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## USA SEIWA KAI NEWSLETTER

### Dedicated to Traditional Goju Ryu Karatedo ISSUE 2: October 2013

Current and previous issues of the USA Seiwa Kai Newsletter can be found  
online at [www.greatlakesseiwakai.com](http://www.greatlakesseiwakai.com)

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## A Note from the Editor's Desk



Seiwa Kai Family and Friends,

The *Seiwa Kai Newsletter* has become a victim of success.

When I first took on the task of editing this newsletter, my greatest fear was that we would not get enough submissions to make four quality issues per year. Now my fear is that with 26 pages of articles in this issue alone, people will not take the time to read all of the quality material that has been submitted. I even had to defer some of the submissions for this issue to the next issue because I did not want to have 35 pages of quality material in a single issue.

Consequently, after consulting with Shihan Vassie Naidoo, I have decided to make the *Seiwa Kai Newsletter* a bimonthly publication. In this manner, you will receive six instead of four issues per year.

Please keep sending articles to the *Seiwa Kai Newsletter*. Send us your dojo news and photos (promotions, seminars, tournament results, births, marriages, et cetera). In this manner, we will keep our Seiwa Kai family close to one another.

Sincerely,

*Mark Cramer*

# **Fujiwara Seiichi: President of Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo**

**Submitted by Johnpaul Williams**

**剛柔会 Fujiwara San of Omagari City**



***Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara***

*The following article was published in the Nitiniti Omagari - Akita Newspaper, in Northern Japan on October 31 2002. During the translation we discovered that the language of Omagari - Akita is slightly different than the language of Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto to which most Westerners are accustomed. The*

*language of the region is more pronounced, defined, and polite [if you can get more polite in Japanese?]. One might find a similar comparison between politeness in England which is quite formal and politeness in the Deep South of the United States which is more relaxed. The reason that we are bringing this up is because during the translation the Japanese writer had described Seiichi Fujiwara Sensei as, a god-like, figure.*

*We thought we were either reading the Kanji wrong, losing our minds, or just plain had the wrong article to start with. So we sent the article to Mrs. Lisa Azuma of Santa Monica for a translation. She returned to us a near exact translation to that we came up with [Thank you Mrs. Azuma!]. We feel it is both weird and wonderful that the most humble man who we have known for many years is being referred to as a god-like figure in his hometown. However, we should unequivocally assure our readers that Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara Sensei is without a doubt, not the type of individual to refer to himself in such a manner.*

*Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara Sensei was born in 1950, and has been an All Japan National Kata and Kumite Champion. He has earned the ranks of 8th Dan JKF Gojukai, 8th Dan Seiwakai Gojuryu Karatedo and 7th Dan Japan Karatedo Federation. Fujiwara Sensei is also a Director and Coach of the Akita Karatedo Federation Gojukai. He serves as a senior member of the Overseas Committee for the JKF Gojukai and is President of the Seiwa Kai International Goju Ryu Karatedo Association, one of the largest Gojuryu Karatedo Associations in the world. As of 2002, he had served for 15 years as a JKF Goju Kai Overseas Director.*



*He makes 3 to 4 trips each year to coach mainly in Europe and America. Currently his students number over 8,500 and in his home region, Omagari City, where he instructs students at the 7 branch dojos. He also instructs High School students at the Omagari Tachidake Gymnasium. Currently his Seiwakai Akita Omagari Dojo [the Gojuryu Karatedo Seiwakai Honbu Dojo] is located at 18-5 Wakatake-cho, Omagari-shi, Akita-ken, Japan.*

***(Left to Right: Mr. Vassie Naidoo Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara, and Mr. Leo Lipinski.)***

*Below are both the Japanese and English versions of the article:*

平成14年10月新聞掲載記事より

From October 2002 Newspaper article [Nitiniti Omagari - Akita Newspaper]

空手道「剛柔流」の最高峰8段に

Karatedo (Gojuryu) the highest rank 8th Dan

大曲市の藤原さん

Fujiwara San of Omagari City.

国内で20人、空手の「神さま」を祝おうと仲間が祝賀会の準備

One of only 20 people in Japan, a "god" of Karate, say his companions as they prepare for a celebration

(10月31日・木)

October 31st Thursday

空手道「剛柔流」の八段に昇段した藤原さん大曲市白金町の藤原聖一さん(52)＝大原旅館＝は剛柔流空手道の最高峰「八段」に昇格した。今年8月に全日本空手道連盟剛柔会本部主催の全国大会が長崎県佐世保市であった時、本部から八段の受審認可を受け、厳しい実戦実技と論文審査を受け、合格した。15人の受審者のうち、合格したのは藤原さんを含め2人だけ。剛柔流空手道で50代で「八段」の頂点に立ったのはこれまで2人しかいない。しかも八段の取得者は藤原さんを含め、全国でたった20人。昨年は流派にこだわらない全日本空手道連盟から「七段」の資格を認定されている。藤原さんの弟子や仲間は「空手道で八段と言えば神さまのようなもの」と喜び、藤原さんの昇段を祝う祝賀会の準備を進めている。



**Mr. Fujiwara instructing in Santa Monica, California, USA [November 2012]**

Fujiwara Seiichi age 52 [at the time this article was written in 2002] is the owner of Ohara Ryokan [traditional Japanese hotel] and has been promoted to the highest ranking of Goju Ryu Karatedo, 8th Dan. This August at the Japan Karatedo Federation Goju Kai Honbu Shinsa [promotion grading] Convention in Nagasaki, he received his 8th Dan certificate from the headquarters. Among the 15 applicants, Fujiwara

was one of 2 people who passed the exam to become eligible. Until this time there have been only 2 people in their 50's who have made it to 8th Dan in Goju Ryu Karatedo. Moreover, there have been only 20 people, including Fujiwara, in all of Japan to become 8th Dan. Last year, his 7th Dan ranking was acknowledged by the Japan Karatedo Federation. Fujiwara's pupils and peers explain "an 8th Dan in Karatedo is like a god!" as they prepare for Fujiwara's rank celebration party.

藤原さんは29日夜、空手指導のため滞在していたイギリス、スロバキア、オーストラリアから帰国したばかり。毎年2回はヨーロッパを中心に海外で指導をしている。八段の受審資格を得るには七段になって7年以上の経験が必要。藤原さんは1995年に「七段」に昇段した。しかし、経験を積んでも八段を受審するには本部からの推薦を受けなければならない。藤原さんの場合、海外での指導経験11年の実績が本部から高く評価された。



On the evening of October 29th, Fujiwara had just come back from instructing in England, Slovakia, and Australia. He travels overseas twice a year to instruct, primarily in Europe. One condition of attaining 8th Dan is that you must have been ranked 7th Dan for at least 7 years combined experience. Fujiwara attained 7th Dan in 1995, but even if one passes the examination, one must receive a nomination from headquarters [Honbu] in order to rise to 8th Dan. In Fujiwara's case, the 11 years he spent instructing overseas was highly appraised work by Honbu.

#### **Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara with his Hachi-Dan (8<sup>th</sup> Dan) certificate (2002)**

だが、本部から推薦があっても七段から八段への昇段は並大抵のものではない。審査員が見守る中、指定された「形」の演技を行い、仕掛けられた技をどう裁き、攻撃するか実戦実技を見せ、その技の解説、さらに空手と自分とのかかわりで得たものは何かなどをテーマにした論文も提出しなければならない。一回で合格するのはごくまれで、普通は4回から5回も挑戦してやっと八段の資格を得るのが普通。それを藤原さんは一回の審査で合格した。本部からは十数年ぶりの記録だと珍しがられたと言う。

However, even with a nomination from Honbu, the move in rank from 7th Dan to 8th Dan is not ordinary. While the examiners make their observations, one must perform the designated Kata

[form]. The examiners must make judgments based on the skills that have been demonstrated. One must also demonstrate actual fighting skills from within the Kata and present an explanation of the skills used. Finally, the candidate must compose a thesis with the theme of, for example "How I have personally benefited from Karatedo." Passing this examination the first attempt is extremely rare. Normally, it takes 4 or 5 attempts at the examination before one finally attains 8th Dan. Fujiwara passed with just one attempt. Honbu said that this broke a more than ten year record.

藤原さんは横手市出身。空手を始めたのは千葉商科大学に入った17歳の時から。それまでは陸上競技の選手だった。大学に空手部があるのを知って「格闘技を身につけ、強くなりたい」と入部した。一緒に入った仲間は80人もいた。ハードで厳しい練習にほとんどが根負けし、3カ月後に残ったのはわずか10人だった。しかし、練習が厳しくても上達するに従い、藤原さんは空手の面白さにはまった。

Fujiwara is originally from Yokote City [Akita Prefecture]. He began practicing Karate at the age 17 years old when he entered Chiba Commercial College. Before that he was a track and field athlete. Knowing that there was a Karate program at the University he joined thinking that by learning grappling skills [Martial Arts] he would become stronger. With him as many as 80 companions entered the Karate program together. The majority of the students in the program quit because of the harsh practice. Three months later there were only 10 people left. However, with the harsh practice Fujiwara not only improved but also became fixated on Karate.

大学を卒業すると同時に空手部の先輩が経営していた千葉県の建設会社に入社。そこに2年半勤務したが、剛柔会本部から声が掛かって大学空手部のコーチに就任。その時の藤原さんは三段だった。

After his graduations from the University, he joined a construction company in Chiba Prefecture which his Karate Sempai managed at the time. He worked there for two and a half years when the Goju Kai Hombu [headquarters] called upon him to become the coach of the University Karate Program. At that time, Mr. Seiichi Fujiwara was ranked as a 3rd Dan (Sandan).

そのころ藤原さんの実家では横手市から大曲市に移って旅館業を始めた。その両親から「旅館を手伝ってもらいたい」と声が掛かり、73年秋に大曲市へ帰った。旅館を手伝いながらも空手は忘れられず、翌年10月に若竹町に空手道場「誠和会」を創立させ、指導を始めた。現在はそのころの後輩が育って、秋田市や横手市、神岡町、中仙町など7支部の道場へと膨らんだ。藤原さんは現在はもっぱら市内の高校生を相手に市の武道館や若竹町の道場で空手の指導をしている。その間にヨーロッパを中心に海外指導に出かける。

It was around that time that Fujiwara's family moved to Omagari City from Yokote City and opened a Ryokan [Japanese style hotel] business. His parents told him: "We would like to have you help with the Ryokan", so he returned to Omagari City in the Fall of '73. Although he helped at the hotel, his Karate was not forgotten. In October of the following year, he opened a Seiwakai Dojo in Wakatake-cho and began coaching. As time passed, his Kohai [juniors and students] grew up and the single dojo expanded to 7 branch dojos including Akita-shi, Yokote-shi, Kamioka-cho and Nakasen-cho. Presently Fujiwara is exclusively in charge of the City wide High School Karate program which he coaches at the city gymnasium [Budokan] and at the Wakatake-cho Dojo. Additionally, he focuses his attention on instructing in Europe and coaching overseas.

藤原さんは話す。「小学生をはじめ空手を学びたいと言ってくる子どもたちは『ケンカに負けたくない。強くなりたい』と入ってくる。でも、空手はケンカに強くなるため学ぶものではない。子どもたちにはまずマナーを徹底的に指導し、技よりも人間を磨くことに努めている」と。空手はその技をむやみに使うと危険を伴う。剛柔流は「人に打たれず 人を打たず 事なきを基とする」がその精神基盤。「相手に嫌な思いをさせないために自分はどう生きるかが空手道の基本です」とも。

Fujiwara says "the children say they would like to learn Karate so that they will not be defeated in a fight," and they join because they want to become strong. However, Karate is not learned in order to become strong in fights. Mr. Fujiwara explains: "We coach manners to children first, thoroughly and exhaustively to polish them as humans." When Karate skill is used thoughtlessly it involves danger. Gojuryu is based on the concept that "you do not strike a person and you do not get struck by a person". This is the spirit of our style's foundation. "The basis of Karate is to live in such a manner that you do not earn the hateful thinking of your partner [opponent]."

藤原さんの指導を受けた小学生たちは4、5年生になると学校の部活にも入る子も多いが、空手を学んだ多くの子どもたちはその部のキャプテンなどリーダーに推薦されるのが多いと言う。藤原さんが育てた弟子は1000人近い。4年前からは剛柔会本部の8人の指導委員としても活躍している。今でも空手をやる時の白い「道着（どうぎ）」を着け、道場で毎日、体を動かす。「道着を着けて体を動かさないと不安になるんです」と藤原さん。その柔和な笑顔、ソフトな口ぶりからは空手の「神さま」と称される厳かさは少しも感じさせない。

Among the elementary school students who receive Fujiwara's coaching, many of them go on to join their school's Karate teams when they enter 4th or 5th grade. Consequently, many of these children become leaders or captains of their teams. The number of pupils that Mr. Fujiwara has raised is close to 1000. He has also been an active member of the Goju Kai Honbu 8-person steering committee for the past four years [1998]. He still puts on his white karate gi when he

does Karate, goes to the dojo every day, and gets his body moving. I become uneasy if I don't put on my karate gi and move my body" says Fujiwara. With his gentle smile and his soft way of speaking, he gave no hint of being the majestic one who is loftily praised as a "god" of Karate.

今月15日から29日まで海外で指導してきた藤原さんは「海外の剛柔会のメンバーは7500人を超えた。ヨーロッパ本部長とも話したが、世界中に仲間がいるので、東京にその仲間が集まれる施設を作りたいと話した。それがこれからの夢です」と藤原さん。海外に出張しても「言葉」は心配ない。留学した際に空手を学んだ現地の人たちが通訳を買って出るからだ。「外国語を覚えると、その国の習慣に巻き込まれ、妥協してしまうんです。あえて覚えられないことにしています」と藤原さんは笑った。11月23日には市内のエンパイヤホテルで藤原さんの昇段を祝う「祝賀会」が仲間とその弟子の主催で開かれる。



**Mr. Fujiwara demonstrating bunkai (a.k.a. someone gets thrown again.)**

Fujiwara, who was instructing overseas from the 15th to the 29th of this month [Oct. 2002], says "There are more than 7,500 Goju Kai members overseas. I spoke with the head of Europe's Headquarters [Mr. Leo Lipinski Sensei] and since we have peers all over the

world, we would like to make some facility in Tokyo where these peers can come together. That is my dream for the future.

Even when he is traveling internationally, he does not worry about language. There is usually a local person who studied Karate as an exchange student and can help out translating. "Once you start learning a country's language, you get wrapped up in that country's customs and your purpose for being there then becomes compromised. So I don't try to learn the language," laughs Fujiwara.

On November 23rd [2002] at the city's Empire Hotel, Fujiwara's rank celebration party will be held sponsored by his peers and students.

# USA SEIWA KAI in OMAGARI, JAPAN 2013

By Des Tuck



L to R: Des Tuck, Kevin Moskie, Johnpaul Williams, Jim Pounds, Leo Lipinski, Ilya Gutkin, Seiichi Fujiwara, Vassie Naidoo, Alyssa Naidoo, Branch Shubin

On the **First Day of Training**, the learning curve is pretty steep. It is not so much learning new things, but re-learning things I'd forgotten or stopped doing. The consistency required in karate is only attainable with a lot of training. I only train 3 times a week which is barely enough to keep my head above water. Ideally at least 5 times a week is optimal and more if possible. We did some rigorous basic movement training in the morning and then did some training in pairs which was actually quite brutal. The net result was that I sustained a bruised wrist

The afternoon training was a bit more sedate, with kata (forms) practice that was strenuous but not damaging. It began to rain this afternoon which thankfully cooled the temperature down quite a bit, but it's still quite humid and I was sweating freely and totally soaked my gi (uniform).

More people arrived for the seminar this evening. The Italians came and one guy from India arrived with his wife. Tomorrow the Iranians will join us. I am pretty pooped and after wolfing down dinner, I hit the sack at about 8:30 pm.

L to R:

Des Tuck V.P. Seiwa Kai USA; Vassie Naidoo, President Seiwa Kai USA, and Leo Lipinski, head of Seiwakai in the world excluding Japan – They have been training together since 1970. Leo is a driving force behind Seiwakai and has built it into a huge organization of about 50,000 members.



**Day 2 of Training** is usually the 'hump' day by which time the muscles begin to adjust to the strenuous demands placed on them. Mr. Fujiwara, our teacher, seemed to think he could put the pressure on us and we did basic movement up the ying-yang until our sweat flowed freely and the bruises glowed pink and blue.

The morning session wasn't too bad, but in the afternoon he decided to make us do some fighting drills which involve much bone-on-bone contact. Depending on how hard your partner wanted to go, the extent of the bruising could vary dramatically. I chose Craig Vokey, the senior Canadian instructor, to be my partner, since he's a reasonably civilized individual who is about my size (220 lbs. and 6 ft. tall) and we got along famously. Not to say that both of us weren't a little achy but it was manageable.

Mr. Fujiwara is the successor to the late Mr. Tasaki, the founder of Seiwakai, and he has a distinctly different style that is oriented more towards tournament fighting than street-fighting. As such, it's a bit unfamiliar to me since we learned the street-fighting approach refined by Mr. Tasaki, who was one of the most feared men in Japan in his day. Mr. Tasaki had an intuitive, very simple style geared to causing the maximum damage to your opponent and the minimum damage to yourself. Mr. Fujiwara's approach requires a bit more planning and knowledge of ring-craft and footwork. So while it can be quite effective if you practice it a lot, it seems to be more difficult to learn, at least it is for me.

Mr. Fujiwara seemed to want to really hammer some basic lessons home with us over and over and over, and by the end of the day, my leg muscles were protesting quite loudly. Luckily a good meal and plenty of beer were awaiting us at Chez Fujiwara so after a while we forgot the trauma and focused on lively conversation, much of which related to fighting experiences shared by some of the more active brawlers in our group. I ducked out after a while and went to rest my weary body and gather strength for tomorrow's session.

As expected, **Day 3 of Training** was the one where I started to feel physically as if I was able to keep this up for a little longer. It's difficult to explain but if you maintain a certain level of physical fitness beforehand, it's possible to escalate to a point where you're able to do things you couldn't normally do within your normal regimen. This feeling is helpful when you're trying to

hone your karate skills, and are up against people much younger, and often much stronger than you.

Morning training was quite tough, though. We practiced Sanchin and Tensho kata (forms) all morning and it was easily the most exhausting 3 hour session of all, even though the movements are slow and deliberate. Although the actual movements appear to be relatively simple, they are actually highly sophisticated, so that different levels of black belt would perform them with slight variations.

In the afternoon, we did 2 person drills, and I again selected Craig Vokey, our senior Canadian instructor, as my partner. Craig is a big, tough dude and although we went fairly easy on one another, we both still had substantial bruises on our arms. In fact my left hand is becoming quite swollen from the constant trauma, and although it doesn't hurt much, my knuckles have pretty much disappeared, as you can see from the picture.



The 2 person drills use a pre-planned attack and defense format that is practiced perhaps 100 times or so. Its fine if both parties execute properly, but a slight timing lapse can often cause damage to your hands, wrists, or forearms in the form of bruising or worse. If that were a onetime occurrence and you could rest afterwards, it might not be too bad. But you can't rest, and the result is that kind of injury then gets battered over and over again. That's more or less what happened to my hand and wrist.

During our 2 person drills, my good friend Rasto from Slovakia was going around 'helping' people. One refinement he added included grabbing the shoulders from behind your opponent, ramming your knee into the coccyx, and pulling them over backwards onto the ground. Sounds good for the mean streets of Bratislava, but Craig and I decided to give it a miss for our practice after thanking Rasto very much for showing us. Even the unimaginably strong Australian Jamie Duggan, who everyone is afraid of, winced when Rasto did it to him, and complained bitterly about that and the Slovak methodology in general. Rasto once again demonstrated why Mr. Tasaki, our late leader, called him Popeye.

We capped the day of training with practice of the kata specified for our particular Dan levels, with me practicing Kururunfa, required for 7th Dan. Kururunfa, is a very difficult kata, but is also very beautiful. The Japan women's team won the world championships doing it this year. I learned several nuances from Mr. Fujiwara that I had not known before, and after performing it about 35 times, felt a bit more confident about my rendition than I had before. There are a couple of other people also attempting grading to 7th Dan, and after watching them, I also felt better

about my standard. Of course this was quite strenuous, and after sweating buckets, I was happy to pack it in. Dinner was a long drawn out affair with much alcohol flowing, of which I partook readily. Tomorrow is our day 'off' where we go for waterfall training.

On our **Rest Day** today, we travelled by bus to a waterfall about an hour south of Omagari to splash around in the ice cold waters over a rocky pool bottom. That might not sound much like fun but it was. It's funny how grownups get excited when splashing around; and when they're having their pictures taken standing in menacing positions while doing it, well that introduces an entirely new dynamic.

The bus ride was fairly uncomfortable because Japanese buses are made, understandably, for Japanese people; and Japanese people are substantially smaller than Westerners. And when you put really big Westerners in a Japanese bus, which is a bit like wearing shoes that are a couple of sizes too small. You get the picture.



I saw that when we arrived at the waterfall everyone wanted to rush in, so I waited until the crowd cleared before setting up my tripod and arranging for my student, Ilya, to photograph me.

We returned to the hotel quite late made it a bit of a rush to get ready for the annual Seiwakai party which is held during our annual visit, at a fancy hotel – The Grand Hotel Kawabata. There are speeches, lots of food and even more drink, and then karaoke.

The party is attended by our entire group, plus some local Seiwakai karateka. As usual I got to sit with all the big mucky mucks at the main table and I was placed next to my buddy Rastio, who later surprised us with a musical performance featuring his entire Slovak group; they sang with him while he played a miniature guitar that he handled like a true professional. It was heartwarming to see that a person who could rip you to shreds with his bare hands and feet was also capable of delivering a superlative rendition of English songs, including blues, in his native tongue.

The other interesting thing to me was to watch how quickly the alcohol acted as a social lubricant. If you made a short video of everyone sitting there demurely before the booze began to flow, and then another about an hour and a half later, it would be difficult to believe they were the same people. Inhibition was cast to the wind, and everyone got along famously, some more than others.

The food was served on Lazy Susans and the more inebriated people became, the more spillage occurred while they were spun around the tables. The Japanese guests, who included a mayoral representative, sang like swallows and everyone poured drinks for their neighbors at the tables with gay abandon.

Our Texas group's head, Jim Pounds, and I, decided that when they announced the party was over, we should take a stroll back to the hotel and go to sleep, which we did. I have no idea what everyone else did, but am sure the happy mood gave rise to a lot more shenanigans into the night.

**Day 4 of Training** was Election Day in Japan and the Budokan where we usually train was being used as a voting location. Instead of training there we had to travel about 15 min. to the dojo of one of Mr. Fujiwara's students. I was able to get a ride there with Mr. Fujiwara but everyone else had to take a short train ride and a long walk. Seniority has its advantages.

We had trained in this hall on previous Japan visits so it wasn't exactly unfamiliar territory. The room itself is enormous and has a really beautiful wood floor that is lacquered very smoothly and is reasonably well-sprung. That matters when you're being thrown onto it during practice, which happened several times during the day's training.

In addition to our usual group, we had about 40 children aged between 8 and 12, all black belts, training with us. It added a nice balance to the mix but didn't make the workout any easier. Japanese kids are treated quite harshly according to our standards, and a lot is expected of them. In a small town like Omagari, family values' are strongly evident. Children show deep respect to their parents and are expected to work hard and stay in line, so to speak. Not a bad thing, it seems.

The weather was quite humid but thankfully not unbearably hot, although it was probably about 90 F. It rained off and on during the day. Because we weren't close to town, we had to take lunch with us and I bought a Bento box of soba (cold noodles) so I could 'carbo load' in the middle of the day's training.

In the morning we practiced kata and in the afternoon, made pairs and practiced sparring routines which involved more and bruising and throwing, which is never my favorite thing. I always feel that if you learn pre-arranged techniques, unless you do it so often that it becomes second nature, all it does is condition your body but you don't necessarily retain the technique in your mind for instant use. It can teach you certain reflexive movements, however, and is useful for that. Luckily I was able to pair off with Craig Vokey again and we took it easy on one another for the most part, although the occasional hard punch, block or kick from both of us reminded us it was real.



Craig has a sense of humor reminiscent of Monty Python, which is partly what makes us friends. Here he is demonstrating that with what I had hope would be a serious picture. In the background, you can see Leo enjoying the moment too.

In the later afternoon we again practiced kata for our Dan level, and I performed Kururunfa ad nauseam. Mr. Fujiwara worked separately with each group and I learned a few new insights as usual.

Sunday is a rest day for the Fujiwara's, and the kitchen is closed. It's usually the day when Leo, Vassie, and I take their family out to dinner to a restaurant of their choice.

We took a short walk to a place we'd been to before, although for Leo it was a long walk because he struggles badly with various ailments, including knee pain, swollen legs and 4 herniated disks in his neck, not to mention a serious heart condition. The word 'masochist' comes to mind. If it were me I would have taken a taxi.

Dinner was fun although Mrs. Fujiwara arrived late because, as usual, she had chores to attend to. I've never seen such a hardworking woman who manages to maintain good humor and thoughtfulness throughout – except maybe Elena. Unfortunately we had to sit on the floor, which I never enjoy, but you do what you've got to do.

After the short walk home, I felt quite tired and instead of joining everyone for another drinking binge which is routine in this group, I want to sleep at about 9:30 or so. Our beds consist of a firm pad on the floor. The worst part is getting up in the morning because it just like getting up off the floor. Not something I'm accustomed to, but again you do what you've got to do.

**Day 5 of Training** was the last day of 'normal' training - tomorrow we will train in the morning and grade in the afternoon. Today's training started off with an excruciating 2 hour session of Sanchin and Tensho – very tiring stuff indeed. Mr. Fujiwara is nothing if not a perfectionist,

which means that repetition is the order of the day. And the repetition continues until you look like you're starting to get it right. Only then does he begin to relent.



In the afternoon, we did pair work again, practicing various combination moves against each other. I snagged my usual partner, Craig Vokey, but we also included Doug Smerek from Calgary in our exercise because he didn't have a partner, having injured his last one, putting him out of commission. Doug is a short, tough guy, and is quite a difficult adversary. He has very strong legs, and blocking his kicks was quite a chore. I developed a few new bruises in the process.



After about an hour and a half of banging on each other, we were again separated into groups for our individual kata practice.

I feel as if I'm beginning to get the hang of what I have to do for my grading tomorrow, but time will tell. My legs definitely feel exponentially stronger, and I'm beginning to regret what will clearly happen when the daily training comes to an end.

Dinner at the Ryokan was a delicious, noisy affair, with much beer, wine and sake. There is a Sapporo draft beer setup which we have access to if one of the attentive waitresses whom the Fujiwara's hire to help with large groups isn't immediately available. I wouldn't hazard a guess at how much beer is consumed in a night during our stay but it must be many gallons. Although I was feeling quite energized when we sat down for dinner, the alcohol must have had an impact because I was ready for bed at about 9:30 pm.

The **Last Day of Training** was supposed to consist of kata practice in the morning, another hour of that in the afternoon, and then a 2 hour time slot for the grading at the end of the day. We did indeed practice kata in the morning, but in the afternoon, we again had to get into pairs and practice sparring exercises, yes the ones where you get big bruises. I tried to stay out of it but one of the Slovaks didn't have a partner and spotted me, and that was that. He now lives in Vancouver, and came as a member of the Canada contingent. He is about 6 ft. 6 in. tall, and luckily he'd been partly disabled in previous sparring exercises so he wasn't terribly aggressive which meant my bruises were smaller.

As the 3pm start time for the grading came and went, we started to wonder what Mr. Fujiwara had in mind. It then appeared that he began making notes during our kata practice so he was already conducting the grading before it formally began. Not a bad idea actually, because stage fright can mess up your chances which can mean you need to wait another year to make another attempt.

Finally at about 3:45, he dismissed the students who were not grading and it was 'game on.' There were about 18 people in the group. I was the only one testing for 7th Dan so I had to do my kata by myself. Sanchin and Tensho, were easy enough, but true to form, about 20 minutes before the grading, my teacher Leo came up to me and told me I needed to correct something fairly major in kata Kururunfa and insisted he had told me about it a year ago. Of course he hadn't but I decided to not argue with him because he hates to lose an argument, and I buckled down and tried to practice it.

Unfortunately Kururunfa is a highly sophisticated kata and I felt quite awkward practicing the new way of doing the movements, which of course was an obstacle to delivering a flowing rendition. Kururunfa is a very beautiful kata, and the Japan women's team won the World Karate Federation tournament doing it in 2012, if you want to see that, it's on YouTube.

So my Kururunfa was ok, or as Leo put it, tolerable. Luckily my Sanchin and Tensho were well above average so that probably did the trick because I learned at dinner after a very long day, that I had indeed passed my 7th Dan test and am now officially a 'Nanadan' which is quite a big deal. I think I was the 5th one in the world in Seiwakai outside Japan to get it. In Japan there are probably another 4 or 5 so it's quite a rarefied honor.

Since this all happened on my birthday, there was quite a bit to celebrate and In addition to a few noisy bouts of singing Happy Birthday, people insisted on pouring beers for me throughout dinner. By the time we left for karaoke, I'd had at least 6 and once we arrived there, another 5 or 6 more, I really can't remember. I finally fell into bed at about 2:45 am and woke at 6 to go see Leo and Mr. Fujiwara off at the train station. They left 2 hours before we did.

## Seiwa Kai Humor



**Sensei Vassie and Sensei Des were ill prepared for the Sanchin Shime that Leo Sensei had planned for them as they practiced in the waterfall.**

# SPOTLIGHT On VISALIA KARATEDO



Dan Taylor, Visalia Karatedo's chief instructor, began his martial arts training in 1965. He has trained in Judo, JuJutsu, Wrestling, Karate-Do, and BoJutsu. He began teaching Karate-Do in Visalia, CA, in 1975.

He is a former member of the U.S. Army Wrestling Team in Europe, and a U.S. National Karate-Do Team in Japan. He is a graduate of California State University, Fresno, with a degree in Business Law.

**Dan Taylor Seated: 2<sup>nd</sup> Row L to R K. Torabi, M. Reitz, N. Quinzon, L. Beltron, M. Prillwitz, D. Ramirez**

Mr. Taylor is a retired Law Enforcement Officer and was the Chief Weaponless Defense Instructor for a large regional police academy. He is also a former member of the advisory board for the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

In addition to his membership in Seiwa Kai, Sensei Taylor has been graded and certified in Japan by the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (DNBK) as Shichidan in Karate-Do (7th Degree Black-Belt) and was awarded a Kyoshi Title (Senior Instructor). In the United States, he was formerly graded as a Rokudan with a Renshi title. Additionally, he has been graded and certified with Black-Belt ranking in JuJutsu and BoJutsu.

In an effort to continually improve his practice of Karate-Do, Dan Taylor Sensei has taken whatever opportunities he could to train with some of the best instructor's in both the United States and Japan. This has afforded him the advantage of personally training with the following notable instructors (Alphabetically Listed): Fumio Demura, Seiichi Fujiwara, Teruo Hayashi, Morio Higaonna, Yasuhiro Konishi, Kenpu Sugihara, Motoo Yamakura, Kiyoshi Yamazaki.

# Santa Barbara Seiwakai

## Our Newest Addition to Our Seiwakai Family

By: Russ Costello

We are pleased to announce to arrival of the newest addition to our Seiwakai family. The Santa Barbara Dojo opened its doors in January of this year and has already had two successful promotion examinations. We have an enthusiastic group of karateka in the dojo and are looking forward to introducing Santa Barbara and the Central California Coast to Goju Ryu Karate-Do Seiwakai.

Special thanks to Vassie Shihan for your support, counsel, and friendship without which all of this would not be possible. We would also like to thank Cyrus Senpai for his support and generosity throughout the entire process.

We are fortunate to have secured a beautiful facility in the heart of Santa Barbara surrounded by the tranquility of thick forest and clean ocean air. The Zen like setting is ideal for karate practice. If your travels bring you in or around the Santa Barbara area, please come to visit and train with us.



### Sweat, Strain, and Bleed For What You Believe

Many years ago, as a young Goju karateka training in New York, we recited many mantras. One of my favorites was “Sweat, Strain, and Bleed For What You believe”. I have meditated on this mantra many times over the years. Recently, I came across an extract from Bohdi Sanders “Warrior Wisdom” series that I think defines the meaning of the mantra and epitomizes the philosophy that we have come to understand as the heart of Goju Ryu Karate-Do.

“Confucius didn’t sugar coat it when he taught, “To see what is right and not to do it is cowardice.” The true warrior knows what is right according to his code of honor that he has meditated on and decided to make the guide for his life.



The test of his dedication comes when he is confronted with a choice to compromise his standards or to live up to his standards and deal with whatever consequences that doing the right thing may have on his life. This is when he has to call on his courage to be strong. Most martial artists think of courage in terms of physical confrontations. Will he have the courage to stand up and fight when the time comes and the situation requires this of him? Will he allow his fear to get the best of him and cause him to back down?

These are the questions that I hear many martial artists discussing, and they are definitely valid questions. But you should also

consider the question of whether or not you are dedicated enough, to your standards and your code of honor, to stand up for what you believe in when you are faced with a moral decision.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote that, “The world has no room for cowards. We must all be ready somehow to toil, to suffer, to die. And yours is not the less noble because no drum beats before you when you go out into your daily battlefields, and no crowds shout about your coming when you return from your daily victory or defeat.” Courage is not just about being brave in battle or physical confrontations. In fact, you will find many more chances to prove your courage in daily life than in the rare physical confrontation, unless you work in a warrior profession.” Bohdi Sanders ~ excerpt from *Modern Bushido: Living a Life of Excellence*.

To my Seiwakai brothers and sisters I say go boldly into the night. Fear not to stand up for what you know in your heart to be right. Our training has prepared us for physical battle and perhaps more importantly for moral combat as well. Continue to Sweat, Strain, and Bleed For What You Believe!

# Full Circle

By James Pounds



In case you haven't noticed, we're all getting older, which reminds me of an anecdote I recently heard: *"Let me show you a photo taken of me when I was younger."* *"Dude...every photo of you is when you were younger."*

Sad but true. The paradox is that as we grow wiser, the body cannot do what it could only a few years ago. At first, that can be depressing – especially for athletes. You just don't see many 40 year-old world class athletes. Let's face it, for the first several million years of human evolution, our ancestors rarely ever *made* it to 40, so our physiology wasn't built to last. We were built to survive a short, hard life. Our joints weren't engineered to keep working six, seven, even eight decades. Now we're buying ski lift tickets in our 70's.

The nice thing about traditional martial arts is that we can keep training well into our later years if we understand that we simply must modify our training regimen and realize there are some things we actually may do *better* as we get older. Conversely, there are many things we can't do like we once could, but we have to accept it and adapt. For example, I'm not as fast as I once was but I'm definitely more perceptive. This ability to perceive an opponent's intention and react to it often makes up that gap in speed.

I know what I cannot do as well at my age, so I spend more time concentrating on what I *can* do well, so those techniques have actually improved. I spend more time working on my flexibility and less on strength training (although I do both). I continue to deepen my yoga practice. Not only am I more fluid in my karate-do, but I'm also a much better dancer, which is a side benefit I hadn't figured on!

But the beautiful gift the martial arts offers to us as we age is kata. Kata deepens our understanding of our art. In fact, everything we need is passed on within the katas of our style. But in addition to being the memory banks of karate-do, kata is a physiological wonder. Kata improves balance, musculature, and focus. It improves our cardiovascular health. It calms the mind and increases our awareness of the subtle things...the nuances so often missed and misunderstood. I have watched practitioners of very advanced age practicing kata as if they were performing tai chi, and looking vibrant and alive -- both in and out of the training hall.

Just as our obi starts as a white belt, turns brown and then black with sweat and toil, eventually returning to a frayed white with age; in Goju-Ryu karate-do we start with the kihon kata Sanchin and never leave it. Sanchin is a part of every training session and every grading. Over years we acquire the entire kata syllabus, but as the body ages and a one-leg sagiashi dashi (crane) stance

becomes increasingly difficult, we are able to go full circle and return to the beginning, performing Sanchin with an understanding that transcends our physical limitations. It is then we know we have arrived at another beginning.

**November 8 - 11, 2013: Guadalajara, Mexico**

**誠和会 剛柔流 空手道**



## **North America Seiwakai Seminar & JKF Goju Kai Grading**

### **SCHEDULE of EVENTS**

**Friday 11/08/'13:** 10:00 am to 13:00 pm training

Lunch time

17:00 pm to 20:00 pm training

**Saturday 11/09/'13:** 10:00 am to 13:00 pm training

Lunch time

17:00 pm to 20:00 pm training

**Sunday 11/10/'13:** 10:00 am to 12:00 pm training

Rest Time

13:00 pm Testing

**HOTEL:** "Mexico Plaza" Guadalajara, They will be both the hosting and the Seminar and party.

### **COSTS:**

Single room with 1 breakfast 890 pesos

Double room with two breakfasts 980 pesos

Triple room with 3 breakfasts 1070 pesos

Quadruple room with 4 breakfasts 1160 pesos

Seminar U.S. \$ 100

Party 300 pesos.

The hotel website is: [http://mexico-plaza-guadalajara.h-rez.com/index.htm?lbl=ggl-en&gclid=CICF3M\\_3m7kCFXBo7Aode38A-g](http://mexico-plaza-guadalajara.h-rez.com/index.htm?lbl=ggl-en&gclid=CICF3M_3m7kCFXBo7Aode38A-g)

Book your flights and hotel.

Contact Vassie Naidoo Shihan if you are attending the seminar, party and JKF Goju Kai testing.

## KATA, SELF DEFENSE, and BUNKAI

### 型 自衛 分解



*“You may be able to perform a beautiful kata, but if you cannot defend yourself, you are not doing karate.”[i]*

「美しい型を行なうことができるかもしれませんが、自己弁護することができなければ、空手を行っていません。」出村文男

**Students of Mr. Miyagi publicly demonstrate kata bunkai that included throws and attacks to the eye**

The study of kata is at the heart of virtually every traditional Okinawan and Japanese system of karate-do. Virtually every one of the traditional Okinawan and Japanese karate-do masters believes that kata and its corresponding bunkai applications train the participant for and instruct the participant in the ways of self-defense. To this end, all of the traditional karate-do masters have placed kata at the center of their training, and it has often been said that without kata there is no karate-do.

However, it is only fitting to point out that there are some popular martial artists who contend that the study and practice of kata is of no self-defense benefit whatsoever. Joe Lewis, a popular 1970s era tournament fighter and professional kick-boxer, once stated that the study of kata will “actually teach you bad habits which could get you hurt in a fight” and Bruce Lee, the legend of martial arts movies, “once compared trying to learn to fight by doing kata as attempting to wrap up water in a brown paper bag.”[ii]

Furthermore, there are those who believe that the best way to learn self-defense is to train for competition. Andy Sherry, an extremely successful international competitor and coach, stated: “I think that the well trained, powerful, agile and spirited tournament competitors are the ones most likely to be able to defend themselves and this cannot be done by bunkai alone.”[iii] Perhaps

there is some truth in this observation. jiyu kumite (a form of which is used in competition) produces a powerful and well-conditioned karate-ka, teaches proper reaction timing, and fosters the development of a strong spirit – all of which are needed when defending oneself. Even Mr. Eiichi Miyazato, who is a very orthodox Okinawan Goju Ryu sensei, supports this view: “Competition allows one to experience what one cannot experience in kata or ‘yakusoku kumite’ [prearranged sparring]: the mental fight or quick ‘taisabaki’ (lateral body movement), timing, training the eyes, etc., that are obviously important to experience.”[iv]

However, it is imperative to point out that competition jiyu kumite and self-defense is not the same thing. In tournament sparing, targets are limited and contact is minimized in order to ensure the safety of the competitors. The contrary is true when one is defending life and limb. There are no limits on the targets that one can use or on the amount of contact that one can make to those targets.

Although some popular individuals have made disparaging remarks against the practice of kata, most traditional karate instructors keep kata at the center of their training. They tell us that “those who train to learn self-defense methods will discover many useful techniques within the kata.”[v] Attacks to the joints and other weak points of the body, chokes, throws, and ground fighting are all needed in self-defense situations, and they are all taught through kata and their corresponding bunkai applications. “Joint locks, strangulations, grappling, biting and eye gouging are also considerations not addressed in [sport] kumite but represent the issues upon which kata are based...”[vi]

## **BUNKAI**

However, some traditional karate students fail to see the relevance of kata to self-defense because instruction in bunkai is often neglected by some of today’s instructors. We must remember that karate was initially altered when it was introduced to the general public in Okinawa”[vii], and it was further altered when it took on a Western competitive sport format during the Post-World War II era.[viii] In accordance with both of these alterations, many dojos teach sport jiyu kumite instead of bunkai. The main reason for this is that all dojos teach to the general public, and many dojos also teach children. Sport kumite is much safer and much easier to teach to any age group. Moreover, teaching karate as a sport requires much less training on the part of the instructor and is much easier than teaching karate through kata and its bunkai. Additionally, sport kumite is much more appropriate to teach to children. Few karate instructors would suggest that strangulation, biting, and eye gouging are appropriate to teach to a group of fifth grade students.

Consequently, the karate that is taught in the vast majority of dojos has been altered to make it safe and easy to learn for all students but particularly for children and adolescents. Research supports this point, and we are told that today karate is taught: “more like physical education; so for this reason, the way of doing kata is kept simple.”[ix] The result of this shift from self-defense to sport and physical education has had profound consequences on the karate. Once taught exclusively to selected students as a vehicle for acquiring the skills of self-defense, karate is now taught to everyone as fitness and sport.

Research supports the view that bunkai has been removed from the karate curriculum to make it appropriate to teach to the public and to children: “Removing what was then considered too dangerous for school children, the emphasis shifted from self-defense to physical fitness through group *kata* practice, but neglected its bunki (applications). By not teaching the hidden self-defense moves, the actual intentions of the *kata* (e.g., to disable, maim, or even kill by traumatizing anatomically vulnerable areas if necessary) became so obscure that a new tradition developed.”[x] *Kata* is now taught for physical exercise, coordination, and discipline. As a result, the self-defense applications of bunkai are often neglected.

This development is not new; it occurred during the lifetime of Mr. Gichin Funakoshi, and he explains this in his book *Karate-Do My Way of Life*. “The karate that is practiced today is not the same as karate that was practiced even as recently as ten years ago, and it is a long way indeed from the karate that I learned when I was a child in Okinawa... What is most important is that karate, as a form of sport used in physical education, should be simple enough to be practiced without undue difficulty by everybody, young and old, boys and girls, men and women.”[xi] Consequently for several generations, bunkai applications (which are considered inappropriate for children and difficult for adults to learn) have frequently been neglected in the traditional karate curriculum and have been replaced with a sport-oriented curriculum.

Another reason why bunkai applications appear to be neglected is because some of the very traditional karate-do instructors teach bunkai applications only when they feel that their students are physically and emotionally ready. This is the manner in which Mr. Chojun Miyagi instructed his students, but it appears as if some of the students of Mr. Miyagi had a difficult time grasping this concept. Mr. Morio Higaonna explains that his teacher eventually learned to both fear and respect Mr. Miyagi’s bunkai demonstrations. “An’ichi recalled one training session in which he asked, ‘Sensei, what does this movement mean?’ Miyagi then invited An’ichi to punch him. When he did so, he found himself thrown to the ground firmly and painfully. Such experiences eventually taught him not to ask questions about techniques that he wasn’t ready for.”[xii] In other words, when some students feel that they are not being taught bunkai applications, it may be because they have not yet reached a state of physical and emotional development where they are receptive to the learning those applications. This is particularly true in the case of young students and beginners.



**Students practicing *kata* bunkai under the supervision of Mr. Miyagi**

### **CONCEALED TECHNIQUES**

Today there is often a misconception about *kata* and its bunkai. Some instructors and students make the incorrect assumption

that a kata's bunkai techniques are obvious. A well-known Shotokan competitor from the U.K. maintains that bunkai applications are easy to figure out. "Once the student has acquired a certain level of competence, most of the kata movements are self-explanatory." [xiii] This type of assumption has led to a misunderstanding and a simplification of the true meaning of kata bunkai.

Many traditional karate-do instructors warn their students not to look at the outward appearance of a kata in an attempt to discern its inner meaning – the bunkai applications. Mr. Morio Higaonna, a highly respected Goju Ryu sensei explains the existence of concealed kata techniques. "[A] technique may appear one way in the kata, and yet have a very different application. In addition, there are many hidden meanings that are not shown in the kata at all." [xiv] Mr. Eiichi Miyazato, another highly respected Goju Ryu teacher, agrees with this assessment of kata bunkai applications: "Techniques within the kata have been developed by our predecessors and are purposefully difficult to distinguish from one another. For example . . . what appears to be a defensive move is actually an attack." [xv]

Many of our traditional karate instructors tell us that a technique may appear one way in the kata, but it may have an altered, backward, or even hidden bunkai application. Consequently, one should not assume that the bunkai applications from a kata are obvious and self-explanatory. The proper instruction of bunkai applications should be learned from a qualified and experienced instructor who has a connection to the founder of a traditional style of karate-do.

For a variety of reasons, bunkai applications are now being taught with greater frequency in traditional karate-do styles, and many well-known instructors are now making the bunkai applications more readily available to their students. The Japan Karate-do Federation now includes bunkai applications with each one of its Shiteigata [standardized kata] [xvi] and many video productions of kata now include the bunkai applications with their presentation of the various Okinawan and Japanese kata.

These applications are usually presented as a series of prearranged drills which are infused with a variety of self-defense techniques and target areas which are too dangerous for any type of jiyu kumite. Moreover, since both the attacker and the defender know what the other is going to do, the risk of serious injury is reduced. In this manner, bunkai applications are now being taught in a format which is safe for people of a variety of ages, but which still contains the essence of self-defense effectiveness.

The bunkai applications which were once neglected in the traditional Okinawan and Japanese karate-do curriculum are now being emphasized are taught with each kata with greater frequency. The application of joint attacks, chokes, throws, and ground fighting make kata a relevant vehicle from which one can learn self-defense. Additionally, most traditional dojos also train in jiyu kumite, and this can help to develop a well-conditioned karate-ka who possesses a strong spirit and who understands proper timing. By reaping the benefits of kata, bunkai, and jiyu kumite, today's karate practitioners have the opportunity to become well prepared for self-defense.

- [i] *Classical Fighting Arts*, Vol. 2 No. 13 (Issue 38), page13
- [ii] Cook, Harry *Classical Fighting Arts*: Vol.2 No 12; page 13
- [iii] Cook, Harry: *Shotokan Karate*, page 299
- [iv] Miyazato Eiichi: *Okinawan Den Goju Ryu Karate-do*: page 32
- [v] Cook, Harry *Classical Fighting Arts*: Vol.2 No 12; page 15
- [vi] Cook, Harry *Classical Fighting Arts*: Vol.2 No 12; page 18
- [vii] Cook, Harry: *Shotokan Karate*: page 23
- [viii] Cook, Harry: *Shotokan Karate*, page 162
- [ix] Cook, Harry *Classical Fighting Arts*: Vol.2 No 12; page 15
- [x] McCarthy, Patrick: *Bubishi*: page 53-54
- [xi] Funakoshi, Gichin *Karate-do My Way of Life*: page 36
- [xii] Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: pages 111-112
- [xiii] Cook, Harry: *Cook, Harry: Shotokan Karate*, page 298
- [xiv] Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 111
- [xv] Miyazato Eiichi: *Okinawan Den Goju Ryu Karate-do*: page 67
- [xvi] Japanese Karatedo Federation *Karatedo Kata Model for Teaching*: pages 9-209