Shihan Yamakura Visits Washington State

by Carol Gittins

In May, Shihan Yamakura spent an extended and busy weekend in the Pacific Northwest. After arriving in Seattle late Friday afternoon, he had dinner with Boyd and Carol Gittins. The next morning, Mr. Yamakura traveled to Bellingham to attend a shinsa testing and present seminars at Mr. Duane Sammons’ dojo, the Bellingham Academy of Self Defense. After the promotional testing and seminars, BASD members hosted a potluck dinner so they could spend time socializing with Mr. Yamakura before he returned to Seattle.

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On Sunday, Mr. Yamakura gave two seminars at Seattle Central Community College, the site of Mr. Boyd Gittins’ dojo. Members of the KinNamiKan dojo, and Dennis and Sue Pfendler, yudan-sha students of Mr. Steve Wilson, also attended the seminars. During the first seminar, which was designed for students below green belt, Mr. Yamakura had the students do kihon and kihon ido basics before he led them through Gekisai Dai Ichi. Mr. Gittins commented, “In one lesson, Mr. Yamakura gets students to do things that I’ve been trying for months to get them to do.” In the second seminar, Mr. Yamakura worked with brown and black belts, focusing primarily on kata. Afterwards, the participants ate dinner together and continued their discussion on martial arts principles.

Monday, Mr. Yamakura and Carol Gittins worked on the structure for Volume III of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do series before going to Mrs. Gittins’ KinNamiKan dojo for a workout with upper-level black belts of the Seattle area. The workout emphasized advanced kata and energy generation, including breathing and use of ki.

During the workout, Mr. Yamakura evaluated two students for advancement in rank. Klayton Kuzminski received his yon-dan, and Alexis Crane earned her ni-dan. Both have studied karate for over a decade and are dedicated students of the martial arts. In addition to their years of training in the GKK, both Mr. Kuzminski and Ms. Crane have studied aikido. Mr. Kuzminski was the head instructor for the North Kitsap Karate Club for several years before his job took him to another city. In addition to training in the KinNamiKan dojo and teaching beginning students, Ms. Crane studies Tae Kwon Do. Their promotions are well-deserved.

As always, every student at every event came away with increased knowledge of GojuRyu karate and a deep appreciation of Mr. Yamakura and his teaching. Thank you for visiting us, Sensei Yamakura.