

**PAN-AMERICAN GOJU RYU KARATEDO
SEIWAKAI NEWSLETTER**

**全米剛柔流空手道
誠和会社内報**

**Dedicated to Traditional Goju Ryu Karatedo
ISSUE 48: May/June 2021**

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To: Our Valued Donors, Seiwa-Kai Family, and Friends
From: The USA Seiwa- Kai Board of Directors

We would like to update you regarding the USA Seiwa-Kai Honbu Dojo, located in Santa Monica. As most of you already know, the adverse effects of the Corona Virus has put many Dojos across the world in danger of closing – due to ongoing overhead and minimized income.

The Honbu Dojo, run by Vassie Naidoo Shihan, has experienced the same effects. Initial efforts were made to secure the Honbu Dojo in its original location of twenty-five years by raising money through a GoFundMe link at: <https://gofundme/e6735e53> to bring the dojo current on rent and as an operating cushion to weather the next couple of months as classes ramp back up.

Unfortunately, those efforts were defeated when the landlord opted not to renew the lease. The appliance store next to the dojo was looking to expand and offered to pay more. This is business and there is no one to blame. Funds have been and are continuing to be raised to save the dojo, and a new location, not far from the Pico Blvd. location has potentially been located. The lease details are currently being negotiated and it is believed before the month's end an announcement will be made of the new location.

We were originally disappointed about the loss of the Pico Blvd location, and are sure some of you are experiencing these same feelings. The good news is, if all goes forward as planned, the new USA Honbu Dojo will have more training space and a fresh new look. We see this as an exciting opportunity. The expense of lease deposits, moving, and remodeling will be significant, but we believe with continued donations in both funds and labor we will be able to unveil the new dojo location as something we can all share with pride!

To clarify a possible misunderstanding, discussion of purchasing a location for the Dojo in the future was also discussed, separate from the immediacy of securing of a new lease space. The hope was that the Honbu Dojo would one day have a permanent place without worries of leases and rent increases. Unfortunately, the reality is that the expense to buy or build are cost prohibitive. At this time, that dream is no longer being pursued. All funds go to saving the Honbu Dojo. A full accounting of the funds will be given to contributors as the project moves forward.

Anyone who has already donated funds, but rather their donation not go to a new dojo location is welcome to contact Mr. William Robertson, dojo member and Trustee of the GoFundMe campaign, at alonobis@gmail.com for a refund. We hope you won't and will continue to donate time and funds as best you can.

With thanks and great excitement –

Respectfully,

The USA Seiwa- Kai Board of Directors

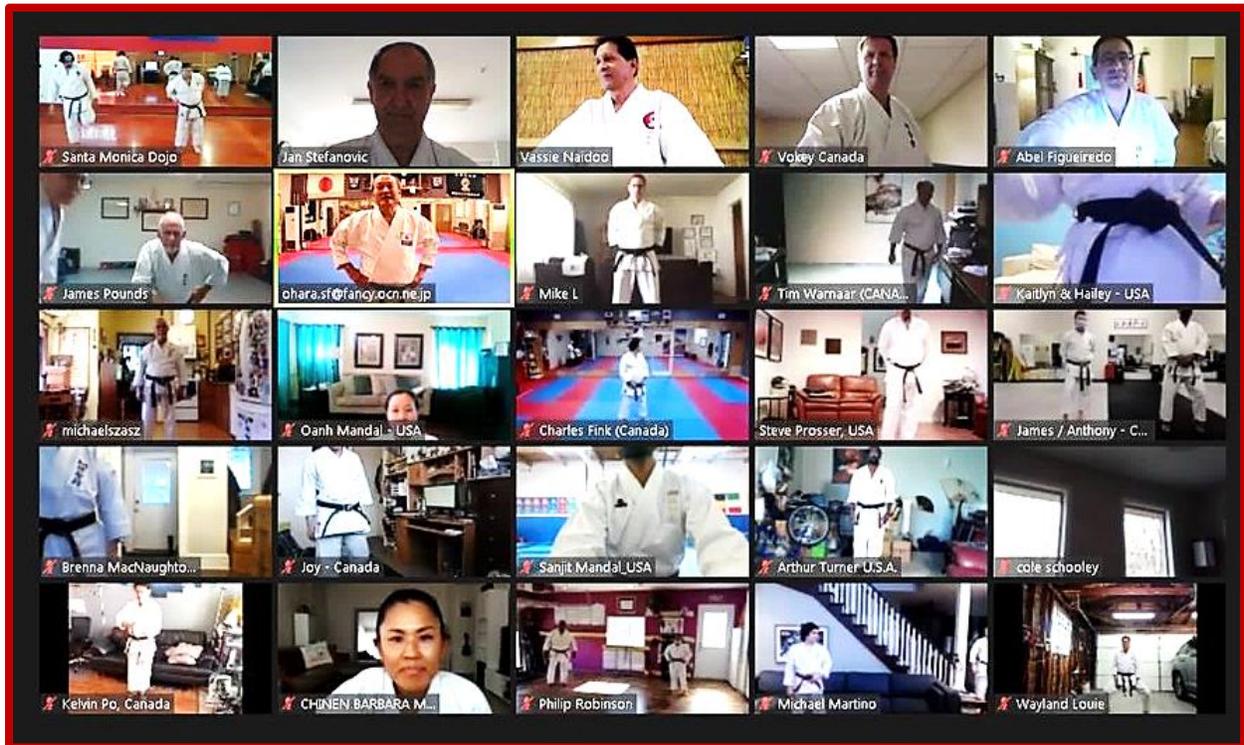
Pan American Seiwa Zoom Seminar With Fujiwara Hanshi from Omagari, Japan Photos provided by Jan Stefanovic

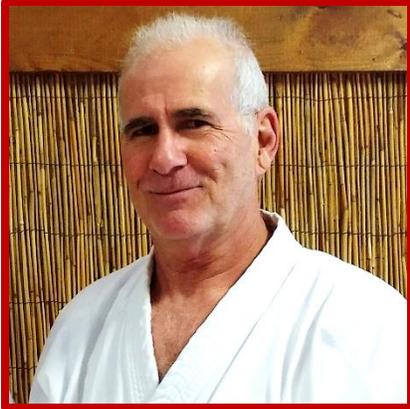


On April 16 and 17, Pan American Seiwakai hosted a seminar taught by Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi from his dojo in Omagari, Japan. The seminar was organized by Vassie Naidoo Hanshi and Craig Vokey Kyoshi and was attended by Seiwakai members from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Mexico, Portugal, Sri Lanka, and the USA.

The two evenings of instruction included a tremendous amount of detail and provided much insight into the kata of traditional Goju Ryu Karatedo. Friday evening was devoted to Sanchin, Tensho, Gekisai, Saifa, and Seiyunchin. Saturday's instruction began with a review of the previous evening's material and then continued with the rest of the Goju Ryu curriculum. Many corrections were made, and all participants realized that there was much work to do in moving forward on our Goju Ryu path.

Two of our newer national organizations were present for their first Seiwakai seminar. It was good to meet and share our Seiwakai comradery with our newest additions to the Seiwakai family – Brazil and Chile.





The Long Road

By James Pounds

“There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going.”

-- Clarissa Pinkola Estes --

Embarking on the martial path is embarking on the long road. Many begin but few stay on the path long enough to discover the many destinations along the way. In fact, those destinations are the learning discoveries that never end. The tenet a pilgrim should embrace is that there is no final destination. To truly embark on this path is a commitment to continue seeking, to keep deepening the essence that attracted us to begin the journey.

The martial path can be deeply satisfying to the traveler, but not always. There are hardships and pitfalls, and we sometimes lose our way, face injuries and obstacles, and encounter long periods of endlessly straight roads through barren landscapes, which leave us uninspired and questioning our motivation. The inspiring and highly motivating places we visited early on the journey have become fewer and farther between. There is an inclination at that point of our journey to miss the subtlety of the places we pass through when we should be looking deeper. The road may seem so monotonous we might leave it ... and the journey.

On the long road, our choice is to either quit entirely or to stop wandering across the vast nothing like Coronado seeking the Seven Cities of Gold – to realize what we *will* be discovering is the occasional gold nugget. But through continued collecting we grow wealthy. That’s known as a re-frame – changing our expectations away from the excitement of the early journey to the deeper satisfaction and appreciation of the nuances. The path *is* the destination.

George Leonard (1923 - 2010), Akidoist, writer, and educator, whose book *Mastery* (1991) is a treatise of human potential, explained the path as a graph line over time. The mastery line is charted across time on the X axis and knowledge on the Y axis. The line starts off by steeply ascending when everything is new, fresh, and exciting. (The journey begins!) and the learning curve is steep and exhilarating. Beginning is heady stuff. Over time that line flattens out until it almost (but not quite) becomes horizontal. Discovering those nuance nuggets becomes less frequent and we may have to search deeply for them. That level is where the seeker approaches mastery. Most travelers love the initial learning rush but take another road when the roadside attractions become less grandiose and farther apart. But that is where deeper learning and understanding resides.

Ours is an age of intelligence without wisdom, and immediate information without effort from search engines and social media. We see recently minted Shodans leaving their mentors and attempting to teach, sometimes creating their own “style” – often an amalgamation of several styles they have dabbled in for a year. Smart, but not wise.

In Okinawa and Japan that would be unheard of, because in their model of Sensei/student, it is common for the apprentice to continue under the master for decades and even after they are

teaching and are themselves considered to be highly regarded teachers and practitioners. In Japan that is true for all arts and businesses not just the martial arts. Mastery is a slow soup!

I'm not saying a recently minted Shodan is not capable of self-defense. Many are. I'm saying that they cannot (yet) understand the depth and nuances of karate-*do* – the *art* of karate. The years spent attaining mastery of the art also internalizes the self-defense aspect. That's why it's almost impossible to best your Sensei, who always makes it look easy. Their effectiveness comes from a place within that is only available to draw from after years of training. Making defense unconsciously beautiful and effective takes many years on that flatter part of Leonard's Mastery timeline.

“There is no shortcut to anyplace worth going.” Indeed.

Also remember that your Sensei taught you everything *you* know, but not everything *she* knows.

The road to mastery is a long one and takes much time and effort. After almost a half century of training under several true Masters, I never consider myself a master. I'll go to my grave realizing how much I don't know. I wish for you that same realization one day. But until then maybe I can teach you something.



Karate's Urban Myths

By Mark Cramer

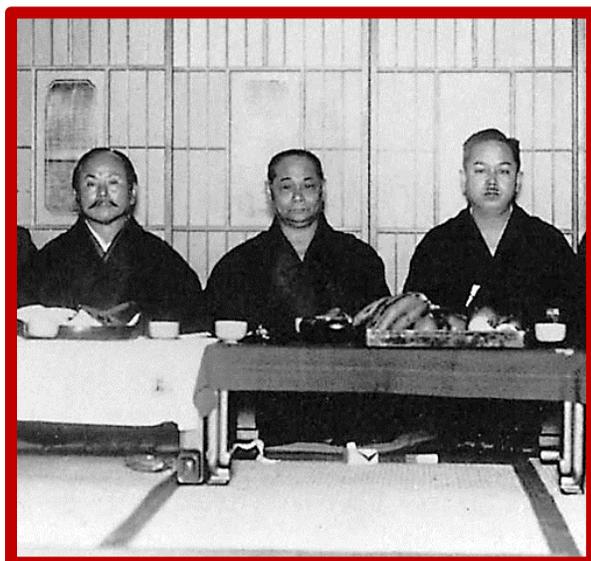
Without a doubt, Peter Urban was a pioneer of Goju Ryu Karatedo in the United States. He introduced the karate of Gogen Yamaguchi into the US. Although he later broke with the Yamaguchi Goju Kai organization, he trained a cadre of instructors who would spread a form of Goju Ryu in North America.

He also wrote the book, *The Karate Dojo*, which I read in the early 1970s. I was definitely impressed by this book. I read about Choki Motobu, the Okinawan giant, who was impervious to the attacks of others. I also read about Gogen Yamaguchi who killed an adult tiger with his bare hands, and I read other incredible stories about incredible people. Although I didn't know it at the time, many of these stories had little, if any, basis in fact. However, these stories are still repeated in karate circles.

Choki Motobu was an extremely interesting and controversial figure in the history of karate. Some of the controversy surrounding Choki Motobu was created not by anything that he did, but by what Peter Urban wrote about him in his book. He debased Motobu's character and dismissed his fighting skills.

Peter Urban wrote that Chuki Motobu was a "peasant farmer" who didn't speak well, didn't comb his hair, and didn't know how to properly dress. [i] Nothing could be further from the truth. Motobu was a member of the Okinawan Royal Family, and as such he spoke Uchinaguchi (Okinawan). The Motobu family educated their children at home with private tutors and not in the public schools where the Japanese language was formally taught. [ii]

It must be kept in mind that Uchinaguchi is not a Japanese dialect; it is a separate language. This meant that as an adult, Motobu had to learn a new language, and consequently, his Japanese was not the best. [iii] However, this is a far cry from the demeaning description offered by Peter Urban. Additionally, in all of the photos that I have seen, Motobu's hair appears to be combed and he appears to be properly dressed.



In minimizing the fighting skills of Chuki Motobu, Peter Urban transformed him into a 7-foot 4-inch (2.24 m) giant who was unaffected by the attacks of others. According to Urban, his success as a fighter "came not so much from his finesse as a Karate master as from his unusual physique." [iv] This made his fighting strategy quite simple; "he preferred to grab his enemies and chop them to death." [v]

This description of Mr. Motobu is clearly a monstrous exaggeration of the facts as can be seen in this photo. Gichin Funakoshi, Choki Motobu and, Kenwa Mabuni (from the left to right) are seated together, and all are about the same height.

Additionally, Motobu's height is verified in a 1925 issue of the Japanese magazine *Kingu* which stated that Motobu was about 5 feet 4 inches tall – a full two feet (0.61 m) shorter than Peter Urban's description.[vi] Whereas many people have been led to believe that Mr. Motobu's success as a fighter came from his gigantic size, the truth of the matter is that he was a very skilled fighter.

In Okinawa, Choki Motobu had a reputation of being a skilled karate-ka and a person who didn't shy away from a street fight. When he moved to Japan in 1921, he quickly placed advertisements for challenge matches in the Japanese newspapers, and he immediately began accepting challenge fights from anyone. Most of these fights came from students of judo and jujitsu who were considerably younger than Motobu who was in his fifties. [viii]

However, there was one challenge match which definitely demonstrated Choki Motobu's fighting skills and earned him a tremendous amount of respect within the martial arts community. This match was against a European boxer, who was in Japan challenging judo students to public exhibitions. The boxer easily defeated several of the judo-ka. Then the 52-year-old Choki Motobu stepped forward to challenge the European boxer. The boxer accepted Motobu's challenge but may not have taken the much older and smaller Motobu seriously. He should have. Choki Motobu knocked the boxer unconscious.[viii] This public challenge match against a professional boxer certainly proved that Motobu was a skilled fighter.

Describing Motobu as a gigantic uncouth peasant who lacked fighting skills is clearly an Urban myth. Additionally, this obvious fabrication of the facts casts doubts on the accuracy of other stories told by Peter Urban. In fact, the entire section of Peter Urban's book which is entitled *Famous Dojo Stories* appears to be a collage of Urban myths – entertaining but inaccurate.

As discussed in Issue 23 of this Newsletter, Peter Urban told a story about Gogen Yamaguchi killing an adult tiger with his bare hands. This too has every appearance of being an Urban myth. It has never been confirmed by any independent source, including Yamaguchi Sensei. It is not mentioned in his autobiography which is quite telling. Additionally, Mr. James Genovese who trained with Mr. Yamaguchi in Japan insisted that Mr. Yamaguchi denied that the event occurred. Finally, many wildlife experts do not believe that it is plausible for an unarmed human to kill an adult tiger. [ix]



I hope that no one takes this article as a personal attack on Peter Urban. It is not. He should be remembered as someone who was instrumental in the development and dissemination of Goju Ryu Karatedo in the US. He should also be remembered as an entertaining writer who created several Urban myths.

[i] Urban, Peter *The Karate Dojo*; page 97

[ii] Goodin, Charles: *Dragon Times*: Vol.19 page 8-9

[iii] Mobotu, Chosei: *Classical Fighting Arts*: Vol 2. No. 17 (Issue #40) page 34

[iv] Urban, Peter *The Karate Dojo*; page 95

[v] Urban, Peter *The Karate Dojo*; page 95

[vi] Noble, Graham: *Dragon Times*: Vol.7 page 9 (From *Kingu*, September 1925 issue No.9, pages 195-204)

[vii] Goodin, Charles: *Dragon Times*: Vol.19 page 9

[viii] Goodin, Charles: *Dragon Times*: Vol.19 page 9

[ix] Noble, Graham *Dragon Times*: Vol. 8; page 31



Interview with Sakura Kokumai From the USA Karate April Newsletter



Editor's Note: Sakura Kokumai is a talented karate-ka and Shito Ryu practitioner. Additionally, after watching the reaction of several of our young athletes to her presence at the 2019 National Championships and Team Trials, I realized that she is an inspiration and a role model to many of our members.

Sakura Kokumai was born and spent much of her early years in Hawaii, and she also spent a lot of time in Japan, where she went to school and has family. The Olympics will be an unforgettable experience for Kokumai regardless of the outcome.

As part of our preparation for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, NBC Olympics sent questionnaires to a wide range of athletes to learn more about their lives on and off the field of play. Here's some of what we found out about Sakura Kokumai:

Tell us about your family.

I come from a Japanese family. Both of my parents are Japanese, and I have one younger brother. We both grew up playing all kinds of sports, and karate just happened to be one of them.

Parent influence on Olympic career?

My parents have supported me through it all since day one. My dad is the quiet one, he doesn't say much, but he always tries to understand what I am doing. My mom on the other hand has always been involved. She drove me to practice, morning and night, and comes to competitions as much as she can. She's strict ... really strict.

Who do you live with?

I currently live with a host family in California. I made a decision to quit my job so I can become a full-time athlete when karate was officially announced as an Olympic sport for Tokyo. I didn't have anywhere to go, and that's when the Stevens opened the door.

They had one extra bedroom and they treat me as if I was a part of their family since day one. I am barely in California; sometimes 7 days a month because of the competition schedule. Because of that reason, it's been hard to find a place where I can call home, or a place to call my own, but the family there has been very supportive and kind since the beginning.

How has your hometown shaped who you are today?

Hawaii played a huge role. Being surrounded by nature and also starting karate there. It has built my foundation, everything about me started there.

Earliest memory of karate?

I grew up looking up to athletes in a dojo in Hawaii. Starting karate at the age of 7, I knew there was something about karate that made me go back every time to train. Karate is not like basketball or soccer

where you can go out there and just have fun. Karate involves lots of focus and seriousness. I remember we weren't allowed to smile or goof around during training. But for some reason I loved that environment.

A lot of the athletes had their on and off switch. You can see a big difference in how they act inside of the dojo and outside of the dojo. And maybe that's what drove me into the sport. Once I put the karate uniform on I felt like a complete different person, like a samurai, and I loved being able to have that switch.

Also, there were two world champions in the dojo in Hawaii. I looked up to them a lot growing up and loved seeing them compete.

Specific breakthrough moment?

It was 2012 World Championships in Paris, France. I was about 20 years old, and it was my second world championships I ever attended, and that year I placed third.

I was able to share the podium with my teammate from the same karate school. She represents Japan but we both trained under the same coach. It was such a surreal moment, because most of the athletes there were people I saw only through DVDs or YouTube. To be able to win a bronze medal at that competition was a big deal for me.

That competition overall was a blur because I was so focused on my performance. I didn't even know I made the semi final match, let alone the bronze medal match.

This competition changed my life. It was the moment I realized I was one of the best in the world.

What's the most grueling workout you've ever done?

I've trained non-stop for 10 hours straight. No lunch break or dinner break. We were just allowed to eat bananas and of course water, but nothing else. It was probably one of the most interesting, grueling and mentally challenging experiences I've ever had.

What would you change about karate?

I want people to see what karate truly is. It's not about breaking bricks or punching each other. It's an art, a lifestyle and people can benefit from it and apply it to their daily lives once they understand. But unfortunately, because of movies and TV shows its portrayed differently. It's an art form, especially with my own discipline, which is kata. Once people understand and see what we do I think they can appreciate the art more. Its like figure skating ... but without music!

Earliest memory of watching the Olympics?

I remember watching the 2008 Beijing Olympics on TV, while I was at physical therapy working on my knee in Hawaii. Everyone's eyes were glued to the screen and I remember watching these athletes flipping and jumping and was just amazed with what they could do.

I have always been a huge fan of the Olympics. Winter Olympics and summer Olympics. I watched it all the time. All different kind of sports too. I sometimes imagined how my life will be different if I played a sport that was in the Olympics. How different will my life be? And how cool will it be to be able to say "I am training for the Olympics"?

Karate was not in the Olympics then and it didn't seem like it would ever be in it. So when I watched the Olympics, it felt like I was watching something that was completely out of my own reach. But now I am happy and excited to say I am training for the Olympics! I am really living the dream.

Advice you'd give a young karateka?

Have passion in what you do and have the patience. Everything takes time, but if you put in work, the result will show.

RESCHEDULED:

USANKF National Championships and Team Trials

NEW DATES: September 1 Thru 5, 2021 in Chicago, Illinois



Seiwa Kai Around the Globe



Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai International



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Vice President: Satoru Takahashi



Vice President: Vassie Naidoo

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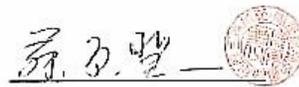
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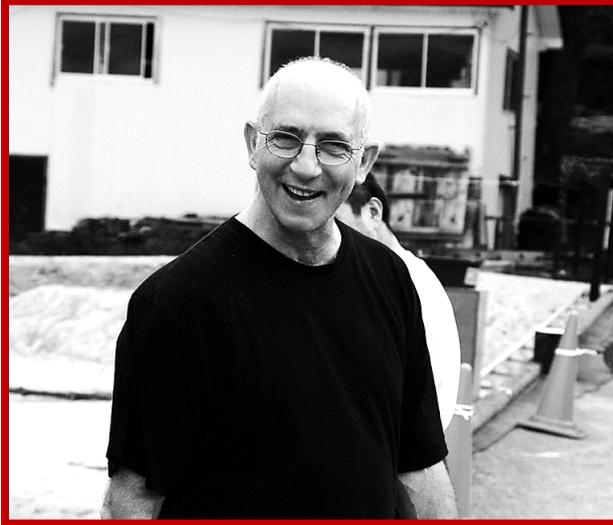


Goju Ryu Karate-Do Seiwa Kai International
Member of
All Japan Karate-Do Federation
All Japan Karate-Do Federation Goju Kai



Seiichi Fujiwara (President)

“Lead them by political maneuvers, restrain them with punishments: the people will become cunning and shameless. Lead them by virtue, restrain them with ritual: they will develop a sense of shame and a sense of participation.” Confucius 孔子 (Koshi)



Words from Leo Lipinski – Words for Reflection Reposted by Marie Tanabalan

Over the past 10 years and more I was often asked what legacy is being created here in Britain/England. I have given this question much thought in the past few years especially in the light of the fact that day by day I am ageing and feeling the effects of this. I will give this question a somewhat long-winded answer.

I have always thought of myself as a student, learning daily from everything I do. This includes my feelings about karate. I go to Japan every year and have been for nearly 50 years. Not for a week or just to attend a seminar but for months on end, sometimes for as long as 6 months. I go there to learn. I go there to try to understand what they teach. Often, I hear people say when they are told something “I know, I know” Common words. I will say hand on heart I have never used these words in relation to karate. In the times I had the chance to train with teachers such as Tasaki Sensei and Shiomi Sensei I never ever said to such teachers “I know.” If I know, why would I be there in the first place. So, I always responded yes Sensei and tried to absorb their teaching. I still do the same with Fujiwara Shihan and others. I go to Japan to learn as much as they are willing to teach me.

Moving on from this, when I say I go as a student, this is the truth. It is also the truth that I learn from all of you even when I am teaching. That is how I think of teaching – sharing information with other likeminded students who are all travelling the same road. It just happens some of us started on the road earlier than others.

Back to the question of a legacy here in England. I will start this by saying I am not English. I am an immigrant with an immigrant's mentality. I am not “hindered” by the constraints of being British. Transferring this to karate I have had a very open policy about taking in people from outside of Seiwakai. Tasaki sensei in truth was not completely in favor of this but he let me get on with it as does Fujiwara Shihan. Today our organization is a mixture of karate cultures. Some are from “mixed” karate styles, some from other forms of Goju Ryu which are actually quite different from Tasaki Sensei's Goju Ryu. What I hope they learn are the values that come with being part of the/ Seiwakai family. In addition to good karate, it is also about manners and respect. Certainly, this is the way of Seiwakai in Japan.

We have been lucky that we have grown and grown even though at the same time losing some people. A few have left when they were not thought good enough to grade by Fujiwara Shihan and me.

As a result of this growth, we now have a pool of leaders of various ages, ranging from 25 up to the late 50's. I refer to people with the rank of 1st Dan right up to two with 7th Dan. This provides

Seiwakai England with quality, integrity and most of all, continuity. All of these people and their students are the legacy. Many in this band of instructors have management and leadership qualities. They are the Seiwakai of the future. We have many in various age groups, 25-40, 40-50 and 50-60. Many are growing in technical knowledge and skill by training very regularly on seminars. Once we get past any politics, and we do not need this as many have seen who attend my regular weekend seminars, we have a truly amazing group of people. They are the legacy for the future and for continuity. A growing group of teachers without personal agendas which get in the way of growing our karate and improving our standards. We do not run Seiwakai by meetings and typical karate organizational processes. It is all by agreement and consensus hopefully of people who are there because they are passionate about karate and not about themselves. I am an older student doing the same as you do. We do not require bosses.



Seiwakai International Seminar



Japan has announced that because of the pandemic, it is not allowing foreign spectators into the country during the period surrounding the Olympics. Consequently, the Omagari seminars will be conducted via Zoom and will begin in late July.

Dates will be arranged to accommodate each continent.

More information will be posted on the various Facebook pages when the dates are finalized.

JKF Goju Kai Overseas Seminar and Tournament



Since Japan has announced that foreigners will not be allowed into the country during this time period, the JKF Goju Kai Seminar will be only for those who are living in Japan.