

Samurai News from Honbu



Busy Shinkendoka



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Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

The Iowa seminar was held in the middle of June with about 80 participants attending. This was the third seminar held in Iowa. The training was excellent, with students coming from Arkansas, Georgia, and Quebec to participate. On Saturday night, the banquet hosted about 130 people (students and families) where menjos were presented. Dan and Jillian Sensei took me sightseeing afterwards, we went to the motorcycle museum and Jillian's parents house. In Iowas, no matter how far we drove, there were only corn and soy bean fields!!

In Spring or Autumn, I hope that we can hold a seminar in Illinois.

At the end of June, I traveled to New York for the seminar hosted by Lou Sensei, my second trip to New York. His dojo was like the old Hollywood Honbu dojo, with very serious students. I felt very happy that Shinkendo was being taught in NY, it has always been my dream. Afterwards we shot the Ashisabaki and Bojutsu video, then translated the French Aikibujutsu video to English and Japanese. The three videos should be recommended viewing for new students.

Currently Peter Lukacs from Hungary is staying at my house. He will be studying Shinkendo, Aikido, and Bo. He is a very serious student, who has been training in Shinkendo for 4 years now. I hope he learns Aikido and takes that knowledge back to Hungary.



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Shinkendo in Singapore

By Jeffery Tie

My name is Jeffery Tie, and I am a Shinkendo student in Singapore. For those unfamiliar with South East Asian geography, Singapore is a small island state located just off the southern tip of Malaysia, and in between the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo. Singapore has a reputation as the “Garden City” of SE Asia, and is also a modern, vibrant business hub servicing the region.



I am a student of Lonnie Oakes sensei. Lonnie sensei came to Singapore in April of 2001. His office is in the business and banking district, and is coincidentally next to a US incorporated Futures broker where I work as a Technical Analyst. For those of you who are unfamiliar with financial markets, a Technical Analyst is a glorified crystal ball gazer who attempts to predict and foretell the direction of financial instruments like the Dow Jones, or Foreign Exchange pairs like the US Dollar versus the Japanese Yen.

For more than a year, Lonnie sensei and I were like passing ships. Both knew that the other was in the adjacent office but we had yet to develop any

meaningful interaction. One morning in Oct last year, I was in the building lobby when Lonnie sensei asked to borrow my pen. During the social talk that normally follows such interaction, we both discovered that we shared mutual interest in trading and in martial arts. I recommended “The Way of the Warrior Trader”, a book written by Richard McCall sensei, and was amazed when Lonnie sensei said that he knew Richard sensei well! We quickly arranged a workout session.

Lonnie sensei soon introduced me to Shinkendo, stating that he considered Shinkendo to be one of the highest expressions of Japanese Budo. My previous exposure to sword training was limited to bokken training in my Aikido group. Shinkendo was very different to say the least. Even basic suburi and cutting actions were new to me. I was soon hooked on Shinkendo.

In June of 2003, I was asked to write an article for a trader’s magazine and decided to write about the relationship between martial arts and trading in financial markets. This article needed a series of photographs to illustrate how martial arts techniques and philosophy can be applied to



trading. Lonnie sensei agreed to be my training partner for the photography sessions.

After the photo sessions ended, Lonnie sensei admitted that he missed both teaching and the dojo environment. At several students' urging, Lonnie sensei agreed to seek approval from Obata sensei to form a Shinkendo/Aiki Buken group and teach here in Singapore.

The birth of our dojo has been fraught with obstacles and difficulties. Martial Arts (and their respective instructors) were in the past largely associated with secret societies and triads (gangs as you call them in the US). The government here controlled the situation by requiring all instructors to be registered with the Martial Arts Control Unit (or MACU), which is a unit of the police force. After some effort, Lonnie sensei was granted a teaching license from MACU.

We are also in the process of registering our group, Kaze Yama Bujutsu Singapore, as a legal entity to comply with local laws as well as to register the Shinkendo brand name for the ISF. Another major obstacle we face is in the search for suitable Dojo space. Rentals in land scarce Singapore are highly priced and it is not viable for us to operate the dojo on a non-commercial basis, especially as the initial student base is small and cannot sustain the rent!

Despite the initial start-up obstacles that we are facing, we are determined to grow our dojo and introduce Shinkendo to Singapore, and eventually to the region. If you intend to visit Singapore, we will gladly welcome your presence at our dojo for training. It is also our intention to host Obata sensei for a training clinic when circumstances permit, and will work towards this as a long-term goal.



A Delay... but Bunch o' Submissions!

My apologies to everyone. This newsletter for July was actually finished for posting on the weekend of the 11th, but in my rush to send it for posting before I left for Taiwan, I made some technical errors that made me helpless until I came back just a few hours ago (today's the 25th). Anyway...

A grand welcome to the Singapore Shinkendo dojo! Their dojo is currently an "open air" dojo which is a first in the federation. Having been to Singapore a couple of times during the summer, I must commend their bravery for going out to practice with full gi and hakama. Keep cool in the shade, Lonnie Sensei!

Merlin Tolstyk writes us an article of the Annual Georgia Summer Camp with plenty of cool pictures and some great commentary about the uniqueness of practicing with Mother Nature. I can only imagine the mosquitoes that attacked them during training. I'm sure the narrow pathway practice puts the Shinkendo-ka in a more 'real world' situation or what the samurai would have faced while walking in a forest.

The Oakland Seminar which Obata Kaiso told many stories about is detailed with some nice pictures of the training. I couldn't help but add a few captions. Kaiso seemed to really be enjoying himself and that's a really nice bike... I wish I had a bike... but then I don't know how to drive one.

Anita Tsuchiya skillfully writes about her visit during Shosai, the anniversary of the birth to our art, as well as Obata Sensei's decision to travel to the states to teach.

Obata Sensei left for New York for a good week and a half. He extended his trip to help with some instructional videos they were producing in the Modern Samurai Dojo. It has been a while since I saw an instructional video produced by Kaiso. I hope it gets published for the rest of us to learn from.

Expect some more articles from the dojos of Obata Sensei's visits. In the meantime, Gombatte!

Oops, we did it again

The Second Annual Georgia Summer Camp

By Merlin W. Tolstyk

This past May 22nd weekend instructors and students from four Georgia based dojos: Atlanta Budokan; Mind Body Spirit; House of the Samurai; and Japanese Swordsmanship of Gwinnett (with Sensei's S. Forristall, M Giles, L. Jones, and N. Smith respectively), all gathered in the woods for a long weekend of training and fellowship. This second annual "summer camp" took place across the North Carolina border up in the Smokey Mountains. Turnout for the event was quite strong with approximately 40 people training plus family members who came along for the getaway.



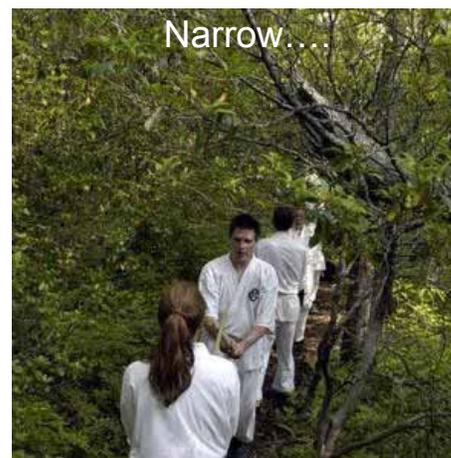
What a weekend it was. Beginning each day at 6:00 am (that's not a typo – six am!) in the temporary dojo we had set up, we covered a full array of training including empty hand, tanto, sword, and bo. Now despite it being such an early hour the overall energy level was quite high. It seems a couple of break falls out of kote gaeshi will wake you up and get the blood flowing much faster and better than an entire pot of black coffee.

After the morning session and breakfast, we came to highlight of the weekend – a combination of hiking and training. Last year I was unable to make the summer camp trip because of work related reasons, but I did hear the now-legendary stories about the hike/death march. So I was a little, shall we say, apprehensive. We gathered in training gear with bokuto and plenty of water for a nice long walk along a mountain trail. We met a trail narrow enough for one that twisted up and down hill. After about forty-five minutes of hiking and ribbing each other (our dojo is just loaded with wise guys) Sensei called halt and said that we would begin a training session. "Uh yeah, shouldn't we come to a clearing first or something?" was going through my mind. But nope, we were going to do it right there where we stopped. Packs down, bokuto up. Giles Sensei was first up to lead the group starting with some suburi to get everyone going, and then some blocking and striking drills.



During these drills the old military concept of wanting to hold the high ground was really hammered home. The person I was partnered with (the guy just ahead of me on the trail) was on a slightly higher level as, thanks to a tree root, there was a step up between us. It was a small difference of only about 6 inches or so but it resulted in me catching his strikes much lower and with much more power than I normally would. Conversely, when counterstriking I had to "reach" more on my strikes leaving them with less behind them than usual. Moral of the story, you want the high ground whenever possible. It makes a big difference.

That lasted about a half hour then it was packs up and on with the hike. We marched for about another half hour or so until the next training break. This time it was Forristall Sensei's turn. He had us begin with tsuki attacks and blocks to get warmed up with, which soon evolved into *Isonami*. Some reps were performed with the person in front of you and then some on the person behind you. Once again, being on the uphill side made things easier, especially when attacking. Retreating uphill was also difficult. Then on with the hike to the next training stop. This time Smith Sensei had us working on Ryusui. After attacking for the first couple of reps something dawned on me – these trees along the trail can really get in the way! The rhythm of the drill can get thrown off when your strikes are deflected by a low hanging tree limb rather than your partner. We quickly learned that techniques needed to be adapted to fit surroundings. If a strike hit an errant tree branch, you simply needed to go on to the next move. This meant the flow of the drill could be very different from what we were accustomed to in the dojo.



The importance of sliding properly on the balls of the feet was also quite clear. If you are not sliding properly on the balls of your feet and you hit a divot, stone, or root your balance and speed would be compromised. You might even trip, especially when sliding backwards. If you slide properly and your foot hits an obstacle you'll still keep your balance. And if it is not too big you might just glide over it. Great to see how the little details Sensei is always hounding us about really do matter in practical application. The devil really is in the details.

After the hike and later that night we gathered for a night movie screening in our temporary dojo. With Atlanta Budokan students in attendance you know a Mel Brooks movie will always be handy, but we wound up watching *The Last Samurai* after a primer of *Samurai Jack*. Everyone seemed to appreciate that selection.



Good use of a volleyball court

After another early morning training session and breakfast, we got together for our final bit of training for the weekend. Again we got out of the dojo, this time to work with the bo. A long weapon and large class meant going outside was a must. The volleyball court and surrounding area made a perfect venue for training. Lots of room and a wide open space, just what the doctor ordered for swinging a bo.

All in all the second annual summer camp turned out to be a great weekend of training. Not only was it nice to get out of the dojo but it also let us train in a less controlled and more "real" environment which clearly illustrated why we do some of the things we do. Hopefully we'll get even more students/dojos coming together for next year's camp.



Kyle and Evan



Smith Sensei



Isn't this a wonderful sight..... Now get back to your tachiuchi!!!!



Obata Sensei at Suigetsukan in May

By Dave Wilson, Stacey Gauny, and Scott Cornelison – Suigetsukan Dojo, Oakland

Memorial Day weekend 2004 brought Obata Sensei, his wife Michiyo, and their daughter Yoko, to the San Francisco Bay Area. This was our first opportunity to train with Obata Sensei in our recently finished dojo. Training was held at Suigetsukan Dojo starting on Friday evening and it was immediately clear that this was going to be another rigorous and exciting seminar. The first night the senior Shinkendo students were introduced to Nito-Ken, the two sword techniques developed by Obata Sensei. The Aikido training that followed was equally interesting.

Saturday and Sunday's training began early at Suigetsukan with both Aikido and Shinkendo expanding upon the previous lessons while working in some new ideas. The focus in Aikido started with a review of basic waza and transitioned into a review of *roppon uke* and the techniques derived from those entries. Obata Sensei encouraged students to emphasize *kuzushi*, proper body movement/alignment and attacks with focused intent. Especially interesting was Sensei's demonstration of "aiki style" techniques that seemed to require more subtle application of principles and a good connection to *uke's* center. The Aikido training was well attended and Obata Sensei appeared to enjoy demonstrating techniques with Yoko throughout the weekend.



"It's fun, isn't it?"



"What?!? No Key!?"

In Shinkendo the Nito-Ken techniques were expanded and developed into a more complicated series of movements. The most difficult was definitely a Nito-Ken tachiuchi with forward and backward movement for both the attacker and defender. Obata Sensei was especially happy with the senior students' ability to grasp the Nito-Ken techniques and commended Esmailzadeh Sensei for teaching all of his students strong basics.

In the afternoon the Shinkendo training for all levels moved to the YWCA, where we had room for the larger number of students that attended, including one student who came

all the way from Utah. We were all introduced to a new tachiuchi form that requires a tremendous amount of body movement to do successfully. Obata Sensei also had us review *Tanrenkata* and *battoho kata*, followed by the *Toyama Ryu jokyū*. All the students trained very hard and Obata Sensei was pleased with our improvement.

The banquet dinner Saturday night was a rousing success. Obata Sensei handed out rank certificates and everyone talked about the day's training and how much they were looking forward to Sunday. Obata Sensei made a short speech about the early days and told everyone how serious a student Esmailzadeh Sensei had been. He commented that Esmailzadeh Sensei was one of his longest training students and that there were very few instructors around with so much experience.

It is always an enormous challenge to keep up with the lessons that Obata Sensei teaches at his seminars. We are all better martial artists when trying to do our best and we once again have both mental and physical hurdles to work on for some time. We greatly enjoyed and appreciated the time we had with Obata Sensei. We were also very fortunate to have Michiyo Sensei and Yoko Sensei there to help teach. We would like to thank them all for their guidance and endless patience. We are already looking forward to their visit next year.



Shibaraku Desu Ne?

Anita Y. Tsuchiya, Ryu Sui Kan, Utah, U.S.A. / Photos by Dennis Cheng, Honbu, U.S.A.

Living out in the middle of a desert, it's easy to let the rest of the world pass by. Nonetheless, our Utah Branch was *l-o-n-g* overdue for a trip to the *honbu*. Kurt Johnson Sensei and I were both a bit nervous about the trip. Kurt Sensei hadn't trained directly under Obata Kaiso in many years. And despite my regular presence on the forums, I'd never actually met any *honbu* students or instructors face-to-face. Kurt expected me to help translate and memorize our lessons. A duty that I predicted "should be quite an amusing experience for everyone, except me."



Arches National Park, Utah

When we arrived, Obata Kaiso was mercifully forgiving about my *champon* (pidgeon) language skills. He patiently explained the basics with numerous metaphors, in both Japanese and English. Somehow, I managed to survive our training sessions without causing Kurt Sensei too much embarrassment.

That first evening, we were invited to the Obata home. We met Obata Michiyo Okusan and Obata Yokosan Musume, and watched several videos of recent demonstrations. For dinner, the Obatas took us to an Islamic Chinese restaurant—a new and delicious experience for me. They serve beef, chicken, seafood and lamb but no pork, naturally.

After dinner, we had the most interesting conversation with the Obatas about *bushido* in modern times. In particular, how ordinary people demonstrated the spirit of *bushido* under the most extraordinary conditions. Obata Kaiso told of a Japanese doctor who was stationed in a European hospital (Poland?) when a dysentery epidemic struck the town. While the rest of the medical staff evacuated the hospital, he and a single nurse stayed to treat the sick until he eventually succumbed to the disease himself. Another tale involved a Turkish Prime Minister, who in 1985 ordered Turkish Airlines to make seats available for 215 Japanese citizens stranded in Tehran. They were flown to safety just hours before the bombing that started the Iran-Iraq war. The Prime Minister explained later that he acted in memory of the Turkish Warship Ertugrul, which had wrecked off the far northern coast of Japan in 1890. The local villagers rescued and nursed the survivors, and retrieved the bodies of the perished for proper burial.



Obata Toshishiro Kaiso

I think my favorite story of the evening was of Chiune Sugihara. He arrived in Lithuania as its first Japanese consulate, just weeks before Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. Defying direct orders from the Japanese Government to support the Axis Powers, Vice-Consul Sugihara personally issued several thousand transit visas to Lithuanian, Polish and German Jews—enabling them to escape the Nazi pogroms.



Obata Okusan Sensei

For the next day's lesson, Monday, I was partnered with Obata Michiyo Sensei, who skillfully guided me through the basic *tachiuchi*. Meanwhile Saito Sensei had his hands full working with Kurt Sensei, who towered over all of us at 6'5". I can tell you that it's quite an experience to block *shinchokugiri* coming down from nearly ten feet high. It's sort of like having a tree branch fall on your head.

After our lesson, Obata Kaiso mentioned that this was a special day, "Shosai," the anniversary of the founding of Shinkendo on May 10, 1990. He remarked that on this day he is reminded of his good fortune at seizing the right opportunities, at the right time. He called these turning points in people's lives "golden arrows." Most people, he explained, don't pay too much attention to what's happening around them. So when that first golden arrow goes whizzing by, they might not notice anything except a whooshing sound passing by their heads. He then delivered an excellent rendition of someone starting suddenly, scratching his head and then peering off into the distance, vainly looking for what might have made the noise.

Some people, he continued, might be smart enough to turn and look back towards the origin of "something came from over there." This would allow them to make the connection between sound and object when the second golden arrow goes whizzing by.

"Eh? That looked like an arrow. . .made of gold!"

Quick learners might be able to catch the third, and final, golden arrow. Of course, many people never catch any of them.

Obata Kaiso smiled suddenly, "But fortunately, I already was looking in the right direction. As soon as I saw something coming towards me, I reached out and grabbed it right away. Once I realized what I had caught, I was ready for the second arrow, and then the same with the third one." His right hand darted out in front of him as he plucked one, two, and then three golden arrows right out of thin air.

He held them up to show us his catch. "Because I was ready, I didn't miss any. Many years ago, I came to the United States to start a new sword art, Shinkendo. Now, I see it growing across many countries—Netherlands, Switzerland, Hungary, Germany, Australia, United States. So, please remember this day and celebrate our anniversary on May 10 when you return to your *dojo* in Utah."

Later that evening, Nathan Sensei organized a *Shosai* potluck at the honbu, in lieu of the regular evening classes. It was fun matching faces with all the names I knew from our ISF forums. Nathan Sensei said that we should do a better job of scheduling the next time we come



No really. . .no more sake for me!



We raise our glasses to toast the Obatas on the 14th anniversary of Shinkendo.

to visit—in order to include working out with Tsuki Kage Dojo! Dennis-san took a bunch of photos, which are posted at <http://aikido.dcheng.net/14thShinkendoAnniversary?page=1>.

Just being in the company of so many good-hearted people was a rare and uplifting treat. By the time Kurt Sensei and I flopped into our seats for the flight home, we were both exhilarated and exhausted. We country folk have an awful lot of work to do to meet the high standards set by the rest of you all.

人生真劍道



(left-to-right) Kurt Johnson, Obata Toshishiro, Anita Y. Tsuchiya