was looking forward to using my katana, which I hadn't had a chance to use in quite some time. More on that later.

The first day Obata Sensei came to the dojo was personally a pretty funny time for me. As a senior student, I had been instructing everybody on how, when Obata sensei first enters the dojo, I will yell "FUDO!". Everyone would need to stop what they were doing, face sensei and Yoko-san, and bow. Wouldn't you know it, I was no sooner done mentioning this to everyone for the millionth time when Obata sensei and Yoko-san walked through the door, and I FROZE!! No "FUDO", nothing! We all bowed and said

hello, but I had lost my voice. Very strange for me indeed. I felt pretty dumb. Thankfully, Sensei Lou did yell "Fudo" as he entered the dojo and saved me from my embarrassing moment.

As I mentioned earlier, accompanying Obata Sensei on this trip was his daughter Yoko Obata. I have had the pleasure (and sometimes pain!! Just kidding!) of training with Yoko-san several times in the past, while visiting the Honbu dojo. As usual, Yoko-san was her sharp (no pun intended), intense and funny self. It is always an eye opener working with her. Just when you think that you have got a movement down perfectly and are flowing like water, Yoko-san effortlessly makes you realize that you are plodding along like an elephant trudging through frozen molasses. Thank you Yoko-san, for such humbling experiences that remind us that we need to practice, practice, practice.

Another fun moment during the seminar was the day Sensei Lou surprised us all with brand new T-shirts, which read "Shinkendo, New York". They were a simple and bold design that looked great. We all proudly accepted them and looked forward to wearing them.

Tameshigiri ended with a magnificent display put on by Obata Sensei. It is always amazing to watch his effortless, powerful and graceful movements while cutting through the targets. He makes it look so easy. Watching him definitely reminds me of why I love Shinkendo so much. To possess such control and focus one must practice, practice, practice. By the time Obata Sensei was done cutting, it looked like he was buried knee deep in defeated tatami omote.

The evening of the final day of training culminated in a big bbq party at Sensei Lou and Terry's house. The food was AWESOME as usual (thank you Terry) and the company and camaraderie was wonderful. It really felt like we were a big family just having a good time together. I had a chance to get to know some of my fellow Shinkendo-ka better. They are all wonderful people with so many different talents and interests that one cannot help but become a better person by being around them. Obata sensei seemed to have a good time too, laughing and joking with everyone and telling some stories. I got to tell him the story of how my mom first didn't understand why I would spend money and time on something like Shinkendo and now, how she is very proud of my and my efforts and gloats whenever she can "show me off" to people. Obata sensei seemed to enjoy the story.

All in all, it was a wonderful time. I'm looking forward to more of the same.



Yoko Obata



Terry Lee gaining insight from Yoko-san

My First Demo, Mashuu Dojo's Daniel Zahn, cont'd from page 2

There appeared to be only 6-7 people there to participate in the demonstration. To help strengthen our showing, instead of my Sensei and maybe one or two of his students, now all of his students were to be part of the demonstration. I don't think it quite hit me that I was going to be on stage until my Sensei turned to me and said: "Go get your swords."

We ran through some warm up moves and things we would probably be doing on stage. Being the least senior student of those there at the time I was fortunate enough to be off to the back right corner and the least able to be seen by Kaiso if he looked our way.

Mrs. Obata approached me when we were done and asked if I had a hakama. I realized I was the only student in our group not wearing one so I would look a little out of place. Maybe I was spared from participating after all. Mrs. Obata reappeared soon after holding a hakama for me and I was given a quick lesson in wearing it by my Sempai. I guess I was going to be part of it after all.

The gear I brought became important since our second run through now required the one in the middle, Sensei, to be using an iaito. For this he borrowed mine. Obata Kaiso was now standing directly in front of our group and some changes in the line up had me now in the front row of our group. I tried to be extra careful of my movements (especially with a hakama on) and strong with my kiai. I felt good about my part, and Obata Kaiso only had a few comments for our Sensei about our group, with Yoko-san translating.

As we were waiting before leaving a couple more students from our class arrived and plans were now changed. There wasn't going to be enough room on stage for all of us. The initial group, minus me, would now go up first. Sensei was now going to borrow an iaito from the other student in our group that brought one. The other two students and I would now be going up alone to perform after them. One of the newer arrivals would borrow my normal bokuto and me in the center with my iaito!

I've only been training in Shinkendo for a few months and had just taken my test for ichimonji five days ago. Now I was going to be center stage at a Honbu demonstration! I could feel the pressure and the responsibility to make a good showing for both my Sensei and for the federation.

(cont'd on next page)



My First Demo, Mashuu Dojo's Daniel Zahn, cont'd from previous page

There wasn't much further time to practice but I asked my Sensei if I could practice the moves I was going to be doing using the iaito. Instead of going onto the mats, I was told to use an area beside the mats at the back. Practicing on smooth concrete, wearing sandals and sliding around while swinging an iaito is an interesting experience. To top it all off, Obata Kaiso kept glancing my direction while I was practicing. Perhaps I was doing OK or he was glancing at someone else since no further comments came our way.

The demo turned out to be the great opportunity to watch some very skilled Tameshigiri and demonstrations by Obata Kaiso and his students that I was expecting. As I was watching, a few people approached with questions either about what they were seeing or about Shinkendo itself. I hope I was able to give them the information they were seeking and that I well represented the federation. One nice man pointed out an adjustment I should make to my hakama.

Before long the part of our group performing was upon us. The first group came up and went through Happo-no-kamae, Happogiri, and Shoden-no-kata. They left the stage and my group was now up. We went through Goho Battoho Kihon Ichi. My noto slipped once, but otherwise I felt good about my performance. Before long the demo was over and we helped clean up. After arriving back at the Honbu I was given a lesson by my Sensei in folding the hakama. A task that proved not to be as difficult as I had expected. Then the day was over and it was time to go. I can't wait till my next demonstration.

P.S. I passed. :-)

Daniel Zahn is a student of Matthew Lynch Sensei at Mashuu Dojo.

Shochu Geiko and Nisei Week thoughts and pics

“Shochu what?” – by James Huang, Honbu student

I found out about Shochu Geiko a few weeks prior, when Saito-san approached me and said “You’re attending Shochu Geiko.” Well, not exactly like that, but sort of.

After the initial surprise, I was rather pleased about the idea, since I’d attended Keiko Hajime and it was thoroughly exhausting and impressive. I did wonder partly if this summer session would meet or exceed the high standard set by Keiko Hajime.

I was not let down. Although there was some difference in tone, I felt like the 40+? members that attended the summer seminar were all pleased by the addition of Aikibujutsu, Bojutsu, and Tantojutsu to the curriculum. Another interesting aspect was that because of Keiko Hajime, most of the folks there knew each other already, so it made for a good relaxed community spirit which allowed us to focus deeper on technique.

For me, I think the most interesting new techniques involved the Tanto, or dagger, usually less than 1 shaku (about a foot) in length. Attendees were also given a wooden tanto crafted by Kaiso as a gift.

The crossover between Shinkendo and Aikido was also very interesting. The majority of attendees, even if they regularly only studied one art, tried their hand at the other art during Shochu Geiko. The results were sometimes humorous, but in many cases, people did quite well at picking up techniques that were totally new to them. For example, in Aikido, I paired up with Shinkendo student Dedmer a few times, whom I asked belatedly, “Oh wait, can you ukemi?” He replied that he had some experience from a different art, and inwardly I winced, wondering if we were going to soon be doing some major ukemi practice. But as it turned out, his ukemi was, as they say in the kung fu movies, pretty good, and we had some good times exchanging tanto slashes and throws.

Everyone had a great attitude about trying something new. And there was plenty new for all involved, including a nice tachiuichi between sword and bo. (nope, not the modified juppon from Shinkendo, a totally new one – ask a friend who attended to show you!)

The only thing I would have liked to add to the seminar? Hmm... maybe an Olympic sized swimming pool to leap into after 6+ hours of training!

“Shochu Geiko...How Do You Spell: ‘R-E-L-I-E-F’? “ – by Marlene Harris, Mesa, Arizona Dojo

My understanding is that the term “shochu geiko” means; “training during the hottest part of the year”. When I first read this, I had to laugh. But, that’s not out of any disrespect, mind you. It’s because I live in the Phoenix area (do you see where I’m going with this?). I don’t know if I can provide a fully comprehensible explanation of an Arizona summer for the uninitiated, but I think the following might help (it was spotted on a bumper sticker here in town)—It contained a skeleton leaning against a signpost planted in a typical desolate desert scene proclaiming “Phoenix, Arizona” with the caption; “Welcome to Arizona. Always 12 feet from water, never more than 2 feet from Hell”. Enough said (and welcome to my world!). So why do we live here? Visit here between October and May, and you’ll see...

At any rate, I’d like to propose the following revised definition for “shochu geiko”: “Thank you Obata sensei and Honbu Dojo for giving us Arizona students a reason to escape Phoenix during the hottest part of the year and train some place some 25 degrees cooler!”. Or, for short, R-E-L-I-E-F!

As for the training itself, it just keeps getting better, and we look forward to Keiko Hajime!

SHOCHU GEIKO PICS!

The following Shochu Geiko and demo pics were contributed by Arianne Condrick and Dedmer Sierksma

(Additional pics to be posted by Marlene Harris, stay tuned on forum)



Aikibujutsu, Bo and tanto were welcome new additions to the Shochu Geiko curriculum



Peter-san's special sleeper-bo waza :>

Peter gets some instructor practice in at Shochu Geiko. "Segan! Gedan! ..."



2 of Saito-san's students at Shochu



Can you spot the Shinkendo flag in this picture?

NISEI WEEK PICS!



Peter T's students demonstrate ippon tachiuchi



Arizona whips out a can of Aikibujutsu



Atlanta demos Tanto #1



Peter knows bo.



Yoko knows bo.



Most kids just get grounded...



Obata Kaiso demonstrates two-sword technique!



Saito san and Yoko demo the all-new bo vs bokuto tachiuchi



Me and Richard Blanke doing Jupon tachiuchi with bo and bokuto



Obata Kaiso with some more two-sword cutting!

Richie=2 x Yoko?





Shinkendo wants YOU!