

News from Honbu



ISF/AB/KTRR

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Sensei's Corner

Three years ago, one of our instructors went to Singapore for a business trip. This year, Sensei Lonnie Oaks opened a Shinkendo/Aikibuken branch in Singapore. Sensei Oaks plans on living in Singapore after he retires, so the location must be really nice and I am looking forward to going there for a seminar. Another student is planning on teaching in Korea in the future, and one of our own Honbu students is planning on teaching in Taiwan in the future. Shinkendo is spreading and becoming more international.

Our Bojutsu is a combination of Nipponden and Okinawaden. Nipponden is the bases of long weaponry such as Yari and Naginata. If I had a Bojutsu class I could teach more Bo, however the Aikido class is too short to teach all the Bo techniques. In some of my branches, instructors are asking whether we give Bo ranks. The answer is: Yes! If you interested, please let me know.

If you do not request and take tests for Shinkendo, Aikibujutsu, and/or Toyama Ryu, your rank will not go up. If senior students do not test for ranks, the rank of the Jr. student will end up being higher. This is fine if the student does not care about their rank. However, if the student wishes to teach one day, promotions for high ranks will not be given out even if it is not requested. All instructors should submit their own rank recommendations because I may forget. The Honbu will decide ranks by the instructor's years of experience, technique, age, and any other situations.

Please look at the Shinkendo website for the Federation announcements. An instructor should never lead their students into a puddle (Wadachi) for selfish or personal reasons. We call fish that leave a big stream and end up in a small puddle of water the Wadachi no Sakana (fish of the puddle). The puddle will eventually dry.

Also...

I used the air plane "Jet Blue" to go to the Georgia seminar, it was closer, the service was good, and very convenient. I would like to use Jet Blue in Long Beach instead of LAX.

Bushido in Shinkendo.

~Toshishiro Obata

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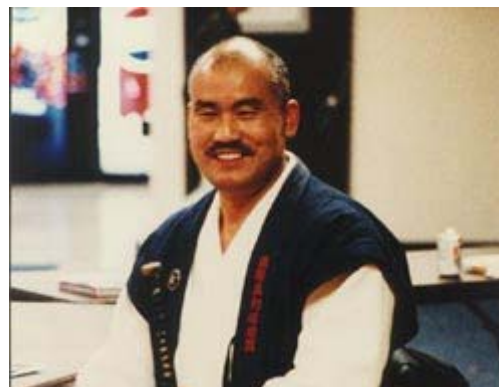
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Christian Woerl writes about the history of the Shinkendo-Club Katana in Fuerstenfeldbruck/Germany

In the beginning there was chaos.

But there was no Shinkendo-Dojo in the Munich-district/Germany. It was Sensei Erich Kirchgessner, a senior 5th dan jiu-jitsu instructor, who asked Peter Felber to join some "Shinkendo"-Seminars. Peter became enthusiastic about Shinkendo and, as Christian Woerl came along, they founded a small club with a few members. By the way, Sensei Kirchgessner is not active and graduated at the moment, but he is our honorary member.

At the 2001 Shinkendo-Seminar in Switzerland we had the opportunity to meet Obata Kaiso and Sensei Brent Hire for the first time. This was really exciting. After the Seminar, Peter Felber and Christian Woerl received their Kenshuin-Licence from Kaiso and joined the ISF. In December 2001 we met the German Chief Instructor, Sensei Hans-Joachim Deuser.

We have been able to improve our technical skills under Hans-Joachim's supervision and so the number of our members grew steadily. Our regular visits with Sensei Hans-Joachim and our mutual invitations are still helping us to develop our skills and philosophical understanding.

In the beginning there was only one dojo in Fuerstenfeldbruck, about 30 km in the west of the bavarian capital Munich. Bavaria is the largest state in South-Germany. It is the neighbour-state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, where Sensei Hans-Joachim's Dojo (and the German Branch) is located. In 2002 we were able to start the second dojo in Munich at the local police-school.

In December 2002 Stephan Neumann received his Kenshuin-licence. Because of the increasing number of members we needed another instructor, and Stephan was the perfect choice. In the meantime Peter and Christian received their Shidion-Licence.

Today, the Shinkendo-Club Katana has nearly 40 members in 2 dojos, and provides Shinkendo-training twice a week in Munich and Fuerstenfeldbruck each.

From September 2003 on, we have the opportunity to use the training hall of the Bavarian Higscool for Police-Officers in Fuerstenfeldbruck. Another important step, because it is really difficult to get a place for practice here .

In October 2003 we will visit the Swiss Shinkendo-Seminar, hosted by Sensei Josef Sturm, with some of our students. For the most of them it will be the first seminar with Obata Kaiso.

In 2004 we are planning a seminar with Kaiso here in Munich, also in autumn.

We are looking forward to visiting the famous "Oktoberfest" with the present instruktors.

Below: The Mod Squad of Germany, a.k.a. instructors of Shinkendo-Club Katana (from left to right): Christian Woerl, Peter Felber, Stephan Neumann



Seminar Survival Guide

It has been many years since my first Seminar with Kaiso Obata where I was introduced to the concept of the weekend long seminar. My previous training involved a traditionally taught style of open hand and normally consisted of about 3 or 4 classes a week which were pretty rigorous, 1 or 1 ½ hour sessions. It prepared me little for the kind of training that is done during one of Kaiso's seminars. After the first hour, I was looking for the drink machine and praying for mass bokuto theft. It seemed as if the clock never moved..... and it didn't..... it was broken. I crawled back to my dorm room that night and wondered how I would survive 3 more days. It has been some years since my first seminar and I now look forward to every seminar with excitement. This is due partially to an appreciation I have gained for the opportunity to train with Kaiso whenever possible, but also to some best practices I have learned that help me maximize the experience and attain a vacation like state of mind.

1. Take some vacation time



Take the day before the seminar off. This serves as a buffer to allow yourself to mentally prepare for the seminar. Resting mentally is just as important, and sometimes harder than resting physically. This is especially important if you are traveling long distances to attend seminars. Always travel the day before the seminar and spend at least half a day lounging before the seminar so you can be relaxed going into it.

2. Carbo Load

The day before the seminar, load up on energy foods such as pastas, energy bars and the like. During the seminars, continue eating those energy foods. If your energy stores/levels are up, you will find it easier to continue training in spite of physical fatigue and abrasions, and will help you retain information and maintain technical poise.

3. Train for the moment



Mentally, it is important that you not worry about when the session is going to end or when the next will begin. Save for being on time, forget time. Focus on the current technique, without concern for what you have done in a prior session or what you will be doing in the next. In doing so, you will find it easy to focus and continue training through physical fatigue.

4. Fellowship

During breaks or meal time, fellowship with old and new faces. It is a pleasure for me to see familiar faces, to catch up on events, or meet new faces and share experiences. It is heartening to make new friends and work together to improve. As Kaiso has stated, there is a friendship ring that is to be extended in Shinkendo. It is what truly binds us all together in our art and enhances our personal journeys in Shinkendo.

5. Chill out after!



When the training is done for the day, lounge hard. It seems to go without saying that you will roll over and crash after a hard workout so don't make plans after the seminar day save for eating and possibly flipping channels. You will find the next days training will be easier if you maintain that vacation state of mind. Errands can wait.

Using these guidelines I have found it pleasurable and easy to participate in seminars regardless of the physical the wear and tear. Most of all, I can retain more information during and after the seminar. I hope these suggestions help you do the same as well

Nayef Z. Smith
Japanese Swordsmanship of Gwinnett



The Twofold Way of Pen and Sword

By Victoria Van Fleet

I once had the opportunity to stroll along the outermost edge of western civilization, the boardwalk between Venice Beach and Santa Monica, with Obata Kaiso. It was my first time with Kaiso outside of the context of the dojo---WAY outside---and I was amused to see that he did not appear out of place in his hadori. He walked slow and casual, lingering over the paintings and drawings sold by the street artists with sincerity rarely afforded them by the thousands of passersby. Certainly, I was too cool to have ever paid them any mind during the hundred days I wandered there. Prior to moving to Little Tokyo, I spent several months on that beach and became so familiar with the landscape that it fatigued me, yet he was *interested*, taking in everything: the music, the performers, the artists, the seascape, were equals. I was beginning realize that Kaiso, in addition to being a master of his art, was also a respectful patron of others.

We passed by a caricature artist. Among his portraits, John Lennon was rendered in thick, chalky psychedelics. "The day that I left Japan to come the United States was the same day that John Lennon was shot and killed." His statement was a little off balancing. A faint image of a young, western suited Obata at an airport flickered momentarily past the samurai standing next to me in a weird juxtaposition. I have never seen him in western clothing, although, I have caught him wearing a Shinkendo t-shirt under his hadori. He is so unmodish, that it is jarringly difficult to assimilate him into the time/space of pop culture. To me, he is a throwback to another era *at least Meiji*.

Kaiso's stories, at least those to which I have been privy, belong to another time. He touches only very lightly on current events. The most contemporary of those stories are of the sorted perils of jidai-geki movie production or his regular trips abroad to teach. However, here, on the edge of the world, where one can be both facing west and looking east, he was shifting right into the moment. Over a tuna melt and a beer, he spoke of the more modern duties of a samurai, like walking the family dog. The Obata dog was preyed upon by other dogs in the neighborhood, so Kaiso had taken to carrying a bokuto when they went out for their walks. *Obata Toshishiro is yojimbo for a DOG!!!!* He shook his head, eyes closed for a moment and then folded his arms in something like...reticence? It was a superbly dry, comic delivery. He is a man-out-of-time who has a remarkable sense of humor regarding his predicament.

I know that the arts of war are but a part of the samurai's life, that samurai pursued various artistic and cultural interests with diligence, however, I never gave it serious attention before my walk with Kaiso. I deliberately neglected Musashi's "the warrior's way is the twofold Way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both," on a personal bias, reasoning that the physicality of martial arts training was entirely opposed to the inert drag of sitting at a computer, writing about what one should rather be doing. Even so, Kaiso is an author in a language which he is neither fond of, nor adept. As his student, I had to consider his example, looking deeper into the artistic and literary culture of the samurai:

"The Japanese were a literate people and the literary culture of the samurai was highly developed. The greatest nobles of Japan, those who resided at the court of the emperor, did not seek military reputation at all, but strove for literary glory. Their example set the tone for the samurai, who commonly wanted to be known both as swordsmen and poets. The greatest warriors of feudal Japan were therefore also men of the mind, the spirit and the cultivated senses."---John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*

Therefore, writing, it could be said, is indicative of maturity and refinement in the samurai warrior. Interesting that the average man struggles to put his words into action, being all talk, he is not what he says. For a warrior, the challenge is reversed. We struggle to put our actions into words, to articulate that which we are. Knowledge and experience is the precursor of writing. *Kaiso did not write books about swordsmanship then decide to take up the sword and found a federation.*

Maybe this is where the distinction between average men and warriors is most evident. When the average man is literary and articulate, he is speaking in expectation, offering his hopes, dreams, and high ideals as facts; his words are, at best, a preface to action, promises that may never be kept. When a warrior is articulate, he is describing things as they exist, so his words have the momentum of experience and the substance of resolute commitment. On carefully chosen words, a samurai stakes his life.

The Twofold Way of Pen and Sword (cont.)

Our path is one that begins with action: we train in the arts of war; we learn by doing. At first, we are so occupied with learning the practical applications of these arts that our martial authorship is usually confined to kata sketches and the cataloging of clever techniques. Yet, in time, physical training *renders knowledge*. Like a pot of soup, we are stirred and cooked. Only when we have been tempered by experience are we capable of writing about it; only then do we begin to appreciate the importance of words in the life of a samurai and command them like tangible weapons. Someone, somewhere, once said that if a man trains in the arts of war, but doesn't also seek to expand himself by means of the cultural and literary arts, he is not a samurai; he is just a man who has learned to fight.

This is a bitter pill for me---more so than most---because I have struggled a lifetime with dyslexia. I usually refrain from admitting to the deficit, but I think that my example is appropriate to the moment and the context.

Reading, and to slightly lesser degree, writing, is so arduous for me, I almost never do it casually, for pleasure. I am strictly mercenary with my subject matter. The novels I have managed to wade through can be counted on a shameful few fingers. I made it through school on Cliff Notes and talented bull, choosing my professions accordingly. When Kaiso asked me to write something here, could he have known that I would have rather done anything but? A thousand suburi? Even so, I was compelled by his example: English is not Kaiso's preference--yet he writes for us. If he is willing to stretch himself that far, surely I can take up the pen for a much shorter distance.

That being said, how is it that a swordsman would approach such an abstract opponent? Maybe, my deficit holds a secret advantage. With such crummy resources, I have no choice but to rally everything that I have for the task, my entire attention. My commitment has to be utterly resolute if I am going to see completion. For me, it is no exaggeration to say that writing is an act of war. Only with that attitude can I find the fortitude to engage it, to hone the skills sufficient to succeed with it and the ruthlessness to smite self-doubt and see it published. Epic metaphors aside, it seems reasonable that the samurai of another era might have agreed.

One of the most popular Zen works in the whole of Japan, the *Tsurezuregusa*, expresses the idea that what you do, or how well you do it is not as important as the mood of seriousness and depth of devotion given to the undertaking:

“In any field of endeavor, specialists are superior to dilettantes, *even if the specialists are not as talented as the dilettantes*. This is because specialists always take their art seriously, while talented dabblers have no need to.

This does not apply only to the arts. In all actions and attitudes, success is based on singleminded seriousness, while failure is based on whimsicality.”

I recall a series printed in this newsletter by Michael Shu. He described his experience as a novice at Honbu, without pretence of the self. Every Shinkendoka has stories of their sensei, their sempai, their individual journey. These strands constitute the fabric of our martial tradition. I think Michael's example was not to be concerned with being authoritative, that speaking from where we are or where we have been is a valuable contribution to our collective martial knowledge:

“It is best not to pretend to know all about everything. Even if they do know something, cultivated people do not advertise the fact. It is the bumpkin who talks as though he knows everything. When ignorant people make assessments of others and think that they know what others know, they cannot be right. For example, when someone who lacks true intelligence, but is good at chess sees intelligent people who are not good at chess, he thinks that they are not as smart as he is. When he sees people who are skilled at all sorts of arts but don't know how to play chess, he thinks he is better than they are. That is a big mistake.” ---*The Tsurezuregusa*.

Cultivated, articulate and artistic acts are integral to our tradition. When Kaiso asks you write something, consider the twofold Way of pen and sword and follow his example. Better yet, take it up on your own initiative, as our sempai Nathan Scott, Sammy Briggs, Matthew Lynch and Lou D'Agostino have in their many contributions here and to Shinkendo-I. Following their work has made my own path navigable, my thanks to them all.

~Victoria Van Fleet

A The Universe S-planed! by Jon King

Jon King's response to the newsletter's deadline phone call: "Ungh. Tired. Go bed now." Since "Dr Jon" is heavily involved in work projects, we're publishing answers to last month's questions from the NY dojo's Keith Comito! Way to go Keith! *uhm... can you guys please explain without all the 'math' stuff?*

1. How many Earths would fit in the Sun stacked side by side.

Keith: Well, the diameter of the Sun is roughly 100 times the diameter of the earth, so if we are merely stacking them end on end, 100 earths would fit. However, if you mean how many earths can fit inside the sun by total volume, then this number is much greater. Since the Sun and the Earth are both spheres we can calculate the volume of the sun $(4/3) \pi (r)^3$ and the volume of the earth; and then get the ratio between these two numbers to get our answers. I come up with around 1,264,090 earths. That's a lot of Earth! ;)

Dr. Jon: *You are approximately correct on both accounts. The interesting answer is in regards to 'side-by-side,' since this gives a sense of scale. Your second point takes account of how many earths would fit into the sun on a volume basis, however all of the volume would not necessary be used up since a group of spheres inside a larger sphere do not take up all of the volume as evident when we look at gumballs inside a gumball machine.*

2. How far apart would a grain of silt and a golf ball have to be in order to represent the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

Keith: First we need to determine the scale factor of our model. This would be the ratio of the sun to the golf ball, which should be the same as the ratio of the earth to the silt. Since I am too lazy to look this one up (and since it may slightly change depending on our golf ball and silt ;) , we shall call this ratio x . Now we take the distance between the earth and the sun, which is roughly 150 million kilometers and we divide it by our x . This is our answer.

Dr. Jon: *You are correct.*

3a. How fast are we traveling as the earth is rotating?

Keith: This question is slightly ambiguous, as it depends where on the earth we are talking about. For now, lets just assume we are at a point on the equator. The circumference of the earth is around 25,000 miles, and it completes one rotation in around 24 hours. So, the speed of the rotation is $25000/24 =$ around 1042 miles per hour. Now, if you want to know how fast you, specifically, are rotating you must multiply this value by the cosine of your latitude.

[Ed: the wha-? huh?]

Dr. Jon: *Right again, if we were at the poles our relative motion around the earth would be negligible since we are on the axis of rotation. It does depend on latitude. At the dojo I gave Obata Kaiso the velocity for both LA and Tokyo for purposes of comparison. Although I believe people might politically disagree if I told them Tokyo wasn't as fast a moving town as LA. :) Let's assume for the moment we are at the equator as you did. This way I won't get in trouble with world leaders. ;)*

3b. How fast are we traveling as the earth revolves around the sun?

Keith: Without getting into the nitty gritty details like sidereal periods and the like... the earth revolves at about 67,000 miles per hour around the sun.

Dr. Jon: *Very good.*

3c. How fast are we traveling as the sun (and thus earth) revolves around the galactic center?

Keith: This one I looked up ;) Its about 150 miles per second.

Dr. Jon: *Students should take careful note of how big the numbers get as you will see in a future column what fraction the speed of light this is. And the exact answer would be based on latitude, time of year, and epoc, but our galactic speed is far bigger than the others so the majority of our speed is in our sun revolving around the center of the galaxy.*

Bonus: How fast are we traveling as the galaxy itself moves.

Keith: Somewhere abouts 370 miles per second. So to get the total answer of how fast we are moving.... we would have to do some clever calculation involving all of the above values, with directional consideration and the like. I'll leave that calculation to you ;) *[Ed: Sure, we'll calculate that, right after we figure out how to fix the blinking 0's on the VCR.]*

Dr. Jon: *Mr. Comito, a tip of the hat to you sir on job well done. Look for future tidbits as the column progresses!*

Next issue, Dr. Jon answers: "Are donut holes really less calories?"

Who's a poet and you didn't know it? Find out here in the **haiku tokubetsu!** Thanks to all for participating - and for all who did not, who knows, maybe we'll do this again and you'll get a shot at poet warrior stardom! Any favorites, let us know at news@shinkendo.com!

O, Practice Practice
More Practice, Practice, Practice
O, Practice Practice
- Obata Kaiso

Shinkendo
Tenouchi hasujii
Tachi no sujii
- Tono Seido (籾 政道) , Honbu dojo

fragile new water
forms on cherry blossom leaves
Sun chases cool night
-Bill Reynolds - ATL Budokan

Anticipation
Kaiso is coming to teach
Grateful students train
- Kalila King - ATL Budokan

Koyu Junikun
Study also Hachi-Do
Life is Shinkendo.
- Matthew Lynch - Mashuu Dojo

After sunset only
the promised lightless world. Clouds
drift in their own ashes.
- Anonymous

Destiny In Life
Floating Like Leaves In A Stream
Shinkendo We Meet
- Tosh Daley - Arizona Shaolin Kenpo dojo

Loose off geta
Undo the last kimono
Sun blinds the eye
- Fred East - Somerset Budokai - UK

"See the glint of steel
Dawn's light glares sharp in my hands
Pray for swift noto
- Mark Sears, Atlanta Budokan

...and a funny one from Matthew Lynch:

Sparring with Nathan,
My bokken hits my forehead.
Learn to block harder.



The way to a man's heart..... is through his ribs. – proverb by Fred East, Somerset Budokai, UK