



# Wado International Karate-Do Federation

## DOJO CONNECTION

July 2006

### HEIYOSHI

Arturo Girona

Some fifteen years ago, during the first WIKF trip to Japan, Suzuki Sensei had some T-shirts printed with the WIKF logo and the kanji for HEIYOSHI, which roughly translates as "Undying Spirit." Today I cannot think of a more appropriate description for an extraordinary man who only a few months ago was near death, but who decided that his mission in life had not yet been completed.

The weekend of June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, Sensei Tom Kosslow and I experienced what many thought could never happen again: a WIKF leader's course taught by Tatsuo Suzuki. Over 50 of the most senior WIKF students from several European countries, plus the United States, showed up in London not only to learn from him but to pay homage to his courage and dedication.

It was refreshing to see Sensei correcting technique for a group that included the likes of Hiroji Fukazawa, Jon Wicks, David Allsop, Wim Massie, Tony Goncalves, and a bunch of 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Degree Black Belts. Only a leader of the stature of Suzuki Sensei would make a group such as this repeat *Pinan Nidan* over and over again ("Still no good. AGAIN!"). It is this attention to detail and level of quality control that makes WIKF special. Fukazawa Sensei was just another student being thrown around by some 4<sup>th</sup> Dan while practicing Tanto Dori. Other students, some of them in their late fifties and early sixties, were going at it as if they were twenty years younger. For Suzuki Sensei, there are no excuses, only hard training. And who would dare to make any excuses to a 78 year old that until a few days before this course still had a feeding tube attached to his body anyway?

The results of Suzuki Sensei's dedication are visible: the technical level of everyone who attended this course was uniformly good. Yes, there are some better than others, but there was not a single person

who didn't belong. It is this depth of talent within the organization that distinguishes WIKF and will ensure its continuity. Yes, Sensei, we still want you around for many years so that you can continue ridiculing our Pinan Nidan, but we also hope that you can take some comfort in what you have built: a strong foundation of loyalty, talented and dedicated students that will carry on your legacy. Long live Suzuki Sensei and WIKF!



*Arturo Gerona, Suzuki Sensei, Tom Kosslow*



*WIKF Members at dinner*



*Suzuki Sensei and his wife, Eleni*



**Blackmail photo**

### **NORTH AMERICAN WIKF SUMMER TRAINING CAMP IN COLORADO**

WIKF members gathered for training in Estes, Colorado during the month of June. Our summer camp was sponsored this year by Sensei Mike Bevins. This was Sensei Bevins first time to sponsor the summer training camp and he did an excellent job of organizing everything. I am certain he learned a lot (beyond technique) from this experience.

Sensei Jon Wicks, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, was our guest instructor for the camp. Those of you who have never trained with Sensei Wicks missed a real opportunity

to receive instruction from one of the top karate teachers in the world. Sensei Wicks is thoroughly knowledgeable in all aspect of the WIKF curriculum. His instruction at the camp included such diverse topics as Tachi Dori (sword defense) , Tanto Dori (knife defense), and kata.

Morning training was conducted by Sensei Bevins and Sensei Burns. Everyone learned quickly about training in the altitude of Colorado. This is quite a different experience even if you think you are in shape.

One afternoon we all enjoyed horseback riding in the National Park led by the Texas cowboys and cowgirls. However it was the Utah cowboy, Doug Jepperson , who demonstrated superb horsemanship. But that's another story which someone else will have to tell you about some other time. Other afternoons were spent in downtown Estes Park souvenir hunting and such.

Each evening we enjoyed each others company for dinner in a different location. Along with the crew from Texas (Brody Burns, Darrin Free, Lisa Free, Bryan Nixon, Tom Scott, Lindsey Kufel, Vincent Garcia, Michael Perez, Dale Gatchalian) we had in attendance Michael Cimino-Hurt (late of Virginia who has now moved to TN), Doug Jepperson and his son Nick from Utah, Curtis Capeling and Philip Briley from Tennessee, and Tom Kosslow from Georgia, and Matt McDonald from California.



*Group Picture Summer training in Estes Park,  
Colorado*



*Horseback riding in Colorado*



*Dinner in Colorado*

### **Recent Promotions**

#### **Newnan Karate Center, Newnan, Georgia:**

**Donald Holcomb** to San Kyu (3<sup>rd</sup> grade Brown Belt)

**Andrea Knoll** to San Kyu.

#### **Academy of Classical Karate-Do, Plano Texas**

**Dale Gatachalian** to Sandan (3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt)

**Tom Scott** to Shodan (1<sup>st</sup> degree Black Belt)



**Dale Gatchalian** and **Tom Scott** pictured with **Sensei Jon Wicks**, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan. Sensei Wicks promoted Dale and Tom after an extensive examination held at the summer camp. Both performed extremely well in spite of the altitude problems we all encountered.

### **YOI**

Tom Kosslow

Watching kata performed at tournaments I am left with the feeling that most of those performers have no real idea about what they are doing. I don't really mean the sequence of moves or the techniques involved. You can tell almost immediately when they begin their kata. They may complete all of the moves correctly and with sharp technique but they don't really get it. My impression is that most of them have never really been in a fight outside of the dojo or they wouldn't perform their kata the way they do.

If you train kata with Suzuki Sensei you will hear him say, "From the beginning." When he says this many students assume that he means from the position after you have come to YOI, the command given in Japanese to signal getting ready to do a kata. But what he really means is to begin in musubi dachi and await the command "yoi." Yoi is the real beginning of any kata. Why is this so? What is really happening here? Why is this the beginning?

While the physical part of the kata begins with the command "hajime" yoi can best be understood as the signal to begin self preparation for combat. The command "yoi" is called out by the instructor to signal to each student that they are to get ready to engage in a combat situation portrayed in that particular kata. The command "yoi" is the mental

preparation to perform kata, the preparation to face not only opponents but also the self.

Imagine this scenario: It's dark, you are alone, and you are suddenly confronted by someone much larger than you who is demanding that you give him money. This is not some self-defense practice, this is not the dojo, and you know your life is in danger.

Potential aggressors depend a lot on your fear and you being intimidated. When you don't react the way they want this is unnerving for them.

Intimidation and outright fear is expected. They are looking for some mental or physical reaction that signals this. Instead when you are standing there unafraid, almost detached and exuding confidence and spirit the attacker gets the idea that, "Something is wrong here. He's not reacting like I want him to. He's not afraid. What does he know?"

If you can do this before the aggressor has actually physically started the assault you have put them on the mental defensive because instead of a victim he finds a person with total concentration, poised and confident---someone fearless and controlled. Someone who is just standing there like a calm tiger ready to explode if necessary but still not taking the offensive. Someone who is thinking, "Wow. So this is how it happens. Well, I've trained 30 years for just this moment. Let's find out if this stuff really works." Not an easy mark, not the profile of a victim at all.

Think if you could practice this feeling and see such a confrontation unfold slowly while maintaining a mental state within which you could act freely without psychological reactions interfering. Well it is something you can practice through kata. If you just perform the "yoi" preparatory move, even a thousand times, in a normal mental frame of mind, not much will be achieved. Remember that the real reason for practicing kata is to make you a better fighter, not just a person with a lot of different technique. While bunkai is important it is also very important to realize that about 80% of your ability to really fight will be mental not physical That's why Sensei frequently has said kata is not a dance and has to be purposeful and alive. If you practice kata correctly and frequently enough this yoi move creates a psychological reaction associated with control of the mind, body and spirit. You create a conditioned response in the face of anxiety or fear that the body has been programmed to follow. So the next time you practice any kata you want to begin with the mental preparation at "yoi" that is the essence of a powerful assertiveness, a confident, controlled movement, with

focused eyes that emit a strong spirit embedded in your very posture. When you can do this you will have begun to understand what far too many karate students miss about kata practice.

"When I stand with my sword against a foe, I become utterly unconscious of the enemy before me or even of myself, in truth filled with the spirit of subjugating even earth and heaven." – Miyamoto Musashi

## **Traveling and Training**

Tom Kosslow

During the month of June I did more traveling and training than most of us do in several years. I spent nearly a week in Nova Scotia at Joey Shano's dojo, nearly a week in Colorado for the WIKF USA Summer Camp, four days in England to train with Sensei, and a week in Florida visiting my mother and attending the AAU National Karate Championships and Anton Phillips Boynton Beach Dojo. To be absolutely honest I cannot imagine how Suzuki Sensei did so much traveling for so many years. That seems to me to have been an almost super human feat. I doubt very seriously that there would be an organization of International scope such as WIKF if Sensei had not done this. I think we don't very often appreciate the magnitude of what he has done.

While I know Sensei will never again be able to travel and teach like he did in the past I am hopeful that we may see him again in this country in the future. In the meantime we have some very good instructors in North America who I am sure will do their best to carry on the standards Sensei has set. Truth be told nobody is much in the position to travel like Sensei did. It may be that I am about the only senior instructor on the continent with the time to do the traveling since I am retired, but after this past month I know I could not maintain that kind of pace. "This ain't Dodge City and I ain't Wyatt Earp."

So what this really means is that we have to change a few things. For the last 20 years or so the senior WIKF students all went to training with Sensei and just got in line, shut up, and trained. Sensei did all Dan Grading as well. A shift has to occur where the senior students now do the teaching at the training events instead of just training themselves. Dan grading will need to be done at these events by the senior instructors charged with this task by Suzuki Sensei. This is the only way I believe we can maintain the high standards Sensei has established. We have the talent, we have the desire to continue, and we have the standards.

