

Samurai News from Honbu



Summer's End



ISF
AB
KTRR

Issue 0033

July-September 2005

Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

On September 6th I led a seminar at the Atlanta Budokan. There were 35 participants in all, with half those members participating in the instructors' section (a cumulative 14 hours over two days). The whole seminar was 32 hours. Shawn Sensei opened up a new dojo near his home, the dojo is about 3,000 sq feet. He is currently teaching both adult and children's classes. Currently in the Georgia area, we have many instructors including Matsuoka Sensei, Nayef Sensei, Lionel Sensei, Mary Sensei, and Kalila Sensei. I am glad to see Shinkendo, Aikido, and Bojutsu spreading in that area. My wife accompanied me on the trip to Georgia for the first time, and she was able to see the active members and the growth in that area. There was not a lot of time for sightseeing, but Sensei Shawn managed take my wife and I to Stone Mountain, a historical attraction.

From September 22nd to the 26th, I traveled to Quebec, Canada for the first time. Bruno Sensei has been leading Shinkendo there for 10 years, he was originally a student of Birdsell Sensei. There were 23 participants in all. The temperature there was 40-55 F, which for Autumn season is colder than even the winter season in Los Angeles. The scenery was very beautiful. Everything was very calm there compared to Los Angeles. The training went very well, but the flight there was terrible. I changed flights 3 times to get there, and it took 17 hours in all from my house to his house. I hope to go there again next year in either April- June time or again in Autumn, and I hope students from other dojos can participate this time.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 SHOCHU GEIKO PICTORIAL
- 9 HOW I FOUND SHINKENDO
- 10 ATLANTA BUDOKAN
- 14 A TRIP TO AMSTERDAM

NEWSLETTER STAFF

PUBLISHER
OBATA TOSHISHIRO KAISO

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MICHAEL C. SHU

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
KEIKO KUMA
JASON RODGERS
OLIVIER BARRAQUÉ

Shochu Geiko 2005 Pictorial

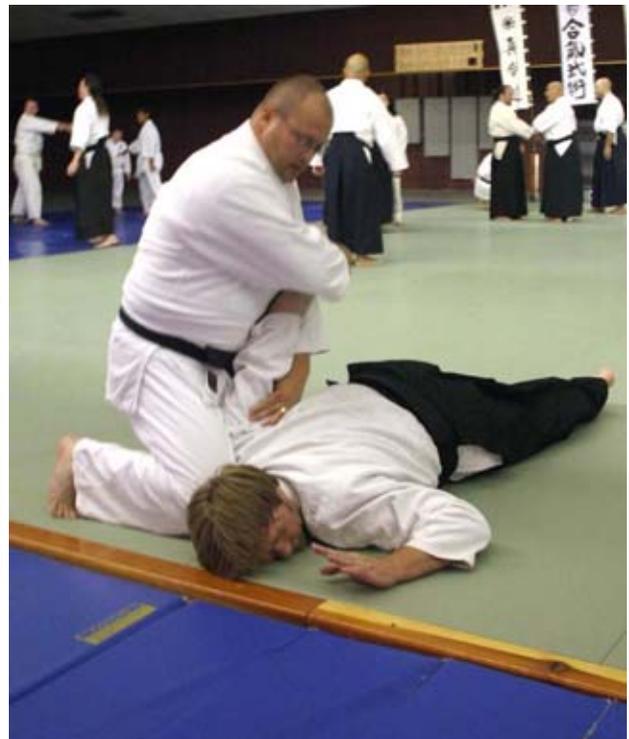
Captions by Michael Shu
Photographs by Shatto Light



It was all a blur for Dave



Ah yes.... The grab, the first step to inflicting pain...





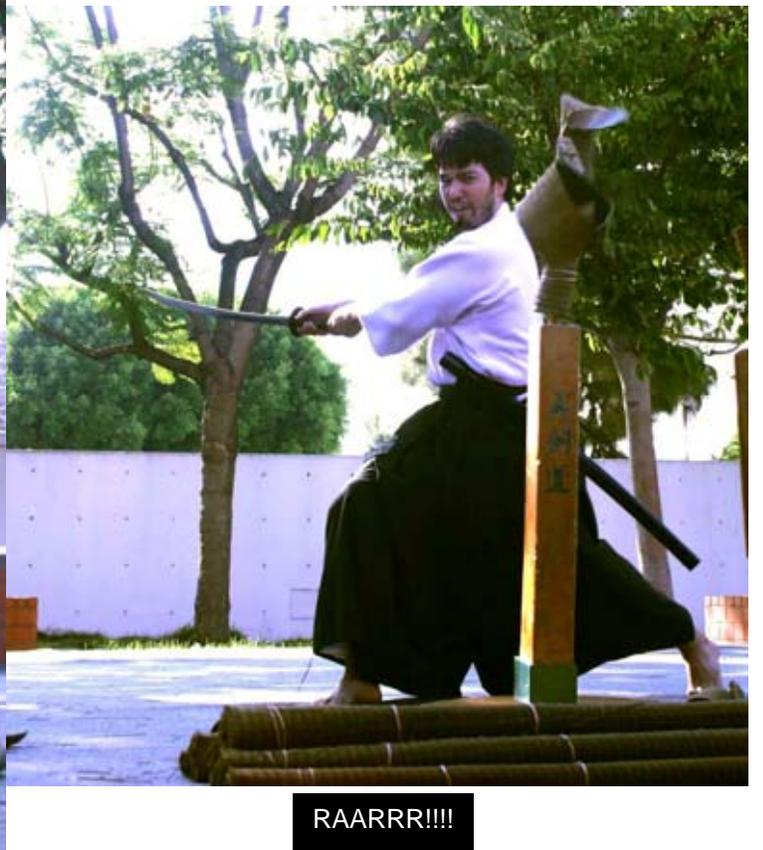
How NOT to treat your dance partner





Nothing like a little pre-show cutting







Lou D'Agostino Sensei and Yumiko Matsuoka Shihan locking blades

Hey! That's my Imagawa-yaki in your dogi!

urm..... no it isn't.....



And now, Lou Sensei will tell some jokes!

Eh....



So..... a ninja and a samurai walk into a bar....



"Hrm, I've heard this one..."



"Okay:
6 Targets, 4 Trips, 24
Cuts.... Just like THIS!"

Trip One...



How I found Shinkendo

By Keiko Kuma – Honbu Dojo

One Sunday morning, my husband and I were in downtown Los Angeles at a Japanese food market. And there, I noticed an old advertisement for Shinkendo on the information board. It said: fix your health and change your life. "This is it," I said to my husband. "I will fix my health and get back my life!"

Since the dojo was conveniently located on the third floor of the same building, we went there and saw four swordsmen practicing on a large tatami floor. One of them was Obata sensei. Watching their movement, I realized how cool Japanese swordsmanship actually was. Then I looked at my out-of-shape body, decided to get in shape first and knock on the door of Shinkendo later.

About three years later, on July 1, 2005, I enrolled in Shinkendo at the Honbu dojo. (Sadly, my body hasn't changed much, just one dress size down.) Because I am a writer, I had chronic neck, calf and back pain. Since I badly wanted to fix these problems before any health disaster would come, I have been going to the dojo every weekday. After only one month, my rounded shoulders were improving--much straighter. My driving was better--much more alert and in control. I even got an extra bonus by getting thinner.

As for my Shinkendo training, I learned more than I expected, such as dojo etiquette. Mrs. Obata sensei explained that the personal space in the Japanese sense, called ma, was defined by the length of a sword. This was the first time I heard the reason behind that. I thought, "Born in Japan and attended schools there, yet no home economics teacher taught me anything in class!"

My most memorable training with Obata sensei happened because in my hands the bokken looked and behaved like just a wooden stick. Obata sensei and his senior students' bokken moved like shinken. "Keiko-san, your kesagiri needs to swing faster and with the correct right angle," said Obata sensei, swinging his bokken at me with a very audible "sonic boom" cutting through air. I have never, ever imagined a wooden sword making a sound like that. It was scary.

At dojo, I have good days and bad days. But every day I have more energy after Shinkendo class than before. This fascinates me and is greatly appreciated.

Atlanta Budokan Hosts Autumn Seminar

By Jason Rodgers – Atlanta Budokan; Smyrna, Georgia

Photos by Steve Goodwin



Kaisei helps a student practice proper Ukemi fundamentals

Over the second weekend in September, Atlanta Budokan had the honor of hosting our annual Autumn Seminar with Obata Toshishiro Kaisei. It was with great pleasure that we were also able to welcome Mrs. Obata Sensei for four days of intensive training. We had a great turn out, and I'm sure everyone enjoyed the focused attention that Seminar provides. During the weekend's extended

training sessions, Obata Kaisei introduced techniques that reminded students of the importance of fundamentals and the infinite subtlety of this art.

Obata Kaisei demonstrated two series of *jodan katate-moche* techniques, one each from *ai-hamni* and *gyaku-hamni*. In both series, Kaisei emphasized first the basic techniques themselves – *ikkajo*, *nikajo*, *sankajo*, *kote-gaishi*, etc. – then expanded the series to include ground control techniques, and finally a number of variations of each position. As we practiced the two series over the weekend, and as each gradually expanded to become more complex and advanced, the focus never changed – keep it basic! In fact, when enthusiasm would occasionally seize an aikidoka and technique would suffer, Kaisei would encourage us to move more *slowly*. Moving slowly forced us to focus on better mechanics and proper balance, on body position and footwork, and on moving from your center. As fundamentals strengthened, so did each technique.

Obata Kaisei also emphasized the importance of proper fundamentals in basic ukemi, particularly when taking a rear-fall as Uke. Through a series of



Kaisei demonstrates ground-control technique – *carefully!*

exercises meant to encourage Uke to take a cheat step when falling to the rear, Obata Kaiso and Mrs. Obata Sensei demonstrated how easy, gentle, and *slow* ukemi should be. By slowing the fall, an Uke can better focus on proper hip rotation and returning to kamae. But if we rush our ukemi, and ignore fundamentals, rear-falls can produce discomfort (or worse, serious injury!)

On Sunday, Kaiso showed us pressure points – on the hand, arm and neck. He demonstrated how careful application of pressure at these points could produce great “motivation” on the part of Uke! In keeping with his focus on fundamentals, Kaiso related the more advance applications to basic techniques – I’ll never forget how *ikkajo* changed forever when Obata Kaiso applied it (along with a thumb-pressure point control) on my elbow!

As a junior student, I found Kaiso’s emphasis on fundamentals particularly helpful. It’s often easy to become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of our curriculum – especially in the intense environment of seminars! But by moving slowly and attentively, I found that my technique improved, I was better able to keep up with senior students while working, I was more disposed to spot and begin to correct “holes” in my technique. It was truly an honor training with Obata Toshishiro Kaiso and Mrs. Obata Sensei, and we look forward to hosting them again next year. Hope you’ll join us!



A great turn-out for the Atlanta Budokan Autumn Seminar

UK Seminar, September 2nd 3rd & 4th 2005

Weston-super-Mare

By Neil MacKinnon – Somerset Budokai

For several weeks running up to the first weekend in September, the whole of Somerset Budokai was a blur of activity. Fred East Sensei commanded serenely, whilst Darren Whyley Sensei, his partners Sam and myself were running around like mad things. In the meantime Wayne Kensett sensei a few hundred miles away in Northamptonshire was making arrangements for flights and transportation.

All this activity was due to the imminent arrival of Brent Hire Sensei for only the second time, and for the first seminar of its kind in the UK.

What made Darren Sensei and Sam's work even more pressured was the recent opening of Kizeme Kai Dojo by Darren Sensei, and the associated work involved in starting a whole new class on their first probing steps into the new world that is Shinkendo. In the end all the effort was worth it, as the whole event came together as planned.

Friday evening, I was just finishing up the vacuuming of the hall that was to be our Dojo for the next two days, when some strangers walked in, I bowed in respect, as is only polite for a junior student and carried on with my duties. After a few moments a smart looking guy, with short hair and big friendly eyes came over and said, "are you Neil?" I confirmed I was and received a large handshake and I then realized that I had just met Brent Hire Sensei for the first time.



The venue was The Packhorse Inn, an old coaching house on the Somerset levels. With its vaulted ceiling and open beam work, it made an excellent dojo with a great feel. All around us was history, with a 13th Century church just across the road and being on the levels, where many ancient and historic battles have taken place over the centuries, we really were immersed in ancient Somerset. Brent Sensei found a disadvantage of historic

Somerset, when trying to teach on Sunday whilst the bells of the church called the faithful to worship – a small price to pay for such historic surroundings.

The first training session was scheduled for two hours on Friday evening. This was where Brent Sensei put us through our paces to find out what we did and did not know and where we were gently but firmly led through a number of techniques and also made sure all the new students fully understood dojo etiquette. Two and a half hours later, a very happy bunch of Shinkendo students were to be found changing and heading off to the bar or bed depending on stamina. Already there was a lot to take in!

Saturday mornings start was delayed slightly, due to those attendees who were staying at the Packhorse not being able to enjoy their breakfasts until 9.00am. I am assuming no one had a traditional English cooked breakfast, as we were soon into the swing of the warm up and then straight into technique. We had been joined by a few extra members from Darren sensei's dojo, and the look on their faces as we charged into techniques they had only recently been introduced to was a delight. They showed great spirit by doing their very best to keep up.

Typing this piece in the week after the seminar, it is hard to recall exactly what we covered on each day, but my memory is full of new techniques, reinforcement of the basic foundations and Wayne Kensett Sensei's ever present kiai.

Brent sensei ran at a relentless pace, always with a keen eye and a kind but firm word and with lots of amusing illustrations of the point being made.

Saturday evening we all met up again for a group meal, lots of chat as there always is after a hard days training and some great stories from Brent sensei about Obata Kaiso, including one about a chap who approached Obata Kaiso and said "what would you do if I attacked you like THIS?" I will leave you to imagining the consequences to the hapless individual.

Sunday morning started gently with some Bo training. For some this was familiar, but for most it was brand new ground and a window into other aspects of what our cultural art has to offer in the future. We then went through a full warm up, and into tachiuchi techniques. One very memorable interlude was where Brent sensei asked us all to remove our hakama! A lot of puzzled and confused faces around the dojo complied. We were then shown a quick and effective method of folding the hakama and then the correct method of tying and wearing it. This is typical of the whole air of the two days, full of incredible information and I confess to learning things I was not even aware that I was ignorant of.

The session finished with the four sensei performing and practicing tameshigiri, which left most of us, but especially the new students, open mouthed. Then, sadly, it was time to clear up, *rei* for the last time, and go our separate ways.

I can only finish by thanking all involved, with of course our greatest thanks to Brent Hire sensei and Joost Berkhout for travelling from the Netherlands to be with us. Wayne Kensett sensei and his students for also putting in the miles, all the Somerset Budokai students for their efforts, Darren Whyley sensei and Sam, for going without sleep and food to get things ready in time, and lastly my mentor Fred East sensei, without whom we would not be where we are.

Jinsei Shinkendo
Gambatte Kudasai



A Trip to Amsterdam

By Olivier Barraqué – Arcueil Dojo, France

My name is Olivier Barraqué, I have been practicing Shinkendo for 3 years in France (at the Arcueil main dojo) with Adrien Six Sensei. This year I started working with support from the French Shinkendo Association to develop Obata Kaiso's Aikibujutsu in France. For that purpose I have been trying to travel as often as possible to Holland for training with Brent Hire Sensei. I recently spent 10 days training at his dojo in Amsterdam during the end of June. This was only my second stay in Amsterdam, but while I had been there in the past with 4 other French practitioners, this time I was alone



After an eventful departure from Paris (I missed my flight...), I finally arrived at the house of Joost Berkhout in Amsterdam. Joost is a senior student of Hire Sensei and an Aikibujutsu instructor himself. He generously invited me to stay out his house during my time in Amsterdam. From the first day after my arrival daily and intensive training began; either private or as part of the collective classes under Hire sensei's direction. This stay was not only beneficial for training in Aikibujutsu - even if this was my priority - but also for Shinkendo as I trained in the regular classes and in a particularly instructive private seminar.

In addition to this training, I was able to do some wonderful sightseeing in Amsterdam; I saw many of its monuments, canals and beautiful parks. Indeed as a conclusion of this very positive journey, we went together to practice a last time with Hire Sensei and some of his students outside in the Vondelpark (see photos).

I would like to thank Brent Hire Sensei, Joost Berkhout, Natalie Eckelkamp and his many students for their warm hospitality, generosity and sincere instruction.

