

# Samurai News from Honbu



## Busy Kaiso



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### Sensei's Corner

#### Congratulations Mike Sensei!

By Toshishiro Obata

Last weekend (May 28-31) was the Oakland seminar. I have flown approximately 100 times, but this was the first time I flew with my wife, Michiyo. Even when we first came to America, we flew on different planes.

Mike Sensei started training with me January of 89' at the Boyle Heights and Sawtelle dojo. He was very serious and attended every class. It has been 13 years since he moved to Oakland. I understand moving to a new place is very hard, but he has continued to teach and dedicate his life to martial arts. I would like to congratulate Mike Esmailzadeh Sensei for the recent purchase of his own dojo. The dojo is already finished, but there are still some areas that need more construction work.

It is wonderful that he has his own dojo. All the students there were very happy about it and everyone is helping with the construction. The seminar consisted of morning sessions and afternoon sessions for Shinkendo and Aikido. Shinkendo instructors were drilled in Shinkendo *NitoKen* for three days. When I observed the Aikido training, it felt very similar to the atmosphere of the Yoshinkan Aikido dojo that I attended long ago. In the afternoon, we practiced at the YWCA where 37 students attended Saturday and 27 students attended Sunday.

Mike Sensei has very dedicated students who

always attend my seminars, including Jim Alvarez, Margarita Jimenez-Hall, Scott Cornelison, Stacey Gauny, and Lillian Bloom. Dojo instructors Rebecca Wong, Gina Rossi, Jorin Bukosky, and other dojo students took care of me and my family. I would also like to thank Mike Sensei, Jorin, and Rebecca for showing us around San Francisco. We visited the Japanese Garden, Alcatraz Island, and saw the Golden Gate Bridge. Thank you Suigetsukan members, and congratulations on your own dojo.



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Photos Taken By Gabriel Koneta – Honbu Dojo



## From the Newsroom

By Michael Shu

I'll go ahead and follow James's trend:

James and I are both students at the moment and due to our schedules we have very little time to slap together a worthwhile newsletter.

In my busy schedule, I forgot to send the Token Kai photos over to James so I must be the one to apologize for the picture-less article in April. How can one simply imagine what some of these beautiful swords look like? So I give you photos of what got most of us started in Shinkendo: 3 foot long shiny sharp and pointy things!

Even better, we get a treat from Gabriel Koneta of the Honbu Aikido class. He took some nice pictures of Obata Kaiso doing some really cool cutting! I can't believe I missed it!

The past month or so has been *very* busy for Obata Kaiso. Traveling from dojo to dojo all around the world would totally wipe me out, especially since there's only a week or sometimes just a few days for him to get ready for the next trip.

Whenever Obata Kaiso leaves for a seminar, there's sort of an empty nest syndrome. Classes aren't as packed and energy isn't as high as it could be. But we do our best to keep each other on our toes.

I must apologize that this issue came out really late. Not only was I busy but we had a problem of the newsletter being very... bare.

Students, even beginners, should not feel afraid to write a piece for the Honbu newsletter. Writing of your experiences training in your dojo will enlighten readers of what it's like in other dojo around the world.

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## Midwest Again Brings Rain to L.A.

By Stephen Bertsch – Yamakaze Dojo (Champaign, IL)

On April 1-3, 2004, David Fazio (from the Iwanami Dojo in Champaign, IL) and I traveled to the Honbu Dojo in Los Angeles to train with Obata Kaiso and the Honbu students.

David and I had to smile at each other as we were traveling in the taxi from the airport and the raindrops began to fall...This was my third trip to L.A., and each time it has rained upon my arrival! Kaiso says it only rains when I visit...At least this time we were greeted by a beautiful rainbow!

We arrived that Thursday just in time to make the regular Shinkendo class that evening.

Much thanks to all of the regular students for allowing us to step in and train with them...especially Masaji Saito Sensei and Michael Shu for their extra attention. The spirit of Shinkendo that makes one feel so at home when so far from home is heartfelt.

The rest of the weekend's keiko with Obata Kaiso was very rewarding as always. We can only try to pay back the effort Kaiso puts into helping us as students by trying to put into effect what he has taught us. Special thank you also to Mrs. Obata for all her kind help and hospitality, both on and off the tatami, and to Yoko Obata for her assistance and patience as well.

Jinsei Shinkendo !



# Photos from April's Token Kai Article

Pictures from Merlin Tolstyk

We missed out on the perdy pictures from last issue so here they are! Refer back to the April issue for the story behind these photos.



Merlin Tolstyk and Bill Reynolds



Some Fine Blades

Tsuba A 'Plenty



Some Fine Blades Part II



## The Talented Obata Kaiso

By Yumiko Matsuoka and Paul Couch – Shibuchō, Birmingham Dojo, Alabama



Kaiso arrived in Birmingham late afternoon of April 15. This year, our entertainment plan for Friday was shooting. Not with the matchlock (Tanegashima) we have done for past several years but with heavy-duty modern firearms. Friday morning, we visited Jefferson County Sheriff's Law Enforcement Training Center where Paul Couch Sensei serves as Director. Here Obata Kaiso and Yumi Sensei tried several firearms together including a Uzi machine gun and Glock machine pistol (both fully automatic), and various other pistols and rifles including AR15. All of the weapons are part of SWAT team armament. We expended nearly a thousand rounds of ammunition.

After the shooting, we visited Vulcan Park atop Red Mountain overlooking Birmingham city. The Vulcan is a 56-foot cast iron statue, the largest in the world. It was made in 1904 and entered in the Worlds Fair in St. Louis to represent and symbolize Birmingham iron & steel industry. Vulcan is the God of the Forge in Greek mythology. The statue was taken down 3 years ago for repair and recently returned atop its new perch. When Obata Sensei first visited Birmingham about 12 years ago, we took him to the park..

Evening instructor's class was held at the new Birmingham Dojo where we moved into just recently. It is still under construction but is twice the size of the old Dojo and has a high ceiling. The training itself was a bit of a surprise. Eight instructors from different Dojo in Alabama and Georgia were introduced to Ni-To-Ho (two sword techniques). Everyone struggled with controlling and coordinating with two swords which seem to work independently against our will. But it was fun and we are looking forward to learning more techniques.

On the following day, at the beginning of the clinic at UAB in Birmingham, Obata Sensei presented Menjo for Shihan and Ganko-sen to Sensei Yumi.





The curriculum for the clinic this time was designed basically for beginners (less than 6 months experience). When we looked at the list of registered students, we noticed many new comers. Obata Sensei, as skillful as usual, has instantly formulated his clinic plan so that not only senior students but also junior students can benefit and enjoy. For example, while junior students practiced these techniques, senior students worked with the same techniques to be incorporated into demonstration pattern. The demonstration pattern for Toyama-Ryu Battojutsu with two performers is one of the demonstration templates which Obata Sensei is trying to introduce and establish among branches. The following day, the training was repeated at the Athletic Club Northeast in Atlanta. Several students joined for dinner at Nakato

Japanese Restaurant. Food was excellent except for few chipped plates (yes we are picky).

