

North America



Wado International Karate-Do Federation

DOJO CONNECTION

July 2007

WIKF USA SUMMER TRAINING

The 2007 WIKF USA summer training course was held at Vanatta's Karate Institute in White House, Tennessee June 8-10th. This year's summer training was unique for several reasons. In the past all of the training was conducted by Suzuki Sensei or another high ranked individual. This year the senior instructors of the USA took turns teaching a session. It is this level of talent within the USA organization that distinguishes WIKF and will insure its continuity. Another unique aspect of the training was that in the spirit of meeting people and building relationships among Wado practitioners across the USA there was no charge and it was open to anyone who wanted to train. Students from all over the country came to train together and we were visited by several Wado instructors and individuals from various dojo in the Nashville area.

After a period of "Meet and Greet" on Friday night Sensei Tom Kosslow from Georgia taught the first session on Pinan kata. Saturday morning found students of all ranks training in advanced movement of Wado conducted by Sensei Doug Jepperson from Utah. The afternoon session was taught by the coaching staff from Texas, Darrin Free, Brody Burns, and Dale Gatchalian, on competition kumite. A ground fighting and pressure points session on Saturday was taught by Eric Enck, Eben Bates and Kim Ford, instructors from Vanatta's Institute of Karate. Later in the evening Mike and Kacey Vanatta hosted a really great pool party at their house. After a long day of training people really enjoyed the opportunity to sit around a pool, eat good food, and build relationships.

The Sunday morning session was taught by Sensei Michael Cimino-Hurt on sword etiquette, sword technique and sword Iai-do kata. Iai-do is the art of drawing and cutting with the Japanese sword.

Sensei Cimino-Hurt holds a 3rd Dan rank in Muso Kikiden Eishin Ryu Iai-do.

The Board of Directors for WIKF USA held its Bi-annual meeting during the summer training session. Sensei Brody Burns, Chairman, reviewed the status of WIKF USA since the last Board meeting held in December of 2006. Since that December meeting:

- Sensei Mike Bevins has opened two dojo in Colorado
- Sensei Scott Meek has opened a dojo in Tennessee
- Sensei Alex Cimino –Hurt has closed the Virginia dojo but hopes to open a dojo in New Mexico where he has taken a position with a school as a teacher.
- WIKF Texas is now the RSO for the National Karate Federation (NKF) in Texas
- WIKF Utah is now the RSO for NKF in Utah
- Tom Kosslow has been selected as a Senior Advisor for Wado with the Shudokan Martial Arts Association
- Members of the USA traveled to Japan to train and tour with Suzuki Sensei
- The Suzuki Cup tournament and winter training will be conducted October 31- November 3rd in Plano Texas. Suzuki Sensei will be there to conduct classes. This will also be the Team Trials for the USA Team for the World Cup.
- The World Cup will be held in Portugal during the summer of 2008.
- Sensei Brody Burns was selected as the USA Team Coach for the World Cup.

Kaisai No Genri

Tom Kosslow

Recently a student from a Wado school of some sort (I am being nice here) in another state asked if he could train in my dojo while he was in the area. I always welcome students from other schools/states if they are inclined to train. Anyway, he proceeded to show me the Pinan kata he knew. He demonstrated Pinan Nidan, which was really Pinan Shodan, and that was the least of the “changes”. I asked him if he had ever seen the video’s of Suzuki Sensei or the stuff on the internet of Master Otsuka doing kata. He said that he had which really surprised me. Now I really don’t blame this student since he is only repeating what his instructor taught him. I corrected as much as I could and he hasn’t come back since.

“Bunkai” are applications of fighting techniques found in a kata. Bunkai allows for more flexibility and experimentation within the prescribed framework of the kata. The study to uncover those techniques is called “kaisai”. The theory of kaisai is called “kaisai no genri” and it offers guidelines for finding those techniques. I suppose there are a lot of rules for doing this that I don’t know but basically these guidelines fall into three main principles:

1. The “embusen” or lines of performance are not always what they seem. Because a technique punches to the left does not mean you are fighting against an enemy on your left side, etc..
2. Techniques advancing imply an attack even if they look defensive and techniques retreating imply defensive moves even if they look like attacks.
3. You are only fighting one opponent at a time and they are almost always in front of you. Direction shifts are to keep movement concise and do not imply multiple attackers. Even in cases where there are multiple attackers you still have to fight them one at a time.

During his Iai-do class at the summer camp Sensei Michael Cimino-Hurt was asked why he did a certain thing a certain way even though it was difficult to do it that way. He said that he did it that way because to change it or simplify it to make it easier to accommodate beginners is to lose the true meaning and spirit of the Iai-do kata he practices. People who change the core of a kata are no longer keeping with the spirit of the system. For that reason he teaches it exactly as he was taught.

At the summer camp I taught Pinan Nidan and tried to offer several interpretations of each movement within the kata. Those were simply my interpretations of what may be happening because there are several “correct” interpretations for each movement of every kata. The standard sequences of the kata are only the beginning. If there were no practical applications to the moves in the kata then you might as well be doing a dance. Obviously there is a lot more going on in a kata than is readily apparent. Sensei Jepperson did much of the same thing with the Sanban, Ohyo and Kihon Gumite in the session he taught. A key difference between what we attempted to do and what that visiting student’s sensei has done is that neither Sensei Jepperson nor I changed the movements of the kata or the gumite. We simply provided food for thought.

It is one thing to talk about and explore bunkai of any movement in any kata. It is another thing entirely to change the movements of the kata itself. Kata are a powerful method of imparting essential knowledge to karate students. All practitioners at all levels when practicing a kata should perform the movements of each kata in *exactly* the same way every time. It is in this manner that the core foundation, the true meaning and spirit of the art is preserved.

Koryu Bujutsu and Modern Budo

Tom Kosslow

The Authentic Classical Japanese Martial Arts, the “old” or “ancient” traditions, are known as Koryu Bujutsu. They are really pretty rare in the West and should not be confused with the classical martial ways, or budo. They were never intended for everyone. They require a tremendous commitment and willingness to learn stuff that has no real practical application in the modern world. They were meant for the Japanese warrior class centuries ago.

The numbers of people who practice the Koryu are very small compared to the numbers who study the modern budo like karate. One of the reasons for this has to do with a lack of qualified instructors since no one would undertake to teach an authentic koryu without explicit permission from a qualified teacher, which is pretty unusual in itself. They are guided by the criterion of quality, not quantity and do not admit just anyone to their ranks.

Another reason has to do with rigorous, demanding physical effort and the willingness to submit to a method of teaching and transmission of

knowledge that is unlike what most Westerners are use to.

For those of us who practice a “modern” budo it is much easier to find instruction. Unfortunately there are a number of people, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who claim to be instructors. Frequently they have bogus credentials and they exploit the general public’s inability to identify competent instructors.

Technology power is doubling every year. According to some experts by the year 2036 technology will be one billion times more powerful that it is today. What does that mean? Exponential change. When will the change end? It won’t. There is no destination. We have to get use to the fact that it is never going to stop.

In a similar manner we have to understand that the modern budo is also changing. There are martial arts schools all over the place today. Check your local phone book or the internet if you don’t think so. As a result a black belt today really doesn’t mean much outside of the organization that issues it. Today students are different as well. Today 50% of the world is under the age of 55. That’s half of the population of the world. If you don’t teach children today it is nearly impossible to keep a dojo open. At a recent tournament I attended at least 80% of the participants were children. When I first started training you never saw a child in the dojo or at a tournament. The real keys to 21st Century teaching are twofold:

1. Understanding and dealing with change
2. Understanding and dealing with students

We have a choice to make. We can become like the Koryu Bujitsu and be extremely selective in who we will allow to train. My old school self says, “Yes!” but my modern self understands we need to adjust our teaching methods to accommodate a changing martial arts scene. This doesn’t mean we have to choose between quality and quantity. I think the challenge is to retain quality while at the same time seeking quantity. Teaching methods have changed, students have changed. Both will continue to do so. But the core of what we believe and practice should not change. Concepts like courage, courtesy, humility, integrity and self control should remain constant in our schools.

Japanese Vocabulary

Here are a few words you may or may not have come in contact with that are worth knowing. I am including them because I want to fill space and can’t think of anything else to write about at the moment. Well at least I am being honest here ☺

KEIKO – Training or practice

METSUKE – Correct use of the eyes

SEME – Pressing or pushing to control the opponent

MAAI – Combative distance

MA – Timing

TANREN – To forge with hard work, sweat, and many hours of dedication, folding together the elements of the body, mind and movement

SHINKEN SHOBU – A fight to the death with a real sword

KASSO TEKI – Imagined opponent

KAKUTO BUGEI – Fighting techniques

SUKI – The space between two things where something else can enter. In fighting the interval of relaxation, a gap , an unguarded moment in your opponent that you can take advantage of.

KUFU – grappling wit something until you can master it

JORIKI – Concentration power

ISSHIN – One mind. Attacking every fight, every task, every responsibility single-mindedly with only it in mind

MAKOTO – Putting everything you have, everything you are into an act