

## End-of-Year Party 2008

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On December 20<sup>th</sup>, Kaifukan gathered at the gracious home of Maeda Sensei to celebrate the end of an exceptional year. Some features of the gathering were familiar and most welcome: the honored presence of Maeda Sensei and his in-all-ways-wonderful wife Jeanne; the camaraderie and warm spirits of Sensei, Jeanne, senpai, kohai, and honored family members; and much wonderful food and drink. However, in several notable ways this was a completely unique and wonderful end-of-year celebration. For those who were unable to be there with us, please know that you were missed. For your benefit, I humbly offer this narrative.



Celebrations, like the Kaifukan Anniversary Party and the End-of-Year Party, are made special by more than our shared fellowship and our gratitude to Sensei, undeniably strong though these are. Nor is it a label like “End of Year” or a date on the calendar that makes these events special. No, it is the creative spirit, passion, and joy that we students bring to organizing them that can make them stand out as truly special and unique. In this regard, we were admirably served by Jake who supervised all details of the party. Ralph partnered with Jake to honor and thank Ken, Randy, and Joette for all of

their efforts to ensure that the wandering *ronin* of Kaifukan have had practice space while the Kailua Rec Center is unavailable, experiencing the *mana* at He’eia State Park, taking sanctuary at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, and studying *al fresco* at Maunawili Elementary School, respectively. All expressed their appreciation to Ken, Randy, and Joette who were also given tokens of our deep

gratitude. The gathered celebrants, including our most honored special guest HKF President Nekomoto Sensei, had not just their bodies nourished but spirits as well: all were treated to a magnificent cello performance by our own Ralph Koga. The richness and



beauty of the music Ralph brought forth from his cello were perfectly complemented by the magnificent Ko’olau behind him. Most in attendance joined Sensei in wondering how Ralph had managed to both conceal his prodigious talent and deprive us of his musical gift

for so long. Joette again contributed a very special (and instructive!) invitation to all and masterminded the First Annual Hoki awards through which Joette and I were able to share our appreciation and love for the uniqueness of each wonderful member of the Kaifukan *ohana*.



The celebration was a worthy bookend for 2008. Certainly, it offered many hours of good fellowship for all that attended. But it is through the creation of a unique and special event that all can see the true spirit of Kaifukan. Whether it be improving our waza, striving for *ki ken tai icchi*, or planning a celebration, Sensei will always urge us on, in the Kaifukan way, to “give a damn!” May 2009 bring many more opportunities for us to celebrate Kaifukan spirit and may we always bring so much creativity and joy to the endeavor. I offer a final toast to Sensei, Jeanne and Kaifukan in 2008 and look forward to seeing you all at the New Year’s Greeting. *Kanpai!*