

# Samurai News from Honbu



## The Summer Campaigns



ISF  
AB  
KTRR

Issue 0032

May-June 2005

### Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

The first and the second summer campaign in Iowa and Arkansas, respectively, are over. In Arkansas, we had an instructor seminar only.

In the Asian philosophy, there are 5 things to study called Goiku.

1. Kyoiku - education (math, reading, writing, etc)
2. Taiiku- physical education
3. Tokuiku- manner, etiquette,
4. Chiiku- Wisdom
5. Shokuiku- food knowledge, smart eating

These five are called Goiku. Some overlap. The problem these days is Shokuiku, where people are not taking care of their bodies. If people exercised more and watched what they ate, they would not have problems with their health. Please be careful with excessive eating and drinking. When I was younger, people who did martial arts ate and drank a lot, which led to health problems. By eating correctly, you will relieve some of society's stress. When I go to seminars, I often observe how students eat. There is not a lot of drinking that goes on which is good, but students should eat what's in season and make healthy choices. It is also important not to rely on vitamin pills, but to get those vitamins from fruits and vegetables.

If students are interested in buying Shinkendo tenugui, please ask your instructor or contact me directly. You can use the tenugui as a headband, decoration, or you can hang it off your obi (side). Lastly instructors, we have new Shinkendo and Aikibjutsu noboribata available for the dojo. Noboribata have long been used to symbolize families on battlegrounds, festivals, celebrations, etc. The Noboribata is a symbol. I would like to make these Noboribata the symbol of our organization.



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# Spring Seminar and Sakura Enbu with Obata Kaiso

By Lou D'Agostino – Shibuchō – Modern Samurai Dojo, NY



And Marimo Too!

Last year was a time of many firsts for Shinkendo New York, 2005 is proving to be just as interesting. Senior Shinkendo Instructors Paul and Yumiko Sensei of AL /GA, have been hosting a spring and fall Shinkendo seminar with Obata Kaiso for many years. At the *Keiko Hajime*, Matsuoka Sensei reminded me of plans for Obata Kaiso's spring visit. I inquired if Obata Sensei would consider coming to New York afterwards since he would already be on the East Coast. Fortunately for us, Sensei was agreeable. The details were worked out and we began the countdown to Sensei's arrival and return to New York.

Taking a cue from Jeff and Marlene Sensei of Arizona, I thought that it might be fun for Mrs. Obata and Yoko (a.k.a "Marimo") to visit New York, and spend time with Sensei. While we all love to host Sensei and Sensei enjoys teaching us, he is away from his family and this is something we should all consider. We are very lucky that Obata Kaiso and Mrs. Obata sacrifice so much for our benefit and for the future of Shinkendo. Yoko was able to make the trip, taking her last final for the quarter, and then departing immediately for the airport. Mrs. Obata stayed behind to oversee the Honbu and other responsibilities.

Last year our dojo performed at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden for Sakura Matsuri, closing the show. We were well received and invited back this year. As good fortune would intervene, Obata Kaiso's visit would coincide with the Sakura Matsuri enbu.

*More on the demo later.*

During last year's Shinkendo seminar, Obata Kaiso introduced us to Bojutsu. Kaiso instructed our members in Bo kihon-ichi, ni, okouri suburi; as well as the basics for Ippon kumite in step by step format.

After completion of last years seminar, we began work on the Bojutsu Tanrendo, and Budo Ashisabaki DVDs. We also re-edited the Self-Defense Aikido video which was originally produced in 1998 in France. I am happy to say that the new English version in DVD format should be available by the time you read this.

In January 2005, we began our Aikido Kyokai. Since then I have been preparing our members to become more accustomed to empty hand techniques since many members had no prior training before joining our dojo. Break falls, ukemi and various other basic self-defense concepts that I am familiar with, were successfully introduced and our Kyokai is off to a great start thanks to Obata Kaiso and Yoko Obata.

I am very proud of the fact that we have begun to study the complete Budo system of Toshishiro Obata Kaiso. A lot of hard work lies ahead but as the Chinese adage says, the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. Kudos to ISF Shibu and their students who have been training in Aikido and Bo in addition to Shinkendo already. Those of you considering undertaking Obata Kaiso's Aiki-Bujutsu should take the plunge.

Speaking of taking the plunge, I have to say that the only time I have experienced such intense pain during "arresting techniques" was during a confrontational handcuffing course I took some years ago with the Marine Presidential guard. I was an assistant instructor at another school and had the honor of assisting part of the week, then later being a student with the marine guard. However at that time I was uke and the pain was inflicted with real hand cuffs during practice, but Obata Kaiso's waza was even more painful during yonkajo. After a day or two, I adjusted a bit better and just let go of the pain. Doing so was a very enlightening experience and although it was very difficult at first, receiving techniques from Obata Kaiso is a very special experience, and honor. In the future I hope to improve in this regard.

The most entertaining part was that Obata Kaiso thought I was overreacting and tapping out too quickly, so he just gave me a bit more! ☺ We all laughed about it afterward and Kaiso took the opportunity to talk about his time at the Yoshinkan and how tough the training was at that time. I have listened eagerly to these stories before, as they are an especially interesting history lesson. After hearing some specific stories I felt a little embarrassed at letting some of the pain get to me. But Sensei has a way of explaining things in a light hearted way that put everything into perspective. I feel much better for having had the opportunity to learn directly from Obata Kaiso and hope to one day become a competent exponent of Sensei's Aiki-budo. Ditto for our dojo members.



Marimo demonstrates how to be a better uke! The pain is only in your mind, Lou-san.



Saturday after dinner Seminar party



Yoshi-san "the samurai sportsman" introduces Obata Kaiso..... the movie star!

In addition to having Kaiso for our first Spring Seminar, Sensei and Yoko were on hand to help out with our demo. However there were additional visitors from out of town. Dave Mancuso, now residing in New York, is playing percussion in the smash Broadway show "Spamalot"



Dave Mancuso- Honbu Dojo



Nicholas Lauridsen Honbu Dojo

And.....

Last year Nicolas Lauridsen (Tameshigiri -editor in chief) relocated to N.Y.C. to continue his education. We have practiced together when time permitted, and I have enjoyed the not only our keiko, but getting to know each other in greater depth. Nicholas-san was on hand to help out with the demo, as did Yoko Obata who is getting used to being introduced as "Yoko Sensei"



New Tameshigiri three stand patterns "introduced" hours earlier by Obata Kaiso!

Marimo followed with Bo, to be joined by Obata Kaiso.



**Marimo and Obata Kaiso**



The crowd really enjoyed it, voicing many oohs and ahs!

Nicholas led our group through Kamae Happo, Ichimoji suburi and Hapogiri, followed by Goho Batto ho Kihon Ichi in Shio Barai format.



Jared Billig on left (15 yrs. Old), and Keith Comito



Marimo and Nicholas.





Jared doing a great job with laito. *Chuden Sei*.



Obata Kaiso wows the audience.



As usual everyone is amazed by Sensei!

The demonstration (about twenty minutes) was very well received and we are anticipating being invited back next year. Over the course of the weekend the botanic gardens had thirty thousand visitors. Several hundred witnessed our demo.

Obata Kaiso and Marimo were surprised and delighted to see Edward Quesada; honbu student who recently relocated to New Jersey, Shinkendo instructor Kalila King's daughter of Atlanta, and Mr. Kudo Muramasa's son who helped Welcome Obata Kaiso, to New York.



Thank you Obata Kaiso and Marimo !

# Sho-Sai

Random Commentary by Michael Shu – Honbu Dojo  
Photographs by the Lauridsen Bros.

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005 –

A Tuesday evening to remember. It was like any other evening in the Honbu: kiai's echoing through the hall, the slight whoosh from all the bokken being swung around, and the smell of pork katsu in the air.....??? Pork Katsu??? The tables around Obata Kaiso's desk have been turned into a buffet line of snacks and entrees!

May 10<sup>th</sup> of this year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Obata Kaiso's decision to travel to the United States to teach Budo. And as usual, it's time to bust out the sake!!! Food, booze, friendly people, and classic stories from Obata Kaiso, what more do you need? Pictures? Oh yesssss... we got your pictures RIGHT HERE!!! Conveniently crammed into one page!!!



"This booze rocks!!!"  
"Urm, Joe, that tea isn't alcoholic"  
"It's NOT!?!?"



"Wait... yeah, I think someone spiked this tea"



"Julian! I was in line first!!!"  
"Gomen Nasai!!!"



# The Mirror and the Iron Ring: Impressions from Obata Sensei's Bay Area Visit

By Dan Spalding – Suigetsukan – Oakland, CA

Aikido seminars with Obata Toshihiro Kaiso are always a special occasion. Our branch of aikido is a living art, and these seminars are an opportunity to learn new curriculum from the person who is creating it. Over three classes from Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup>, we studied *ai-te* and *gyaku-te* techniques from *chu-dan* and *jo-dan*. Sensei Jim Alvarez was kind enough to host the aikido portion of the seminar at his dojo in Livermore, near the southern end of the Bay Area.

There was ample review as well. Obata Sensei surprised us all by beginning Friday night's class correcting our warm-ups. We were instructed to make our circles bigger when we rotated our arms, and to keep our arms straight when we stretched them back. Making big circles would emerge as a big theme this weekend. (I was individually admonished to sink my hips deeper during some leg stretches.)

We then moved to five *gyaku-te*, or same side, hand techniques. Some of these were familiar from my jujitsu training; others, such as *yobi-kaeshi* (literally "call and send back," where we draw *uke* to us before moving them away again) were brand-new. Also new were the *kagami*, or mirror techniques. They are named after *tort*'s hand position, where by the end of the technique the *kagami* is facing themselves or *uke*.



Obata Sensei repeatedly mentioned envisioning our arms and hands making a *tetsu-wa*, or iron ring. He first demonstrated making a ring with his arms while performing a variation of *hijiate*. The version I am familiar with seems to emphasize making wave motion with your arms; the iron ring concept alone gave me plenty of food for thought. Perhaps most surprising was when he showed techniques, such as *nikkajo*, where even one arm making the ring shape makes a big difference.

Since he only comes once a year, it's easy to forget what a humorous person Obata Sensei is. Amidst his criticism of our warm-ups, he reminded his mostly-young audience that our bodies in our 20s are like diamonds. In our 30s, they're silver, and he joked that his own was now "dried wood."

I think Obata Sensei's biggest smiles were saved for Michael Esmailzadeh Sensei. Specifically, when he was demonstrating a technique on him. For some reason, Esmailzadeh Sensei looked to be in extreme pain when Obata Sensei was smiling the most.

All of us at the seminar learned a lot from Obata Toshihiro Kaiso's visit. Thanks again to Jim Alvarez Sensei, and we all look forward to next year's Bay Area seminar at Margarita Jimenez-Hall Sensei's dojo in Morgan Hill.

# Obata Sensei's visit to Livermore

By Sequoia Patterson – Suigetsukan – Oakland, CA

All through the drive from Berkeley to Livermore, I could feel the excitement growing. I was on my way to attend the open Shinkendo seminar, taught by Obata Sensei, and hosted by Alvarez Sensei. Arriving at the school where the seminar was to be held, I could spot fellow Shinkendoka socializing in the courtyard, and anticipation grew. After registration was taken care of, I was able to sneak a peak in the open doors to the advanced Shinkendo course that was being taught before the open Shinkendo started. Seeing the speed at which they were moving, and the intensity of their workout, I knew that I had a challenging day ahead of me. When the advanced seminar ended and we were allowed to go in, I could feel the energy in the room. Speaking with some of the advanced students, I was able to get a glimpse of how tired they were, and I was actually looking forward to being blissfully worn out as they were.

I have had the fortune of attending one seminar with Obata Sensei previous to this one, last year in Oakland, so I was a little bit prepared for the speed at which the information was going to be coming at me, but I was still surprised at the intensity of the instruction. It took complete concentration for me to keep up and understand everything that was going on. By the time we had our first short pause, I couldn't believe how quickly time had passed. But soon enough the break was over and we were back at it. With my mind focused on what I



was being taught, and attempting to absorb as much knowledge as I possibly could, I hardly noticed how sore and tired my feet had become, or how late in the afternoon it was. All too soon the day's seminar was over.

That night we had a delicious banquet at the Chevy's in Livermore. Many of us met up at the restaurant, to share our experiences from the day and how we felt. My answer to the question of how I felt about the seminar was always, that I was tired and worn out, but I loved every second of it. Experiencing all the techniques what we learned, being surrounded by countless other Shinkendoka, all of whom are wonderful people who have passion for Shinkendo just as I do, and on top of that to have the honor of being taught by Obata Sensei, means I couldn't have asked for a better day. At dinner I once again marveled at the room full of people, coming from so many different backgrounds and all over the Bay area, brought together by a common passion. After dinner Obata Sensei awarded rank to everyone who had passed their test recently. I was very proud of old friends from my dojo, and new friends I had just met that day, when they received their Menjo. It was also a treat to hear Obata Sensei speak of his visions for the Shinkendo community in years to come. On the drive back to Berkeley that night all we could talk about was Shinkendo and training, I couldn't help looking forward to continuing the next day.

Sunday brought another intense day of training in Livermore. Luckily the weather cooled off a bit, because it seemed we were working even harder than we had on Saturday. I welcomed reviewing techniques from Saturday's seminar, because I definitely needed to work on it all again. Again the time flew by so quickly that, when Obata Sensei bowed us out, I could not believe that it was already over. Though the rest was welcome, I was a bit sad that this great weekend was drawing to a close. I had learned so much, and spent time around so many wonderful people that I wished the seminar could continue for many more days.

I would like to thank Alvarez Sensei for hosting so many of us eager students in Livermore, I would also like to thank every one that made the Seminar possible, and a very special thank you to Obata Sensei for traveling here to teach us, and for developing such a wonderful Shinkendo community for us all to train in.

# IOWA SAMURAI ARTS SEMINAR: Midwest Shinkendoka Sharpen Skills.

By Randy Newburg – Moline, IL

On June 10, 11 and 12, students from dojos in Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska were given the opportunity (privilege) to train with Obata Kaiso in Shinkendo, Bojutsu and Toyama Ryu. And, as those of you who have taken part in one of Kaiso's seminars know, there was much to review, many fine points of technique to correct, and an abundant amount of new information to try to assimilate. I don't know about the rest of you, but *my* brain usually gets full somewhere around the middle of the second day. After that, I simply try to keep up with the rest of the group in the fervent hope that I will "get it" someday in the not too distant future. When this overwhelming feeling of confusion strikes, I often resort to my secondary martial arts skill — Video-do. This provides my brain (and body) with needed moments of rest while also affording me the chance to observe the techniques (and Kaiso) from a different perspective. I get a certain sense of satisfaction in knowing that, if my Video-do is focused and pure (especially focused), my efforts will bring understanding not only to me, but also to other students who view it. Repeatedly, at least in my case.



By now—if you haven't a long time ago—you are probably asking yourself, "Just who is this guy and why am I still reading his article?" I can only answer the first part. I am a student of David Birdsell Shihan of the Midwest & Northeast Shinkendo HQ in Moline, Illinois. My wife, Michelle Hammond, and I first saw Kaiso at a seminar in Iowa in 1994. Our initial curiosity took root and in November of 1996, at my wife's suggestion, we signed up for a continuing education class through our local community college under the instruction of Birdsell Shihan. I was already (only) 46 years old at the time—she was younger but wiser...and better looking...and funnier...and smarter...you get the picture. Neither of us had martial arts training. We were complete rookies and unsure of how long we would pursue our training in Shinkendo. After nearly nine years, many seminars, and the help and support of numerous sensei along the way, we are still studying and trying to sharpen our skills so that we can remain worthy representatives of

the International Shinkendo Federation. And I'm not ashamed to admit that, in Kaiso's presence, I *stiiii* feel like a rookie sometimes.

But enough about me. My goal here is to write an article for the bi-monthly ISF newsletter and submit it before the June 22<sup>nd</sup> deadline. I hope I make it. If you're reading this in late June or early July, I did. (Editor Mike's note: you indeed made it, Mr. Newburg, thanks for taking that tentative deadline so seriously ☺)

At this point, let me thank Kaiso Obata for his willingness to journey to the heartland and share his skill and wisdom, Senseis Dan and Jillian Coglan of the Jade Tiger Dojo in North Liberty, Iowa, for their willingness to take on the challenge of bringing Kaiso to our region, and to the students of the Jade Tiger Dojo for their willingness to do the many tasks required to help make the seminar a success.

Those of you who have attended one of Kaiso's seminars are familiar with the basic format and I'm not going to give a session-by-session description of all that went on. Suffice it to say that many students participated in Bojutsu, Shinkendo and Toyama Ryu training over the course of the 3 days. Children's classes were also held in Aikido and Shinkendo. Kaiso patiently helped us iron out the wrinkles in our suburi, kata and tachiuchi, stressing the importance of striving for correct, basic technique before worrying about speed and power. Good kamae is essential and can be improved by careful observation of either yourself in a mirror, or by another who is observing your technique. Help your partner! And remember: Practice makes PERMANENT, not

necessarily perfect. Practicing bad technique only makes it harder to correct down the road. Those students who were called upon to help demonstrate tachiuchi—particularly Trevis Crane, Shaun Daly and Koichi Mikami—have our gratitude for sharing their skills.

Kaiso also stressed the need for safety when performing tachiuchi. He gave instruction on striking and blocking properly and again recommended using a tsuba on bokuto—including waxwoods—to protect hands and fingers. Some of the instructors were fortunate enough to be given instruction in two sword techniques for the first time. After several hours, muscles I didn't know I had were screaming for mercy. I think that it was at this point that I truly and deeply realized that I have barely scratched the surface of the profound skill and knowledge that Kaiso possesses in so many areas. It was a beautifully humbling experience.

Senior instructors were invited to attend dinner with Kaiso at the Three Samurai restaurant. Good food, good friends, sore deltoids, and flipping/flashing/flying spatulas. Good times. The next evening, all students and their families were invited to attend a dinner and menu presentation at the Peking Buffet. We were tired, but it was a good kind of tired, and our stomachs were full.

On Sunday morning, Marcus Mikami, my six-year old godchild and I happily came upon Kaiso in the breakfast area and were invited to sit at his table, since the room was crowded. There were only 2 chairs, so Kaiso sat briefly away from the table and drank his coffee but rejoined us after several minutes. Marcus ate his Rice Crispies while Kaiso and I talked about his family, his bringing of bad luck to the Yankees and Mets when he was in New York, and other stories of his travels. Again, I was impressed with the genuine goodness and friendliness of the man. I count myself fortunate to be able to occasionally spend some non-Shinkendo time with Kaiso during these seminars.

Sunday's training focused on Ashisabaki and Tachiuchi, with the added bonus of Kaiso's thoughts on the 5 "iku's" (described in the above "Sensei's Corner"). He stressed the importance of keeping these 5 aspects in balance. Kaiso made it especially clear that many people could improve the quality of their health and lives by making wiser and healthier choices, not just in the areas of Tai-iku and Shoku-iku, but in all 5 areas. His example of a well-known (and recently retired) boxer whose physical abilities were unquestionably superior, but whose education, manners and wisdom were at a very low level brought Kaiso's point home with simple clarity.

This was my day for Video-do, and another opportunity to converse with Kaiso while the other students were practicing tachiuchi. At one point he expressed sincerely that he felt "lucky" that the vast majority of his students seem to NOT use alcohol to excess and generally behave in a way that reflects positively on Shinkendo. My immediate response was to share my belief that "luck" has little to do with it. The quality of his leadership, the depth of his knowledge, the dynamic beauty of his teaching, and the loyalty that he engenders in his students—from the most senior instructors to the most recent Ichimonji—tend to attract people who have a more serious attitude and who wish to make their lives and the world around them a better place to be.

In my professional life, I am a teacher. I have worked with at-risk teens—kids who have been kicked out of their home schools because of behavioral and emotional problems—for over 20 years. The philosophy and practice of Shinkendo have stood me in good stead for the past 9 of those years. But that's a whole different article. Yet I never cease to marvel at Kaiso's teaching ability, for which I have nothing but admiration and respect. I know I can never come close to Kaiso Obata's level of skill and dedication. But I can certainly enjoy every moment of my journey along the Shinkendo path.



Thanks again to Kaiso, along with Dan and Jillian Coglan Sensei and the Jade Tiger Dojo for providing us the opportunity to train, learn and grow. Thanks to Birdsell Shihan for bringing Shinkendo to the Midwest. And thanks to my wife, Michelle, for suggesting we take the first step on this journey. *Jinsei Shinkendo*

# USC Shinkendo

## Relay for Life - Cancer Fundraiser Demo

By Michael Shu – Honbu Student/USC Shinkendo Instructor

Photographs by Shatto Light and Keiko Yoshimi



A little over a year ago, I was looking at the University of Southern California's "Martial Arts Offered" pamphlet and saw the silhouette of a kenshi wielding a bokuto in a familiar kenjutsu kamae (same much abused pamphlet on left). But the ironic thing was that no swordsmanship classes were even listed! There was a Kendo club on campus but they had nothing to do with the photo, so I thought to myself "I should give that pamphlet picture a 'raison d'etre'!" And thus, with permission from Obata Kaiso, I began my mission to create a Shinkendo organization on the USC campus.

Much red tape and space-finding hardship later, USC Shinkendo has a healthy following. In Mid-February of this year (during our second semester of existence), I was contacted by Danielle Harty – entertainment chair for the Relay for Life organization. In an e-mail she outlined that there

was a fundraiser for cancer patients coming up in April and that she was interested in having our group perform. I was scratching my head about how appropriate a demonstration of swinging around instruments of death would be appropriate for a cancer patient fundraiser. But later I found out that one of USC Shinkendo's students, Karen Suri, in fact recommended our group to Miss Harty for the event. Honoring Karen's considerate referral, I told Miss Harty to sign us up and we were on for April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We were given a 1 hour slot and Obata Kaiso recommended that I invite all nearby dojo to come perform. Due to the length, I thought it would be fitting to perform tameshigiri. So with the help of Miss Harty, we were given clearance by USC's Department of Public Safety to have Honbu Shinkendoka bring their shinken for tameshigiri – a first for USC.

As it turned out the April 23<sup>rd</sup> date was smack at the beginning of "hell week" for students finishing up final projects, so only two USC Shinkendo students (Jeff Rich and Garret Sergeant) were able to sign up to help out at the demo. Honbu students were very helpful with filling up the needed crew, with James Huang, Stephen Fast, Dr. Bob Nosaka, Chuck Light, and Keiko Yoshimi helping out that day. Oh, and Dr. Nosaka's young son, Allen, helped out too.

Lack of convenient parking made carrying target stands and tatami-omote great exercise. Since the "stage" was rather tiny, we had to improvise by cordoning off a section of the grass in front. Nostalgia struck me as USC Shinkendo was forced to use the same grass field for its first few meetings in the dark before we secured a regular space.



Enough with the exposition! On with the pictures!!!



"Oh, nothing! I was just gonna take it for a walk"



Chuck's happy face



Mike's evil face





Crouching Ronin, Hidden Samurai



"And now! I shall personally perform the Shinkendo remix of 'In Da Club'."