



Samurai News from Honbu

Return of the Newsletter



ISF
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Issue 0040

Fall 2007

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SENSEI'S CORNER

By Obata Toshishiro Kaiso

This year we have had many students train at the Honbu for an extended stay. In January, we had a Japanese lady train at the Honbu for a month. In June, Sensei Howard from Australia trained here for 3 weeks. In mid-June – mid-July, Sensei Peter from Hungary trained for a month in Aikido and Shinkendo. From August to September- Sensei Roland, and his students Peter Kottek, Robert Nagy, Laszlo Acs, and Ferenc Sziklai. Ferenc concentrated in both Aikido and Shinkendo. This has been the first year we have had this many students train at the Honbu for so long. We are happy here at the Honbu, to welcome so many serious students.

As these students train for long periods of time, they work together with the Honbu students, giving our students a chance to work outside of their space and comforts.

We will be hosting a total of four seminars by the end of this year at the Honbu. You may remember Keiko Hajime at the beginning of the year. The spring instructor seminar that took place for the first time this year. Shochu Geiko in August. We are looking forward to hosting the Autumn instructor seminar soon. Since the change in the dojo location and the limited mat space, the increasing amount of seminars allows us to accommodate more of the students.



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We have had students from Arizona and Morgan Hill between these seminars for extra training.

You may remember our new tradition of having students exhibit one of their best techniques facing the Shomen on the last day of the seminar. We have a new addition to our Shomen. We have added two calligraphies by Master Calligraphist Inoue Takusen Sensei. These two calligraphies are those that Inoue Takusen Sensei won an award with in Japan. I enjoy watching students proudly showing their techniques to the center of the dojo. For those students who come to visit the dojo, please take pictures with the calligraphies in the background.

I have seen an increasing number of activities from the 99' students. Our students who started training roughly around 99', or started teaching around that year, are very active members at the moment. These students include Matthew Sensei, Lou Sensei, Brent Sensei, Shawn Sensei, Dan Sensei, Jillian Sensei, and Howard Sensei, and MARIMO!!! =]

Editor's Corner

By Michael Shu

Ohishashiburi desu!

The newsletter has been missing for a while now. The Shinkendo community has undoubtedly been busy and the restoration of the discussion forum probably also cut the community off a little. But we're back and that's what matters!

Long, long ago we requested that the younger generation of Shinkendo students submit their stories of joining and training in the art. Since the beginning of summer, one young student from Atlanta took up the challenge and had been working on it hard as we waited for other submissions to come in. Read about her journey into the world of Japanese swordsmanship in the next page.

Other articles of note include a journal-styled piece about the Amsterdam intensive training. It is an introspective look of the experience of the seminar, not just the techniques taught.

Our local Matthew Lynch Sensei of the Mashuu Dojo (Dojo named after a lake in Japan), went to a more local lake in California, Lake Tahoe, for a much needed vacation. There he gained some insight of how to explain Shinkendo to people who are strangers to martial arts. A very interesting analogy comes out of it.

Also, Matthew Sensei continues a trend that a Honbu Dojo member started in his travels. Take a picture holding the Shinkendo tenugui in front of a local landmark while you travel around the world. Shall we start the Shinkendo version of the traveling gnome?

As I mentioned earlier, the Shinkendo discussion forums is going through a reboot. A nice welcome to the reloaded Shinkendo forums are a couple of very thorough self-introductions. Daniel Craig tells a story of the generous hospitality of Howard Quick Sensei of Australia.

Obata Kaiso hopes to have more newsletters released regularly to bring the Shinkendo community together with everybody's stories around the world. That way, no matter how far apart, we will be one close family.

A Passion Without Boundaries

By Ashley Lockwood, Atlanta

I never thought I would be the type of individual to enjoy martial arts. I was the person who loved dance and gymnastics; the girly type.

It was several years ago that I came across the show Rurouni Kenshin, a renowned samurai-related anime. Slowly, I became interested in the history and plot. After hearing from a friend about Japanese Swordsmanship in north Georgia, I began my search for a local dojo.

Eventually, we did find one, Japanese Swordsmanship of Gwinnett. Everything was going well until we found there was an age limit of thirteen and up for the class unless a special interview was conducted. At the time, I was twelve, my birthday still months away, and knew I would have lost my nerve if we waited. Well, there goes that idea, I thought sadly.

After a few phone calls to Smith Sensei of JSOG, the interview was over. To my surprise, I had passed and was welcome to join.

Am I insane? That thought played through my mind as I walked into Japanese Swordsmanship of Gwinnett in early August of 2005. At first, my impulse to join the martial arts was simple and there didn't seem to be a rhyme or reason for trying it. I thought it looked interesting and exciting. That was it. I had talked to Smith Sensei over the phone and observed a class the week before. I thought that would be the end of my "training". For a brief moment I thought that I would lose interest just like my peers told me I would.

It's safe to say I've proved them wrong.

Even though I'm still training after two years, people are still shocked. The reason for that is I'm only fourteen. When I first joined the ISF, many of my sempai were sure I was at least fifteen or sixteen. On top of that, when I joined I was the only girl. This was a very intimidating situation for someone who didn't have very much self-esteem or self-confidence.

I remember my first classes were quite difficult. I couldn't remember what to say, when to say it, or more importantly, what I was doing. The only thing I could think of was how I was embarrassed and confused I





was, especially when I accidentally hit myself in the head or knee with my bokuto. I've probably sustained a few concussions since I started.

As time went on, I began to understand and take in all that I was learning, going to the occasional demo or seminar. During those months, I told friends about the fantastic Shinkendo class I was taking, and eventually getting others involved in our classes. Many of my close friends have had the pleasure of practicing Shinkendo. Eventually after getting over most of my fears and uncertainties, I began to gain confidence. Looking back, I've had my share of laughs at some of the silly things I've done. We've all done them: the upside-down bokuto, forgetting to breathe.

Some of my favorite memories lie with Georgia's yearly festival, JapanFest. To put it simply, it's a collaborative festival celebrating the Japanese culture. I have made an effort to visit for the past several years, and every year our dojo performs in front of the crowds. This is such an exceptional thing for me. It is a great thing to see several dojos from around the state come together and execute the same forms and styles with each other. That's not to say my first time wasn't

scary enough being only two months after joining the dojo.

If I was to tell someone something positive about Shinkendo, there is one thing that is forefront in my mind – the people. I have come to think of my dojo as a family. The environment I entered two years ago and the people I met made my transition from the shy outsider to the self-assured teen very uncomplicated. As a dojo, we support each other in so many ways. We push each other to strive, to do better, and to work harder. Every time I enter the dojo door, I know I'll get to see the people who always make me laugh and smile. Even at seminars, I meet people of all ages, sizes, and backgrounds with such a passion for the art. I always feel at home with my fellow Shinkendo-ka.

I would like to thank Smith Sensei, my sempais, and all the other students of JSOG dojo. All of you inspired me to stay through all the bumps, bruises, and other awkward moments that took place those first few months. You are all the reason I'm still practicing Shinkendo today, and truly, I am grateful for that.



Amsterdam Weekend Intensive

By Richard Mann – Cornwall England

From Thursday the 24th to the 26th of May, Byron Shepherd and I spent 3 invaluable days, training with Brent Hire Sensei and his students in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. We are both students of Wayne Kensett Sensei in Northampton, England. Byron will be starting a new Aikibujutsu group in Kensett's Sensei dojo and I myself will am looking forward to starting a new Shinkendo group in Cornwall (in the south of England) where I am in the process of moving to.

Upon our arrival in Holland we spent some time sightseeing around Amsterdam and then made our way to begin training.

The first classes included Aikibujutsu and Shinkendo. Coming from an Aikikai background I was very interested is learning more about Aikibujutsu and Brent Hire Sensei spent some time getting us started on a basic understanding of how to train safely and properly. During our time in Shinkendo, I found the guidance, not just of Brent Sensei, but of other students in the class also, to be most beneficial. During our practice the atmosphere within the class was heavy with the intent to master what we could in the time we had, punctuated by Brent Sensei's comments on technique and light sense of humor.



The class came to a close and we set off to the local for some food and drink. I was not sure what I should expect before coming to Amsterdam, but after the first day I quickly realized the warm, easy going atmosphere that existed along side the hard working training process. We were warmly welcomed into the class and had a fantastic night to finish. We were very kindle offered residence for the weekend by Mark-san, a student within Brent Sensei's Aikido class.

The second day came round quickly, with the practice of the previous day still prominent in our minds. After making many notes to guide us later, we set out for the day and made our way to the second dojo after some more sight-seeing. The session this time was only a few short hours that passed in no time. Brent Sensei helped us better our technique and correct things that had changed recently within various kata. We spent some time on how to lead a class, in preparation for our own time when it comes to demonstrate to a class of students.

On the third and final day, we took an early morning to attend Brent Sensei's normal classes, which included some time spent on the use of Sai and Bo and then another class in Aikibujutsu, topping off the days training with an intense session in Shinkendo.

I found the Sai and Bo work very interesting and again tried my best to pick-up as much of the new Aikido style as I could during this lesson. We went through many different Aikido forms and techniques, each one similar but different. Brent Sensei very kindly arranged a short demonstration, done by his students, of some of the various techniques present at the higher

levels, after which he asked us to demonstrate some of the techniques we could remember from the day. I have to admit at this point that while I did manage to remember many of the things we had been shown, I did slip back into my more familiar Aikikai techniques a number of times.

We took a short break to have some lunch and change dojo, after which we continued with the Shinkendo training. This lesson was hard work, after a long days training, but served to teach so much it could never have been missed. We were shown a new kata and were picked-up on many corrections to our technique. Again, some time was spent of correcting changed kata and technique. I still find it very interesting to see the ongoing development of the martial art and how it changes for the better as time goes on. Things being adapted to better suit the current climate and requirements of the art. This is something you very rarely see in other arts as their founders tend to have passed away and things become heavily steeped in tradition, making the evolution of an art as one body a slow and some times unbeneficial process.

The weekend as a whole was well worth the effort required to get out there and I would like to thank Byron-san very much for organizing this excursion to Amsterdam. My thanks also goes out to all Brent Sensei's students for helping us train and of course to Brent Sensei himself for having us at his dojo and making the whole training process an enjoyable experience.

I am looking forward to my next visit to Amsterdam and also await the next seminar in the UK eagerly.

Tahoe Philosophy

By Matthew Lynch Sensei - Van Nuys, CA

Recently I went on an overdue vacation to Lake Tahoe. A friend of mine was nice enough to let me use his house, and my sweetie and I spent a week there. Lake Tahoe is special to me, because, like Lake Mashu, the water is very clear. They are both mountain lakes, although Mashu is a crater lake and Tahoe is a glacier lake. Still, I felt like I was on personal sacred sand, and it was very beautiful and peaceful.

Whenever I am away from my dojo I find myself trying to explain Shinkendo to non-martial-artists. This is never an easy task for any of us. In particular, I found myself dwelling on the nature of kata. Whether solo or paired, our kata are choreographed, pre-arranged drills. Many times people ask me how we can train in reflexes, agility and flexibility within a fixed drill like that. In answering, I am reminded of my time studying music theory.

Great songs are recorded and written down so they will not be lost, but they are also studied and played by new musicians all the time. A piece of written music is like a kata. The timing, notes, and order are all dictated by the composer, and on the paper this might look like it takes all the individuality and spontaneity out, leaving only empty notes. However, every single musician who plays that piece of music brings their own life to it. They bring their skill level, their interpretation, their emotion into the piece, and they play it a little bit differently every time. So it is with kata. Each of us brings our own skill level,

understanding, and intent into the kata, and so every time we do a kata we grow and the kata changes under our sword.

By studying and emphasizing different aspects of Kuyo Junikun, and by following our instructor's teachings, we bring new levels of understanding to the drill, and it takes on new life and new meaning for us. If this were not so, people would not still play great music by Beethoven and others. After all, it's been recorded before. Every martial artist, like every musician, brings new meaning and new life to his training every time he takes up his sword, or instrument, and performs. This is, in fact, why we study in the first place.

It's nice to be home, but I am glad for the relaxation, fresh energy and insights I gained from my visit to Lake Mashu...er, Tahoe.



G'Day From Australia

By Craig Golding - Coffs Harbour, Australia

G'day to all Shinkendo instructors and students,

My name is Craig Golding and I have recently joined the Shinkendo family and attended my first Shinkendo lesson. I hope I don't bore you with the following story, but I have the time to write it and hope that you find it a little interesting.

As you can tell by the greeting, I'm an Aussie and have wanted to start Shinkendo training for about two years now. Finally, circumstances and finances allow it to happen. Luckily, here in Australia we have Howard Quick Sensei as our instructor. Why do I say 'Luckily'? Well, to show you an example of his character, he picked me up at the airport (30 mins one way), took me to and from the motel, invited me around for dinner with his wonderful family (scrumptious), and to watch the Shinkendo TV channel, invited me to

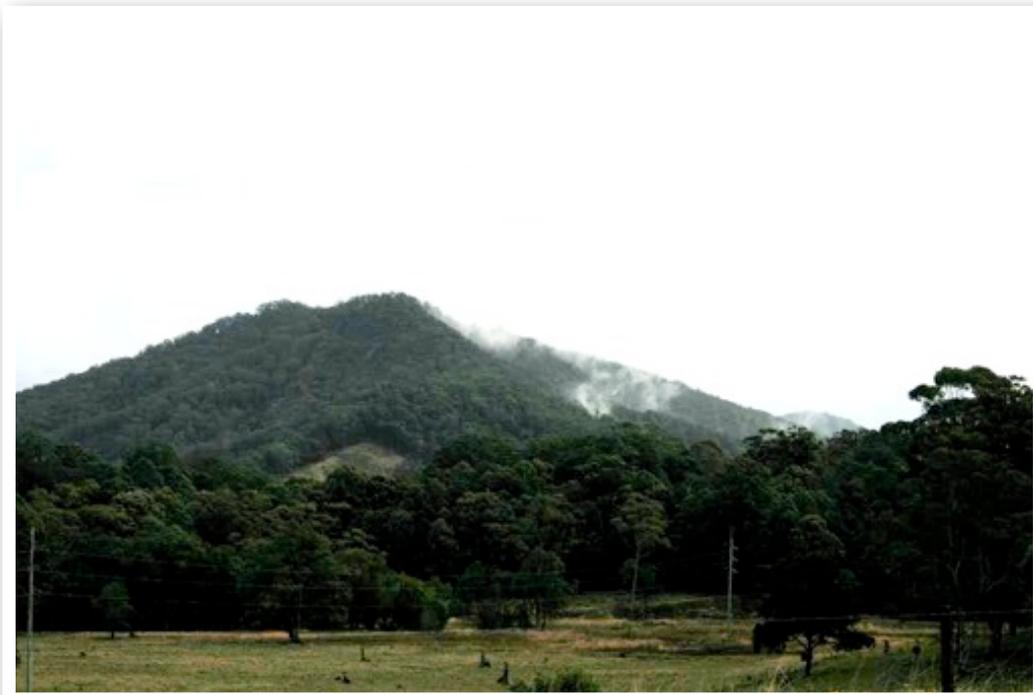


watch his Jujutsu classes, lunch at a restaurant then tea at his house after training, and finally, took me to the airport again (different airport, 45 mins one way). To say that I was thankful would be an understatement, going so far out of his way to look after a first timer was appreciated most deeply. My surprised wife commented that she wished everyone could all be so nice

and that it was great to see such spirit in an organisation. I feel proud to be associated with the ISF.

Now for a little about myself. I am a 36 year old husband and father of three great children aged 7, 3 and 1 (she has just started walking...). Until recently, I was working in Brisbane as an IT support officer but have recently moved back home to Coffs Harbour, interstate and about 400km's South of Brisbane. I spent some time in the Army as an electronics technician and moved around a fair bit, including time overseas on peacekeeping duties. It was all great experience and it certainly makes you appreciate the little things in life like running water, toilets and edible food (including Vegemite).

Moving the family back home has forced a huge change in our lives and we are now baby sitting the family farm for my ill father. We have the best of both worlds, the serenity and open spaces of a farm (of about 200 acres), but only 5 minutes to town and 7 minutes to the



beach. The children love it as they are getting back to nature and experiencing a few things that most city kids never would. On seeing the birth of a calf for the first time, my 7 year old boy said, 'Wow, that's cool!', and my 3 year old boy said, "Awesome dude!". Me, well I was just glad I didn't have to help out the cow this time...hmmm, and I might cut back the amount of TV my 3 year old watches. So, career wise I'm trying to get a small fledgling IT support business off the ground as well as being a full time cattle farmer.

Until my first nervous Shinkendo lesson, I'd never had any training in any martial art before, but have always been drawn towards the Samurai and the Japanese sword. To say I was excited when I discovered Shinkendo about two years ago would be putting it mildly, I said to my wife back then that this is what I've been looking for all along (whether I realised it or not) and promised myself I'd find a way to do it. Funny though, I bought a copy of 'Crimson Steel' way back in the early nineties (wished I bought more copies

after seeing the prices on eBay these days...), and have read it many times but only found Shinkendo relatively recently via the internet.

My head is still spinning from the info overload that flooded in during my first two hour lesson. There were only 3 students that day due to the vicious colds and flu going around, and so I received a lot of valuable one-on-one instruction. I bought a notepad at the airport on the way home and furiously started making notes about the day before it all leaked out. As it is a month between my lessons (ah, the tyranny of distance), I spend as much time as possible practicing all I can remember from the lesson. My Shinkendo book is getting a workout and the only videos I have (Molten Fire and Budo Ashisabaki) are watched at least once a week. Although I have Ashisabaki on DVD and watch it frequently, Obata Sensei still manages to embarrass me and my clumsy footwork – even in slow mo. I know my training will be a long road only having a dozen lessons per year (some students probably do this

many in a few weeks), but I'm prepared for it and quite determined.

I sincerely hope I haven't bored anyone with my ramblings. The real purpose of this post is not just to introduce myself, but to also encourage those people that haven't tried Shinkendo to give it a go. Hopefully my enthusiasm will infect others and invigorate a few spirits. I've made a strong personal commitment to Shinkendo, I feel that I had to, my father's illness has shown me that you can't waste your time here and you should do what you can to make it a better place, starting with yourself and letting that improvement flow on to your family and others.

I've attached a few photo's of my home town and home area. There is some bamboo growing on my fathers farm but the pics didn't turn out so well, I'll do some better shots and post them sometime over the next few days.

My public thanks again to Quick Sensei, I'm looking forward to the next session.

