The GKK Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary!!!

On June 25th, 26th and 27th, the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Members from four countries, nine states and seventeen schools attended the celebration in Toledo, Ohio, the birthplace of the GKK. All had a great time, made new friends and reminisced with old ones. There is no better way to describe the events than to have our members tell it in their own words. I thank all of you for your contributions to this month's Newsletter.

On June 25th, 26th and 27th, the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Members from four countries, nine states and seventeen schools attended the celebration in Toledo, Ohio, the birthplace of the GKK. All had a great time, made new friends and reminisced with old ones. There is no better way to describe the events than to have our members tell it in their own words. I thank all of you for your contributions to this month's Newsletter.

Nimrod Astel – GKK Israel; Mr. Niv and I, representing the Aum-Dojo from Israel , made a long journey in order to attend the GKK 50 year anniversary. For the both of us it was a "show down" of all which we have worked to accomplish for a long time. Mr. Niv was tested and promoted to his Shodan Rank. This is a major event for us. For him, from all the obvious reasons one could imagine. For me, because he is my first student awarded with this rank and the first one to have come this far in our Dojo. A great pride to all of us here in Israel . It was also my honor and great privilege to share my thoughts and experience on two subjects which are of great significance to me. The practical and effective aspects of reality based combat survival training – which can save our lives. As well as the healing arts - which can make our lives so much better. I see both aspects as related and complementary to our traditional practice of the art. Additionally, a serious project in which one of our dojo members Mr. Shraga Lapides and I were engaged in for the past year came to completion – The translation to Hebrew and printing of the first Hebrew edition of Yamakura Shihan book Vol. 1. This project, referred to by Kyoshi Stamper as "A Labor Of Love", was carried out for the benefit of all the students here in Israel . It was our great pleasure to present Yamakura Shihan with the First Copy of the First Hebrew edition of his First book. The social aspects of this journey were wonderful. We have met the nicest and kindest people who made us feel welcome. The generous hospitality of the GKK and the support which we have received from the senior teachers and each of the practitioners were heartwarming. I am happy to say that we have met the most qualified teachers and colleagues and made new friends. With all honesty and modesty… I couldn't be any prouder or happier with what we have accomplished here in Israel in the past few years. But, none of this would have happened if it wasn't for this phenomenal organization, its members and its leaders. Just 4 years ago to this date, when I was first making my way into the GKK I was requested by Kyoshi Stamper to explain what it is that I am looking for – "To make sure the organization can meet my needs" as he wrote. In my response I wrote – "I'm looking for a home that will enable the progress of my professional skills and my personal growth as a budoka as well as an instructor, and one that will provide flourish ground for my future students to prosper". Well, I couldn't have found a better place!!! I started by saying what a long journey we have made all the way from Israel . However, it was worth every mile traveled and every dollar spent. On behalf of Mr. Niv and myself, I thank all of you wonderful people for this great experience. We have learnt a lot and enjoyed every minute of it. I specifically wish to thank Kyoshi Ken Maunz for hosting us in his dojo and for making us feel at home and to Kyoshi Rich Stamper who cared for us and supported us in ways that words simply could not explain. It is my hope that it won't be 50 years before our next gathering. John Roath, GKK Canada; The 50th Anniversary Celebration for me was a memorable experience both from a training and a social perspective Unfortunately, I missed some of the first day seminars (Definitely my loss). However, the seminars I was able to attend were very well done and I believe I learned something from each one. They were definitely an opportunity to train with knowledgeable instructors and people from many different areas within the GKK. It was a positive learning environment that was very enjoyable.

I was also able to meet people who until then I had only known of from pictures in Book 2 or through the internet group or the newsletter. Everyone seemed so happy to be there that you couldn't help but have a good time. I truly appreciated the opportunity as did others I talked to from our group who were also impressed by their experience.

I also enjoyed the banquet where I was able to get a better sense of the 50 year history of the GKK and those have contributed to it. People who have given freely of themselves asking for so little in return. As someone relatively new to the GKK I personally feel a great debt there and admire them for their contributions.

What more can I say but.....Thank you very much, it was a great time and a great event! Aleojin Rios, GKK Panama; The idea of attending the GKK 50th Anniversary Celebration was for sure exciting enough as for me to get on a plane and travel 3,000 miles from Panama City all the way to Detroit. It was one of the best karate events I have ever attende in twenty five years of training. The logistics and arrangements were all covered to the smallest detail making of this celebration a great success and a memorable experience for those of us who were fortunate enough to be there. C leaders, representatives, directors, and members in general had the opportunity to get to know each other and create strong bonds of friendship and fellowship during this event. It felt good to finally put a face to all the names of people I had read about, but never had a chance to meet before. There were seminars covering a great variety of topics. Such seminars were directed by our very own members who shared voluntarily their talents, skills, and knowledge. Each of these seminars provided valuable information that will help us improve our karate training. My respect and gratitude to a those instructors who took the time to prepare these seminars as well as everyone who attended them. The closing was a wonderful performance of traditional Japanese music with drums during the banquet. It was amazing to see how every single one of us was delighted with the skills and marvelous talent that those kids shared with us. The food was absolutely a heavenly experience to everyone’s taste. I felt privileged not just for being there, but also for being a member of a great organization. Finally, I would like to thank Yamakura Shihan, Stamper Sensei and their team who made possible for all of us to be part of this celebration. I’m looking forward to attending another celebration like this. Carol Gittins, Edmonds, Washington; For me, the best parts were connecting with old friends I haven’t

seen for awhile—Brad Smith, Rick Algee, Ken Maunz, Joe Ordonez, and Dave Shaneman, as well as many others—and making new acquaintances in karate—Nimrod Astel, Nancy Ault and her students, Aleojin Rios, and so many others. It was wonderful seeing so many black belts in one place, all dedicated to improving their martial arts skills and sharing their knowledge. All of our dojo in the NW are small, so seeing 50 black belts in the same room was a powerful experience. Let’s do it again in ten years! Dwight Scales, Toledo, Ohio; I was already proud of our organization. From the leaders to the students we show our strength in our cohesiveness. The Anniversary Celebration truly reflected this fact. Representatives from around the globe, coming together for a common cause, what a wonderful experience! I especially enjoyed learning new methods of applying the karate that I already know; expounding on techniques. It showed me that one is never too far along in one’s studies to learn new and more effective ways of doing something. I look forward to continuing this learning process. I will always reflect on this event with pride, knowing that I am a part of such a fantastic organization. Mark Cramer, Toledo, Ohio; The GKK 50th Anniversary Celebration was one of the most impressive events that I’ve been to. Four nations were represented – Israel, Panama, Canada, and the United States. Many states were represented from the west coast to the east coast and through the heart to the country – Alaska, California, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Washington. I believe that about 140 GKK members were present. The seminars were conducted by extremely competent instructors. The banquet supplied us with good food, pleasant beverages, and fantastic entertainment. (Taiko drummers played for thirty minutes, and put everyone in an upbeat mood.) However, for me the greatest part of the celebration was meeting the GKK members who I hadn’t previously known, getting together with old friends from within the GKK, and seeing people who I haven’t seen for decades. We shouldn’t wait another fifty years before we do something like this again. We need to get together as a group more often. Joe Ordonez, Haines, Alaska; It was a long journey from Alaska to travel to Toledo for the 50th GKK anniversary. Luckily I traveled first class, I had lots of frequent flier miles built up! I arrived in Detroit where Mr. Ed Myers picked me up and drove me to Toledo. Thanks, Ed! The event was very positive for me. Living in Alaska, it is easy to feel isolated from the organization and the greater karate world at large. And for me, as Sensei and chief instructor, I spend the majority of my time teaching and practicing but very little time receiving instruction and pointers. So my goal was to receive some instruction and connect with the organization at large. My goals were met. I enjoyed meeting the other karateka. I enjoyed the instruction I received, especially the seminars with Shihan Yamakura. Participating in the kata competition was enjoyable for me, as I have not competed in many years. I enjoyed seeing how karateka from the other dojos perform their katas; it was nice to see how each dojo has its own personality. And the Shihan Yamakura black belt kata seminar with 42 black belts performing kata at the same time was very powerful. I would like to extend an invitation to any and all GKK members to visit us here in Haines, Alaska. Haines is a beautiful town and we have a dedicated group of students here- 3 black belts, 1 brown belt, 2 green belts and several white belts. I own a tour company so I can help set you up with wildlife viewing, kayaking, rafting, flightseeing or any other type of tour you may be interested in. You can contact me at joe@joeordonez.com. Special thanks to Sensei Stamper and all those who put in the hard work to make this special event happen. Robert J. DaLessio, Renshi, Bakersfield Fajukan, Bakersfield, California; The opportunity to be able to take part in our organization's 50th year anniversary was a great honor. This was not only a time to reflect on the hard work and dedication of those who have brought us to this point in the road, but also a great opportunity to foresee the great future of this organization as so well illustrated by all the hard work and commitment by those who made this opportunity possible for all. As many of us, I have trained with other groups and organizations in the past. Each time I train and interact with others from the GKK it makes my heart smile as I know that I am in the right place. If the selfless efforts of those who orchestrated, taught and participated in this great event is any indication of this organizations future then I am happy to say that the GKK will continue to be a great organization where good people will continue to do the right things, for the right reasons, for generations to come. It was my honor to be fortunate enough to attend. Mike Galose, Findlay, Ohio; The Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai is stronger than ever! Recently, at the Fiftieth Anniversary, talented karateka from throughout the United States, Israel, Panama and Canada came to practice with one another under the wise leadership of Yamakura Shihan and Stamper Kyoshi. Special thanks are in order to the leaders of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai, and in particular to Dodge Sensei, Myers Sensei and Stamper Sensei for the innumerable hours spent in planning, preparation and execution of this historic event in the GKK's continuing endeavors to provide legitimate, non-commercial karate training to all those with a sincere desire to learn. My personal quest to become proficient at the art of karate spans well over thirty years. I started training in 1970 at the Shindo-Kan Academy of Karate under Jack Coleman Sensei. The workouts were very mentally and physically taxing for a twelve year old boy. I remember when Mr. Stamper was a ni-dan and wore a black gi. Although there were tremendous athletes on the dojo floor at that time, their kata, footwork and understanding of basic concepts such as ma-ia, suri-ashi and tai-sabaki from kumite no kamae pale in comparison to what we see the GKK Competition Team do today. The point being that knowledge of legitimate Goju-Ryu has grown immeasurably with Yamakura Shihan and Stamper Sensei as our leaders. I am very thankful to them. I am also personally obligated to say that Mark Cramer Sensei has made the GKK a force to be reckoned with in International competition in the WKF, the USAKF and other venues. Personally, Cramer Sensei has taught me a great deal and I am very fortunate. We, the members of the GKK, have tremendous talent in our organization and, equally important, we have an organization with a big heart that cares about its members. This cannot be said of every Goju-Ryu organization. We are fortunate to be a part of this. I practice karate as a way of life and have vowed to show all I know to other karateka who I am lucky enough to practice with. They, too, share their knowledge with me. The GKK is an organization of openness and not one where elite athletes keep their knowledge and talents to themselves. We are truly a group of sincere karateka who practice, learn and teach one another without the interference of egos. True strength of character comes from helping one another reach the next level. This is what our Shihan has taught us. I hope we can all be exemplary of this trait. I know this through experience as I was Yamakura Shihan's

partner for the ran-gekki session of our GKK DVDs. All I can say is that I was never hit from so many directions with such skillful targeting in my entire life. This includes my three year career as a U. S. Marine where I attained the proud rank of sergeant. The skill, heart and talent I saw at the GKK fiftieth anniversary make me very proud. Senseis Nancy Ault, Nimrod Astel, Robert DaLessio, Bill Kane, Ken Maunz, Mark Cramer, Carol Gittins, Dwight Scales and many others were there and one could sense their dedication without them speaking a word. May this level of dedication continue for the next fifty years. Nancy Ault, Damariscotta, Maine; The occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the GKK afforded a most impressive collection of talented karateka from near and far. It was an honor to partake of this momentous occasion and be in the presence of many of the early GKK initiators. Thank you for all your earnest efforts so that us ‘new’ karateka have a considerable understanding of the esteemed history. Thank you to all the people that helped organize this event and those that traveled from afar to attend. Our dojo from Maine had a wonderful time and we look forward to assembling again, sooner than another 50 years! Arrigato! Adrienne Leeman, Damariscotta, Maine; I had a wonderful time in Toledo. I came home newly invigorated, inspired and recharged. It was such an Honor to train under Yamakura Shihan, also Sensei Ken and Sensei Dave stand out in my mind. I found it energizing and informative. It was great being able to meet other karateka from around the world. I think we should do something like this more often. Bill Kane, Godan, Ambler GKK; On behalf of myself and the rest of the Ambler GKK dojo, I wanted to once again express our appreciation to you and the rest of the GKK leadership for your efforts in making last weekend a supreme success, and for many of us, an unforgettable experience. The quality of the seminar instructors was excellent and reflects quite well on the GKK membership and represented dojos. The musical entertainment was superb, speakers were enlightening/engaging and even the Master of Ceremonies' was excellent. We're proud to be part of the GKK and look forward to our continued support and involvement with the organization. Helen Muth, Nidan, Ambler GKK; The GKK 50th Anniversary event was a wonderful introduction to the leaders, history and legacy of the organization. I very much appreciated the time and effort by all the session leaders. I especially enjoyed the Kata Tournament, Jujitsu and Street Combat sessions. The banquet entertainment was a real treat as well. In general the opportunity to socialize and interact with all the karate-ka practitioners was the main benefit of the seminar. Thanks to all the organizers and session leaders for a great event! Howard Blum, Nidan, Ambler GKK; The 50th GKK anniversary was a great event! Although we really only had two full days together, the blend of activities was extremely well balanced, from Japanese medicine to kata tournament to street self defense to use of energy and kihon drills. Many thanks to the session leaders and event organizers. The most memorable impact for me was meeting so many practitioners from different parts of the country and as far away as Israel. Learning about how they view GoJu - teaching it and doing it - comparing and contrasting my thinking with theirs was very inspiring and formative. To everyone - thanks for a really great experience! Allen “Zak” Zaklad, Sandan, Ambler GKK ; I had a fabulous time at the GKK anniversary event. I particularly enjoyed meeting many of the GKK founders and long-time members, with whom I have only had email conversation. To me, GKK is a spiritual community and meeting the people & training with them was terrific. The banquet was well-planned, delightful, and well-executed. The atmosphere of sharing and working together is wonderful and I think Miyagi Sensei would be pleased with our organization. I loved having more time with Mr. Yamakura in the elder's and energy flow sessions. Also, Ms. Nancy’s women's self-defense, Mr. Greg's promotion, Ms. Carol's bunkai, and Mr. Nimrod's Shiatsu sessions stood out for me. I am honored to be a part of GKK Dr. Fred Koslowski, 4th kyu, Ambler GKK; The kyu rank seminar was excellent. High energy warm-up and rapid conduct of the class kept people active and engaged. Focus on bunkai and application was especially helpful in bringing kata and kihon to life. John Barton, Shodan, Ambler GKK; “The GKK 50th Anniversary Celebration was a wonderful experience and fantastic opportunity to train directly with some of the world’s top martial arts instructors. The variety of styles and breadth of knowledge truly complimented each other making for a comprehensive training experience. GKK members are very fortunate to have such high caliber instructors come together and share their knowledge. Meeting and training with such a wide array of talented martial artists has been a great inspiration. Many thanks to the GKK, its members, and everyone who helped arrange the event. Well done!” Paul Stetsko, Nidan, Ambler GKK; The GKK 50th anniversary celebration was a well organized gathering that demonstrated the core values of the organization as a whole. The cooperative nature in each of the sessions brought home the message that the GKK is really a group of people with similar attitudes towards learning, teaching and working together. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated people within the group that are willing and able to share what they have learned over the years with all the members of the organization. It was an experience that everyone will benefit from. Tom Letizio, Shodan, Ambler GKK; I found the anniversary event to be a great learning experience as well as a good workout. I liked the way the events were organized so I could pace myself throughout the weekend, with the more physical classes at the tail end. In retrospect, I should have worn my athletic-supporter to Mr. Astel’s class. I came away from the weekend inspired to continue my learning in Goju. Hopefully in the future I will be able to give back to the next generation of students what was given me at the GKK event. Vic Lim, Yondan, Ambler GKK; GKK's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Conference was a great event. My direct exposure to the GKK organization has been through Renshi Brad Smith and Shihan Yamakura. I am very pleased to see that their willingness to help others is shared by every member of the GKK that I met. We have a similar spirit within the Ambler GKK dojo and I am proud that we belong to the GKK organization. I hope the GKK decides to make the conference a regular event since I believe that national conferences, such as the one that was just held, are beneficial to members and will make the GKK a stronger organization. Steven Muth, Shodan, Ambler GKK; I thought that the entire weekend was a great learning experience. I really enjoyed meeting people from other dojos, and trading thoughts and perceptions with them. I was also really pleased I got the chance to train under the dignitaries of the GKK, such as Rich Stamper and Sensei Yamakura. I thought that on the whole, there was less of a focus on how to do Goju-ryu and more on different ways and styles of practicing and executing Goju. In my opinion, this was one of the greatest strengths of the conference. I learned many things, but most of them were not mere technicalities of the Goju

style, but how to deal with life in general. Overall, I would rank this as a very important step concerning my growth in karate. Steven Rusche, Shodan, Ambler GKK; The weekend was a wonderful opportunity to study karate with a variety of masters, as well as to meet other GKK members from all over the world and feel connected to the larger organization. Everyone learned new skills, met new friends, and came away energized to study further in our martial arts. Gary Mazzotti, Springfield, Illinois; What struck me about the trip was not only how much older we are, but how much better shape we are in than the rest of the general population. I have seen guys our age that were in a lot worse shape. I especially appreciated sensei Yamakura's seminar on chi and soft power. I have been working tai chi and hung gar kung fu and what he said reinforced a lot of the principles my sifu has been espousing. Kampai! Bill Handren, Dwight, Illinois; Room;$275.00, Rental Car; $205.00, Meals; $200.00. Having Mister Stamper stop his car if front of the hotel, get out and sing "Happy Wedding Anniversary" to my wife and I on June 27th.....Priceless!