



Woman defending Kumamoto Castle with a Naginata

Kobayashi, Kiyochika (1847 – 1915)

Events Schedule

2009	
January 10	New Year Demo Tucson Children's Museum 1:00 – 4:00 PM
January 12	Senbon Suburi Stone Avenue Dojo 6:30 PM
January 17	Kagami Biraki Magee Dojo 6:00 PM
February 21,22	Phoenix Matsuri 7 th Street and Monroe, Phoenix 1:00 – 1:30 PM
March 6, 7	Mizu Hi Tai Kai Tucson, AZ
March 8	Shin Shin Ryu Testing Tucson, AZ
May (USFBD)	Florida Tai Kai Palm Bay, FL
August (USFBD)	West Coast Tai Kai Costa Mesa, CA

The New Year

When the New Year begins, there is a fresh opportunity to make things better, a chance to repair your equipment and define your goals for 2009. It is also time to add new daily use items and retire some of your

threadbare socks and underclothes. This is a time to make some decisive moves in your own life and then celebrate with family and friends.

The *Yamakawa Dojo* prepared for the New Year first, by cleaning the *Magee Dojo* building and grounds in December. **O-Soji** (Big Cleaning) is practiced all over Japan at this time. Besides the obvious benefit of a clean training space, it also leaves people with a feeling of accomplishment and reinforces ties to a social group. We are no different. Our shared interest in Japanese culture and martial tradition, is not the only reason we continue to train. Just as important, are the shared experiences of *Enbu*, *Shinsa* (Testing) and *Tai Kai*. Working together in all of these areas, bonds us together as friends.



The beginning of a new training year will also be marked by the important "1000 cuts practice" (*Senbon Suburi*). Here is another strenuous activity that helps people feel good when it is over. Like climbing a mountain, some are unsure that they will make it to the top. So when we all get there together, there will be some euphoria. Finally, we will culminate our efforts in a party (*Kagami Biraki*) where we can eat, drink and have good conversations with people who have shared these ordeals.

The cycle continues...

Iai Connections

We are part of a community that reaches all over the globe these days. People may train with our *Dojo* for a few years and then move on to a new city or perhaps a new country but it is important to remember that our numbers are actually quite small worldwide. Of all the people involved in martial arts, a small fraction will dedicate themselves to swordsmanship. From that group, you will see some of the same core for the next few decades. That is why it is so important that each person practices good manners and cultivates the valuable relationships between groups. The Annual Tucson *Tai Kai* is a great place to build these connections and also to be of service to the

guests who have traveled to our city to participate. It is also a treat when we have visitors from Japan. Memorizing a few simple phrases can make the difference between awkward silence and friendly exchange. Just making the effort to speak another language (even with mistakes) will show your sincerity. Perhaps the most useful "Swiss Army" word is *Dozo*. **Dozo Osakini** means "After You", but if you can just remember *Dozo* and motion with your hand politely, it will be interpreted as the whole phrase. Everyone should already know "Thank You", we use it every class. It will never be wrong to say *Domo Arigato Gosaimasu*. Perhaps the last essential phrase is "Good Morning / Day /Night". This is a short conversation where both people can walk away happy. **Ohayo Gosaimasu** (Morning), **Kon'nichi Wa** (Afternoon), **Kon'ban Wa** (Evening Hello), **Oyasumi Nasai** (Evening Goodbye). The response is to repeat the words back to the speaker.



Year of the Ox

Tsuchinoto-Ushi 己丑「土の弟牛」 (Yin Earth-Oxen) begins on January 26th in 2009. This is the 10th year of the 60 combinations used throughout Asia to mark the passage of time. Some people believe that specific signs bring auspicious events. Perhaps the most widely anticipated years are the Dragon combinations. The next Dragon year will be 2012 (Yang Water-Dragon).



Ne Waza 2008

Once again there was an extraordinary opportunity to learn some *Ne Waza* from *Sensei (Toshitaku) Okada* and *Sensei (Hal) Sharp*. Several members took advantage of the seminar that was held on December 10th in Tucson. The theme this year seemed to be *Jime* (Choke Holds) and as *Sensei Okada* deftly demonstrated, strength is not the determining factor. A good *Ne Waza* technician can overcome a strength advantage with the judicious application of choke holds and arm bars. If you do not believe this, just let one of these octogenarian *Judoka* get a hold of your sleeve and they will make a believer out of you in a few minutes. In addition to the techniques, we were also shown the calm, “snake-like” (*Hebi*) strategy of progression from hold to hold that soon results in a victory. I believe that we were also witness to the “ready” position of *Ne Waza* which, as it happens, is almost any posture on or near the ground.

Sensei Sharp regaled us with stories of intrigue and mischief with Gene Lebell and how to tell a good story “*Never let the truth ruin a good story*”. He also demonstrated the “climbing grip” that walks up your sleeve or pant leg. At the end of the seminar these teachers all received our thanks and students left with a DVD that Mr. Sharp had produced in the last year.



Both men are expert in their own right, respected *Judo* teachers and experienced fighters. A bit of serendipity brought them together a couple of years ago in Japan and they discovered that they both had been students of the legendary *Oda, Tsunetane* (1892 – 1955). Since that time they have taken on the task of preserving these special “Old School” techniques by giving seminars to interested *Judoka*.



Sei Hin

This year, the economy has been the big player in world events and daily discussions. There is no escaping the effects of our global circumstance on all facets of our lives.

It seems appropriate, at this point, to share an old cultural concept that is still found in many places in Japan. *Sei Hin* is sometimes translated as “Honorable Poverty”. A recent way to apply this idea in a Japanese company is a certain level of restraint and probity when it comes to compensating executives. This is particularly the case, when a company is not generating a great deal of revenue, however, it also applies to these people during times of great prosperity. They have an obligation not to live like princes. During lean times it is expected that CEO’s will reduce their own salary and eat in the company cafeteria. Outside of work, many would be embarrassed to have a large house or be seen in an extravagant car.

In general the average compensation of top Japanese executives is 40 times less than their American counterparts. The big difference may be in the way individuals rise to positions of responsibility in Japan. Most often a leader has developed within the hierarchy of one company rather than being a mercenary, hired by the shareholders. Part of their merit as a leader is based on their ability to get along with other workers so they see themselves always as part of a team. It is said that managers and executives are chosen as if they were the captain of a baseball team, always mindful of the fact that success is brought about by team members.

Japan is not the only culture with this concept of restraint or “Just” compensation.

The European religious tradition has the “Wages of the Worker in the Vineyard” concept of not expecting or demanding too much except the right to be useful. Some Native American cultures also have traditions that limit the concentration of wealth into too few hands. One idea among Pacific Northwest Indians is called the Potlatch. This is a ceremony where chiefs and leading warriors give away or destroy possessions. One form of giving is the sponsorship of a great feast.

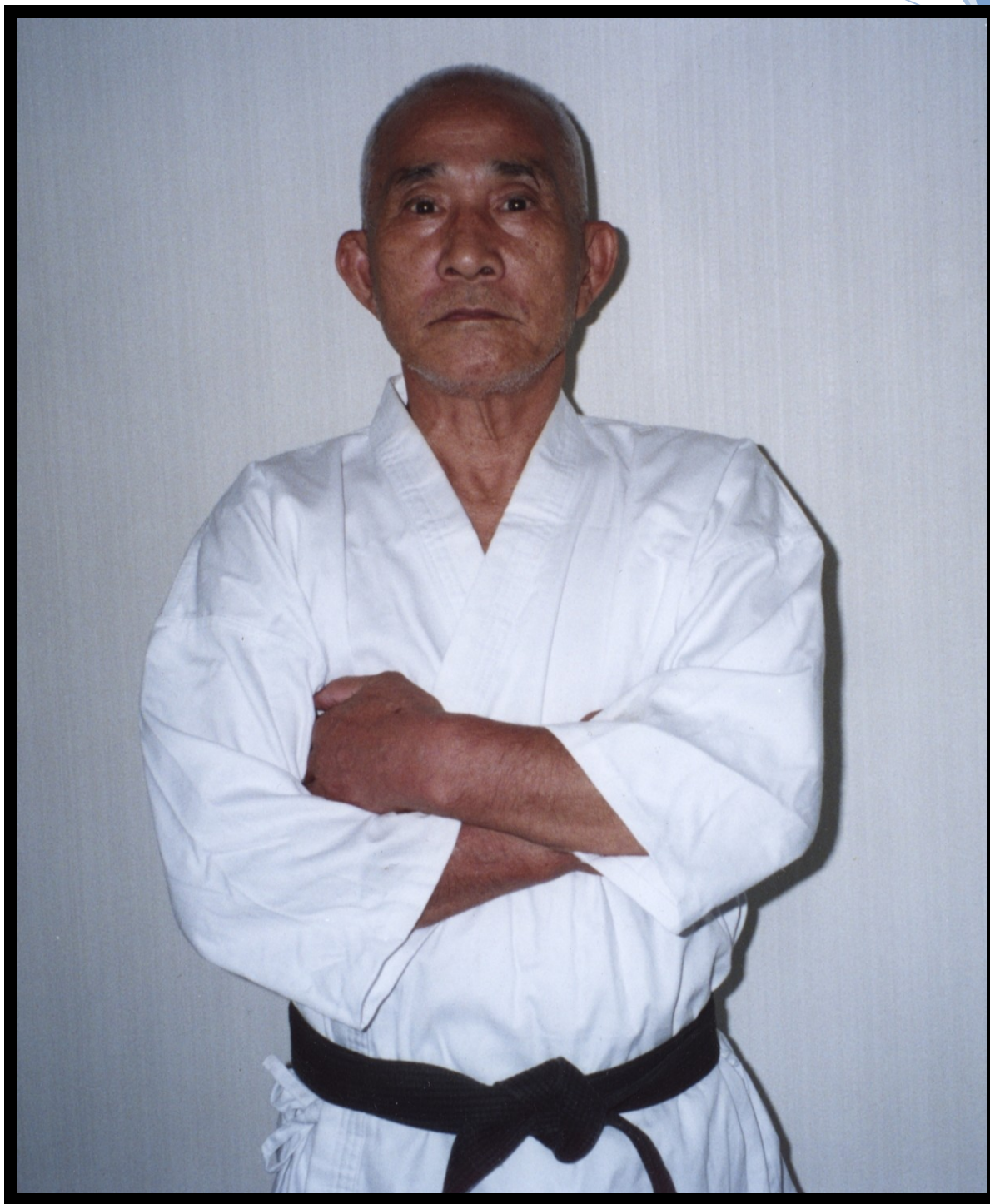
A different idea is the “Protestant Work Ethic”, where wealth is supposed to be evidence of hard work and self discipline. Even that does not accurately describe the current situation. Those who took the wealth out of the market were gamblers who convinced everyone else to take a turn at the wheel.



Pointed Sticks

Dr. Gettings gave an introduction to swords and *Kenjutsu* to a group of *Jujitsu* students in Tucson last month. The kids in this class were very attentive as he explained the legacy of *Okina* “The Old Man” forged in 1492. Later, there was a demonstration of the cutting power of a *Katana* and *Wakizashi* on bundled *Tatami (Goza)*. A small group was instructed in the basic concepts of distance and available targets when facing a weapon. Afterwards, the support crew accompanied *Shihan Gettings* to a nearby restaurant for dinner and some refreshments.





Wado Karate Master Kawaguchi, Yoshio
1926 – 2008

We were sad to learn of the recent death of *Sensei Kawaguchi*, leader of the *Yokohama* branch of *Wado Karate* and longtime promoter of martial arts throughout the world. His tireless efforts to continue the legacy of *Wado* founder *Otsuka, Hironori* will be sorely missed. He was the oldest practitioner of *Wado* and an original student of the founder. Dr. Getting brought us the news at the beginning of practice at the *Yamakawa Dojo* in December. We observed a moment of silence and saluted him in a traditional manner. Afterwards, Dr. Gettings shared stories of his experiences, learning *Wado Karate* from this unique teacher. We are diminished...