

October 2016 Newsletter
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

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Shihan Yamakura Visits the Northwest Region

By Carol Gittins and Steve Hampsten

In June, Shihan Yamakura led three days of classes at the Meadowbrook Community Center in Seattle, WA. GKK members from the KinNamiKan, the BASD in Bellingham, and the Skagit Valley dojo, along with guests, took advantage of this opportunity to learn from Shihan. All sessions were held at the Meadowbrook Community Center in the curiously angular crescent-shaped room.

Friday Class: Front; Yumi Berg, Shihan Yamakura, Carol Gittins. Back; Scott Schweizer, Andrew McLane, Tom Baldrige, Chris Jordan, Steve Hampsten.

Our first class, Friday, was focused on reviewing kata up through Seipai with emphasis on breathing and energy visualization. We also spent time practicing the three UechiRyu kata that Sensei has been teaching us from his days in Boston, as well as working on a new Uechi-style partner drill.

Our Seattle-based group was joined by Tom Baldrige from Bellingham, and Scott Schweizer from NWMA in nearby Bothell. Dinner was a small group at a Japanese izakaya and ramen restaurant; the conversation flowed and a good time was had all around.



Saturday Class: Front; Christin Sulit, Yumi Berg, Shihan Yamakura, Tom McKeon, Doug Lafferty, Chris Jordan, Carol Gittins. Back; Steve Hampsten, Bill Carter, Andrew McLane, Boyd Gittins, Ricky Wright, Matt Stockbridge, Klayton Kuzminski.

Saturday's class was a thorough review of all the kata, including Kihon Kata and Uke no Kata, again "warming up" with the lower kata as well as energy visualization performed during kata. Many of the kata were done three times before going to the next one: half-speed/focus, then at three-quarter's speed, and finally at full speed and focus. This class continued the previous day's review of Uechi kata, and included individual kata performances from the junior black belts. Three members of the BASD, Bill Carter, Tom McKeon, and Doug Lafferty joined their Seattle area doshi for this session. During the class, Shihan Yamakura awarded Boyd Gittins and Carol Gittins their seventh degree certificates. A post-workout meal was held at Elliott Bay Brewery to honor the occasion



Carol Gittins, Shihan Yamakura, Boyd Gittins.



Sunday Class: Front; Chris Jordan, Christian Sulit, Bill Giller, Shihan Yamakura, Yumi Berg, Carol Gittins, Steve Hampsten. Back; Boyd Gittins, Ricky Wright, Andrew McLane, Matt Stockbridge, Klayton Kuzminski.

During Sunday's class, Shihan Yamakura introduced another sparring drill and reviewed all of the kata, with added emphasis on Kururunfa and Suparinpei kata. In closing, Mr. Yamakura also gave advice on the next steps in our training. In the evening, most of the class gathered at the Gittins' home for dinner and conversation.

On Sunday, Carol and Steve took Mr. Yamakura on a tour of Whidbey Island, the biggest island in Washington. They stopped at parks and beaches, ate freshly caught fish, and hit a few of the tourist attractions, including a ferry trip.

The Northwest GKK members thank Shihan Yamakura for his time and willingness to share his knowledge with us. We will continue to work diligently so that next year Mr. Yamakura will give us more material to study. Onegaishimashita!

Stepping Out of Our Comfort Zone in the Path of Karate

By Zorri Eliraz, Aum-Dojo, Israel

We all know this very well: most of the time, we won't cross the borders of our comfort zone unless we are forced to. Sometimes, we might feel a subtle urge inside of us, a weak voice telling us something in us needs to change. As time passes by, this small voice might get louder. Still we won't move unless so called "bad circumstances" don't leave us any other choice... Why do we need to get ill, fired, miserable, lonely, desperate, or suffer other great losses in order to move forward in our lives? Isn't there any other way? Isn't there a way where we consciously choose to expand the borders of our comfort zone, without going through intense suffering?

Well, of course there is! For me, walking the path of karate is definitely part of this other way! No outer circumstance has ever forced me to train. I'm totally free to quit training at any time, with no direct penalty. Yes, maybe I might lose some of my karate friends, but then again, I have so many friends... Yet, although this path is totally out of my comfort zone, here I am walking this path. Over and over again, I'm asked to expand far beyond my current personality. It's not enough to improve a little, to get a little stronger, agile, faster or accurate. No! I'm being asked to take quantum leaps of faith into the unknown. In order to grow in the path of karate, I need to go through internal evolutions and revolutions. I have to endure physical pain and emotional strain. I have to confront fears and slay some wild dragons. And I'm consciously choosing to walk this way, in order to evolve and grow!!!

In fact, stepping into the dojo for the first time was already totally out of my comfort zone. Maybe some of you have had the luck to be born in a martial arts family with a dojo in their backyard. Or maybe you've started training as a kid. But for me, at the age of 42, even this first small baby step did feel so weird and unknown. So why did I do that?

Well, my story starts a month before the Jewish holyday of "Purim". Similar to Halloween - one of the traditions of this holiday is the invitation to wear costumes. I love this! And over the years I started using this holiday as a spiritual practice for inner growth. The basic idea is not choosing to disguise into something that is not connected to me at all. Instead it's about opening the gates of my sub-conscious, and let some repressed part of me come to the surface of my consciousness. Those repressed parts are in the sub-conscious for many reasons connected to our education, society's norms, our life experience etc. Yet, although repressed, they are still part of us. Freeing them from the chains that imprison them in the sub-conscious is an amazing experience! And in the past, I've already done some meaningful changes through this process. Yes, indeed, it is a process! I'm starting the process a month before the holiday, because those repressed characters in us need some time to get used to the bright sunlight... And I need time too, to get used to them, and to prepare the costume. The culminating point of this process is the holiday itself. But after that, if I decide to continue with this process, there's much more work to do... The final goal for this repressed character is to receive a central part on my inner conscious stage. It should be part of my everyday life, as many of the other roles I'm playing ("mother", "daughter", "software engineer", "best friend" etc).



So, two and a half years ago, I was starting the process, and to my uttermost surprise, the character that was coming up inside of me was "Zorro" – the black masked character with a black cape, riding his black horse and using his agility and his sword to defend the defenseless. I was so surprised! It was the first time a male character came up to me in such a process. But I knew I had to trust the process. So I went to a local toy store and bought a cheap plastic sword. There I was, standing in front of the mirror, with a plastic sword in my hand. And it looked... ridiculous. So my inner Zorro instructed me to seek some sword lessons, before the holiday. This is how I first met Sensei Nimrod Astel, and entered his dojo... I was excited, but felt totally insecure, as I had never done any other physical activity before. I knew myself as being clumsy, with no muscular strength, no coordination and no balance. So, this was totally out of my comfort zone!!! But, my teacher reassured me, and safely led me step by step into that journey. Although I initially came only for "a few lessons in the art of sword", I found myself practicing at home and really enjoying it. Soon enough I joined self-defense classes and some other of my Sensei's trainings. A couple of months later I started practicing karate! And since then, this has become a central part of my life! Many times, I'm still surprised that this is where life has taken me to. And I'm deeply grateful to my Sensei!

Well, this is an example of initiating a life change without going through the suffering which usually forces us to grow. As Halloween is approaching, I invite everyone to open the gates of their sub-conscious, and play with a new character in their life...

But meanwhile, I'm pretty sure many of us are growing through the challenges of karate training! Although your first step in the dojo might not have been as dramatic as mine, sooner or later each one of us encounters deep challenges in the dojo. And those challenges are forcing us to expand beyond ourselves! We cannot stay the same person and walk the path of the karate-do. Because it's not only about training the body, it's about training our minds and spirit. But this, I'm sure, every karateka knows deeply...

(Feel free to contact me at: zorri@aum-dojo.com)

New York Seminar

By Frank Matt

News from Glens Falls New York. We will be holding a GKK seminar October 14 and 15 at the Adirondack Sports Complex this year. We moved from our little dojo in Corinth to a bigger venue in Glens Falls.

Mr. Ed Myers will be leading the classes this year and I hope many of you can make it. We will have a Friday evening general class from 7 -9pm, and Saturday from 9:30 am until around 5pm .

You can pre-register on line at adirondacksportscomplex/programfinder.cfm. Click on New York Seminar. The cost will be 15.00 for the two days. We have a little cafe on site for lunch on Saturday with all kinds of stuff.

I will plan on a dinner at a local restaurant after class Friday night.

Please contact me at fmatt04348@yahoo.com. with any questions.

2016 USA Goju-Ryu Karate-do Seiwakai Annual Training Seminar

with JKF Gojukai & Seiwakai Shinsa Santa Monica, CA, USA

Friday-Sunday, Nov. 4, 5, & 6, 2016

Open to all Karate Practitioners.

Three days of training in sunny Santa Monica, California with Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi, 8th Dan -- President and Head Instructor of Goju-Ryu Seiwakai and Head of the JKF Gojukai Overseas Committee;

Vassie Naidoo Shihan, 7th Dan -- President of Seiwakai USA;

Desmond Tuck Shihan, 7th Dan -- Vice-President of Seiwakai USA; and other Senior Instructors from the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Australia. The emphasis will be on kihon waza, kata, and practical applications of Goju-Ryu Karate-do.

You will leave this seminar with significant improvement of your kata performance, kata bunkai, Goju-Ryu style kumite, and a deeper understanding of Karatedo.

Please plan on joining us for insightful instruction, sweat, beach training, and camaraderie, at the Rustic Canyon Recreation Center - 601 Latimer Road Santa Monica, CA 90402 Special room rates are available (under KICK) at the Travelodge Santa Monica 3102 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 450-5766

For registration forms please visit; <http://www.greatlakesseiwakai.com/tournaments-and-seminars.html>

USA Karate Federation 42nd Consecutive National Championships

By Patrick Hickey

Saturday November 12, 2016

Information at USA Karate Federation National Championships . Registration is now open!

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