



News from Honbu



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Sensei's Corner

The Shinkendo seminar in Australia was from 4/11 to 4/18. Currently Sensei Howard Quick hosts seminars every two years. The weather was very nice. This year, we had 3 participants from Singapore. We also had two new students from Sydney. They had not gotten the chance to practice Tachiuchi, so I believed they really enjoyed the experience. I hope that one day Shinkendo will spread to Sydney.

On the 14th, we visited Joe Thambu's dojo. Joe is a Aikido Yoshinkan instructor in Australia. His new dojo is very nice, the ceiling is very high and the floor space is over 100 tatami. I hope that one day all our instructors can have nice dojos!

Sensei Howard flew back with me to Los Angeles where he is currently training (today is 4/23). He will fly with me to New York, where he will attend the seminar there.

The seminar was very nice, but the flight was VERY long. It took 18 1/2 hours on the flight there, and 16 1/2 hours on the flight back.

Please enjoy the pictures in this newsletter- I am very happy about the increasing activity and good spirit in our organization.

~Toshishiro Obata



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by Toshishiro Obata

I took my daughter with me to France from the 21st to the 28th of March. The main event was the martial arts demonstration. The demonstration had two rehearsals, and was televised live on Saturday night. The stadium held 17,000, and tickets were said to be sold out online. I believe there were 300 participants, about 70 or 80 different groups in all. In the second off the demonstration, 3 ancestors of the Samurai were introduced; this included myself, Mr. Aoyagi from the Shorinji Kempo, and Mr. Mochizuki from the Yoseikan. Shinkendo was performed after the Kendo, Kyokushinkan Karate, and Shorinji Kempo groups. Marimo and I demonstrated Nitoken, Bojutsu, and Aikibujutsu, afterwards I performed Tamesghiri. I would like to thank the French Shinkendo branch for all their help, those that held the Shinkendo nobori, and those that helped set up targets. Last year, I appeared on the cover of Karate Bushido Magazine, and had a television interview. This time, we also had photo shoots for Aikido Magazine and Karate Bushido, and a radio interview. I hope that these big martial arts demonstrations will be held in other countries in the future, hopefully in the US. My student Tony Cortina and I demonstrated at the same stadium 8 years ago.

The demonstration had participants from Japan, such as a Taido group and Yoshinkan Aikido. The Yoshinkan Aikido group was participated by Kancho Inoue Kyoichi, and four other students. As you all know, Yoshinkan is where I started out, and is my base. It has been 33 years since I've seen Inoue Sensei. I received good feedback from Inoue Sensei regarding the Nitoken cutting, Tameshigiri, and Aikido variations (where I flipped by daughter during a throw).

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France and LA enbu

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The French branch organized the Shinkendo seminar for Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday, with Aikibujutsu on Sunday following Shinkendo. On Monday, we visited Rouen and Normandie, mainly to visit a gentleman who does film stunts with horses. He demonstrated for me several different ways to right on the sword, depending on the different centuries.

On the 1st of April, the Honbu and Mashuu Branch demonstrated at the Santa Anita Park, Japan Day Festival. This even invites So ma Nomaioi, samurai descendents who rides horses, from the Fukushima prefecture in Japan. Our demonstration consisted of Shinkendo and Aikibujutsu. On the 2nd of April, the Honbu and Mashuu Brance demonstrated at the Sakua Matsuri in Pasadena (rosebowl). This demonstration also consisted of Shinkendo and Aikibujutsu. I would like to thank all the students who came our and participated on the 1st and 2nd.

Instructors, the new Shinkendo test guides and instructor surveys have been handed out. If you have not received them yet, please let me know immediately. If you have received them, please send me an e-mail letting me know.

The Aikido test guides and instructor surveys will be available soon.



Obata Kaiso and Yoko with the Paris Dojo



European Kangeiko 2006

By Michael Cetinić – Shinbukan Dojo Amsterdam, The Netherlands

On February 17th, 18th and 19th the annual European Kangeiko took place in Amsterdam. Preparations for the Kangeiko started well in advance. Everyone was in high spirits, for some it would be a seeing of old friends and for some people who started Shinkendo recently it would be a chance to experience for the first time what a family we have become. The opportunity to shake off the winter cold and start the New Year with an intense training was met with great zeal.

Personally I was looking forward to seeing Wayne Sensei from England and Walfried Sensei from Belgium again and to reminisce over our shared experiences and previous seminars.

The Kangeiko seminar itself was to be spread over three days. The first guests arrived on Thursday, which was a normal training day, so they were welcomed into our class and trained alongside of us. Friday was an extra training especially for our guests as they don't get the chance to train with Hire Sensei as often as we do.

The emphasis of the training and of the seminar as a whole was to be core/centre movement, which fell under the heading "back to basics". Guided by Brent Hire Sensei with his enthusiasm and a big smile, we worked on our centre movement. Evasive footwork, body movement but also attacking, everything had to be done from the centre with good balance.

Saturday continued with this theme; starting with taisabaki (body movement) and ashisabaki (footwork). Then we began an intense training in nitoken. Swinging two swords all afternoon will give any samurai a big appetite, so after training we all went to a restaurant to replenish our energy and mentally prepare for the next day in which we were to go all out.

Sunday culminated with all of us plus visitors from the other Dutch, German, Swiss, Belgium and UK dojo in the University Sport Center. Each location brought with it its own character; where during the previous days our modest dojo had given us a comfortable feeling, the big hall of the USC with all the participants gave a sense mass battle. I had the honor of leading the group in the warm-up and it was a huge thrill to hear the simultaneous counting and kiai answering mine. This was the promise of a great day full of hard training to come.

We started again with taisabaki (body movement) and ashisabaki (footwork) after which we combined them with sword drills (suburi). Putting everything together presented its own challenge. Before the seminar there were requests to have other Sensei also teach as guest instructors, as a complement to Hire Sensei's own instruction. This way, we had the opportunity to share different views on some of the same principles.

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Obata Kaiso and Yoko: a demonstration in Paris in front of more than 17,000 spectators



European Kangeiko 2006 (cont'd)

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Benefiting from the perspective Alec Sensei and Vendel Sensei had to offer made tackling the challenge of keeping your center whilst moving and swinging the sword easier. Just before lunch, Alec Sensei tested our progress and understanding of the center movement by having us do Goshiki Santen Ura.

The fantastic lunch was served to us by two lovely ladies, Natalie and Sanne.

Not only was the food wonderful but all of us sitting at one big table exchanging stories and reviewing technique added much to the already pleasant atmosphere. After lunch and a lot of tall stories, our bodies nourished and our spirits heartened, training continued.

We trained in Tachiuchi in addition to the taisabaki, trying to keep the centre movement while sparring. We were split up into two groups, one training under the guidance of Hire Sensei the other with Vendel Sensei.

Vendel Sensei had us do some advanced tachiuchi, like shiho, and was very thorough in explaining the principles of the centre movement and ma-ai within the technique. He made us work hard for it till the very end of the seminar giving us a sense of accomplishment.

We ended the training by making the customary group picture and had dinner afterwards.

Content with a whole day of training most of us met up in an Argentinean steakhouse, to cement new friendships and new memories.

Having tasted the enthusiasm and excitement of the seminar, ideas and suggestions for a new one were being made already. We had a fantastic time and we had the feeling of having had three seminars because every day had brought new people and a new atmosphere; but through all of it there remained the feeling of family.

Jinsei Shinkendo,
Michael Cetinić



by Trevis Crane

When I accepted a postdoctoral position with my current advisor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, it was contingent upon my willingness to go to Stanford for up to two months to make samples for use in our experiments and at the same time to learn the sample fabrication process so that I could then reproduce the process in house in Illinois. That was in August of 2005, and by February of 2006 it was time to go.

Naturally, in the intervening time I went online to the ISF website to find a local dojo, and I found that Mike Esmailzadeh Sensei was teaching out of the Suigetsukan Dojo in Oakland. I contacted him and got permission to come and train with him while I was out there, time permitting. Well, after looking at Google Maps and the Caltrain and BART websites, I figured that if I had the time I could make the (long) trek between Stanford and Oakland. So, as it turned out, I arrived in the Bay Area a few days before I had to start work, and that weekend also happened to correspond to the Suigetsukan Dojo's annual intensive training weekend.

Giving myself what I thought was plenty of time, I started from the house where I had rented a room and headed towards the Caltrain station that was two miles away. Two miles isn't much, unless you're walking (as I was that first weekend) with all my stuff. But when you're desperate for some training, you do what you have to. Then on Caltrain (the peninsula's commuter train) I had about a 30 minute ride, followed by another 50 minute ride on BART followed by an ~8 minute walk from the BART station to the dojo. Fortunately, on the way there everything connected well, so it only took about two hours to get to the dojo. Ah, the joy of public transportation!

I had some difficulty in first finding the right building, until I heard (somewhat distantly at first then louder as I approached) "EI, YAH, TOH" as Mike Sensei led his students through a series of suburi drills. I approached the only entrance I could find, and then timidly opened the door when, after looking through the side windows, I realized that I would be essentially walking into the mat space. Well, I thought, I hope he cuts me some slack for showing up late and disrupting class.

So I opened the door, glanced around and almost immediately met Mike Sensei for the first time. From that moment forward, I have been continually and repeatedly struck by (and am extremely appreciative of) how warm and completely welcoming he and his students have been. I dressed out as quickly as possible, room was found for me on the mat and I quickly relaxed as we proceeded with various Shinkendo drills.
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Training Adventures in Oakland (cont'd)

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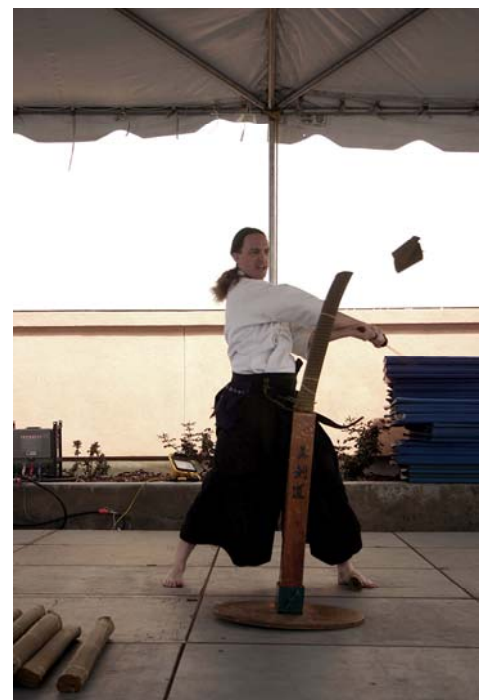
The rest of February proceeded in much the same fashion, though the bike I shipped to myself arrived and I figured out how to get from my place to the dojo without arriving late. After that first weekend, my days were spent working in the lab and looking forward to the long commute to Oakland if only to practice for an hour or so during the weekday classes or longer during the Saturday class. My return trip was often aided by Maren, one of Mike's advanced students who happened to live not so terribly far from Stanford that she was able to give me a ride for most of the way.

At the end of February, I returned to Illinois. At this point I have to digress and mention that between August of 2005 and February, my wife and I found out that she was pregnant with what will be our first child. So, I headed home at the end of February to spend a week with her and to be present for her first ultrasound in which we learned that we'd be having a daughter. The plan was originally to go back to Stanford for the rest of March, but due to various factors, it was decided that I would stay home for the month of March and head back to Stanford for the month of April.

Well, after a month of being home I didn't much relish the idea of going back to California for another month when my wife was getting bigger by the day, and I was able to regularly feel our daughter-to-be moving around doing empty-handed suburi (I'm certain that's what she was doing!) and generally keeping us distracted whenever it was time for bed. But the one thing I really did want to go back for was training with the wonderful folks at the Suigetsukan Dojo. Mike Sensei's insight into technique and depth and breadth of experience are humbling, and training with him is only bested by training with Obata Kaiso himself. But more important to my experience here (I'm still working at Stanford, as I write this) than the quality of training, is the quality of the people who I've had the pleasure and honor to work with while here.

I have to mention the names of those who in particular have contributed to my time here: Gina, Maren, Alex, Dave and Stacey, Fred, Jorin, Scott, Lillian, Rebecca, all the junior students who I had a chance to train with or teach, and, of course, Mike Sensei himself. In their various ways each of the individuals mentioned above made me feel truly welcome and a part of their dojo. The meaning of this, to me, is something I cannot adequately express in writing. If you're ever in the Bay Area, make it a point of visiting. These Shinkendoka exemplify the idea of Shinkendo as community, family and a way of life!

Trevis Crane
Iwanami Dojo
Champaign, IL





USC Shinkendo – Half-Time Show

By Michael Shu

I've been pretty busy as of late, and so I write for the Shinkendo newsletter as a non-editor, been a while since I've done that.

Interestingly enough, shortly after taking part in the Honbu Dojo's Kyokushin Karate Tournament halftime demo, USC Shinkendo was asked to participate in a halftime demo for USC Tae Kwon Do. Pho Pham of USC Tae Kwon Do knew me when he advised me in the formation of USC Shinkendo, and he was happy to have us demonstrate for the halftime.

Finding the participants was rather interesting since the tournament fell on the beginning of Spring Break for USC students. So we had participants Daniel Ford (who spent some time training at the Honbu) and newcomer Rafaela Luna-Pizano. For the rest, I came to the Honbu to ask for help.

I mentioned it to Obata Kaiso, and although I didn't realize it at that time, he was subtly jumping at the chance to help out in the demo any way he could. Soon he was helping me arrange the demo and volunteered Dr. Robert Nosaka, Stephen Fast, and Masaji Saito Sensei, to take part. Honestly, I was a bit overwhelmed by the help, but it was much appreciated.

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USC demo (cont'd)

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The tournament arena took place on the 10th floor of the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall in Downtown LA. It was the first time any of us had been in there and it was surprising to find a gymnasium with bleachers right outside the elevator on the 10th floor. Memories of my early years flooded me as I watched the Tae Kwon Do contestants pummel each other in their protection padded glory... good times.

Obata Kaiso acted as a mentor as we set up for the demo and guided us through every step of the way. We were introduced and went through our set of tanrenkata, basic and advanced tachi-uchi, nito-ken, and tameshigiri. Kaiso's presence and help with even the changing of the targets made it feel like we were going through drills in class, and helped ease the many eyes watching our performance.

Afterwards, I gave some concluding remarks and USC Tae Kwon Do surprised us by having a formal ceremony of giving us free t-shirts. Nice touch.

I would like to thank the students of USC Shinkendo and Honbu Dojo for making the demo a success. Special thanks to Obata Kaiso for spearheading the demo – it wouldn't have been as successful without him.

~ Michael Shu





Obata Kaiso with Samurai Armor at Santa Anita Park