

Kailua July 4th Parade 2009 & Kaifukan

July 15, 2009

Kunio Maeda Kaifukan Kancho



The idea that Kaifukan participate in Kailua's Fourth of July Parade first came up many years ago. Henrik, one of the very first students of Kaifukan, suggested it. Linda is the most senior student at present, but Henrik joined two weeks before Linda did in June 2001. Henrik had spent time with me when Kaifukan had only a handful of students and we craved for more student enrollment. Short of students kept Kaifukan in the red for the first year and a half, and periodically many months after that. Under such dire financial circumstances, he even suggested that we should do a 'car wash' to raise money. I was not at all comfortable asking my students to do something that was completely irrelevant to their kendo training. He then came up with the suggestion that the Kailua Parade might be a good way to let the Windward neighbors know about us. Maybe it was. However, I only heard a lone voice of Henrik speaking. And I was not sure if anyone else is willing to be involved in any extra activity besides kendo. The idea of one single man got no support, thus it never took off the ground.

This time it was Linda who suggested our participation in the parade, which she co-chaired. On this occasion, I felt that my students, although many of them are relatively new, care greatly about Kaifukan and give a "damn" about our dojo. I have been trying all these years to make my students become aware of the core spirit of Kaifukan - the virtues of not being selfish and self-centered. These virtues are expressed as being respectful, caring, united and making sacrifices for the good of the 'family' or a greater good. You cannot imagine the profound joy and the



enormous sense of reward I felt when you participated in the parade and walked along side of me as members of Kaifukan.

On the morning of July 4th Eric and I arrived at the starting point of the parade a few minutes after 8 o'clock. Dan, Randy and Matt were already there, all of them in good spirit. During the next 2 hours gradually all the participants, **Linda, Ken, David, Andrew, Yah, Gid, Randy, Matt, Joette, Dan, Eric, Terry, Brian, Aja, Jan, and I**, had assembled. Most of us came very early. To everyone's surprise, David was on time and not late as usual. Jan was lost and had a hard time to find us. Linda & Ken, who incidentally gave us the advice to come early, arrived last around 9:30 since Linda being co-chair of the parade committee didn't have to worry about her parking space. Of course!

Make no mistake it was a beginning of a beautiful Hawaii summer day. The temperature was definitely going to shoot up as time goes by. I was sort of worried about having some



students wear their 'men' and do 'kirikaeshi' and other waza in the hot sun. But they said they could do it and that it was only a mile or so, so they talked me out of my worry. I understood it was Linda, Yah, Gid, Andrew and Eric who would be wearing their 'men.' But Terry of all people, who has a heart problem, took out his 'men.' What is the matter with this man? Next moment, we all

cracked up. Inside of his 'men' he had installed a battery operated two little ventilation fans on the grill of his men so that he has some breeze and can breathe easier. He had created a 007 world inside of his 'men.' First he had attached a cooling patch on the top interior part of his 'men,' a pair of glasses on the grill, and now, a ventilation system! This guy has determination. I thought if I don't permit him to wear it during the parade I might be accused of obstruction of scientific and technological progress. It's too bad we didn't take any pictures of this 'men,' and how we all made a big fuss over it.

We changed into our gi & hakama. Men and women, the young and the old, we all looked fierce, yet beautiful, like samurai warriors ready to go to the battlefield. We lined up in the following order – Sensei, kendo students, Ken, David in his truck that carried the signs, Brian & Aja carrying our Kaifukan flag, and Jan as an errand person cum photographer. With Linda's cue, "Sensei, you can perform now," we all started moving.

At first I did iai performance in the middle of the road. But I immediately realized that I was just too far from the spectators to make any impact at all, so I decided to get closer to them. In fact, I began to swing my sword over the spectators' heads. It was the right decision. Some were startled, others scared, screaming and yelling but still enjoying the horror show. Ken also immediately got the idea and did the same. He scared a little girl of 3 to cry. I have to say it was a very successful, and convincing iai performance by him.



The performance by the Kendo students was highly successful as well. Although in Hawaii, where the Japanese ethnic group is said to be the largest, and everyone may know or has heard something about samurai warriors, yet only a very few people have actually ever seen kendo. I saw that the audience's eyes were glued to the kendo students' performances. I bet they were wondering if we really hit each other with the stick, and how can we stand the pain when hit. We must have given them a lot of eye-popping scenes as well as some food for thought. Now they know



that Windward has its own kendo dojo, and I believe this recognition itself has contributed to an important cultural exchange. Thanks to my Kaifukan students' blood, sweat and pain, especially in the soles of their feet, the residents of Kailua received their first introduction to Kendo. I am grateful for this and extremely proud of my students. I truly enjoyed it. I believe all the participants seemed to have enjoyed it as much as I did, having gotten a tremendous sense

of accomplishment.

Our new young members of the dojo, Brian and Aja walked at the end of the group carrying the flag and passed out the flyers. They also watched our personal belongings stowed in David's truck. We couldn't have done without their help. Jan, our newest student, wore his keiko-gi for the first time, and took his job of taking photos for record-keeping seriously, running back and forth, drenched in sweat. And to David, of course, without him, we would have been stranded. Thank you, David, Jan, Brian and Aja. Last but not least I would like to say my special thanks to Linda & Ken. Not only did they make our participation in the parade possible they even spent their own money and time to make the banners. I owe them so much on top of their countless generous support and assistance in the past to make Kaifukan what it is today.

We hope our participation in the parade will have some impact on those spectators and might even result in some people enrolling as Henrik had hoped it would. I am writing this final page on Aug. 8th, but unfortunately, I have received no inquiry as of date. Nevertheless, I have no regret. We will have more students in good time.

Each activity has its objective, and the objective of the parade may have been recruiting new students. But the underlying fundamental objective of all our activities at any time is one and that is to achieve unity in Kaifukan. We have accomplished this in this parade. Thank you all and congratulations!



After the parade, we immediately moved to the next venue, and of course, Independence Day, by enjoying traditional American favorites - barbecue burgers, hotdogs and beer. It was a small way to show my appreciation. It was too bad that Terry

couldn't stay, but Jim and Donna joined us instead. It was the first July 4th celebration, and no doubt another great party. Jeanne's parents, Mr. & Mrs. Katayama joined us for the first time. They appreciated and enjoyed our company. Who wouldn't?



Talking about the activities to strive for unity, Kaifukan was asked by the "Friends of He'eia" to help with their fundraiser held on July 12th. Thanks to "Friends of He'eia" and to Ken & Linda who introduced us to them, we have a place to practice, and on top of that, we are privileged to use the facility free of charge. If we were paying for it Kaifukan can easily fall back in the red, particularly now when we have lost some members. We owe them tremendously and they needed our help. **Dan & Barbara, Randy, Matt & Julie, Jeanne & I, Yah, Eric (& Nicole), Noguchi, Matthew, Kenji & Maya, Ken & Linda, and Ralph** responded to the call and came in this order to help out from 11:00 AM to sometime around 5:30 PM. Thank you for your support and contribution of time on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. Carole also has expressed her appreciation to all of you.



***"There is no love without expression, and
There is always manifestation for appreciation."***

One last note on the subject of appreciation, I would like to express my thanks to Randy for repairing the carport of my house to be more suitable for our monthly Open House and for other activities. The ugly concrete floor, oil stained and crumbly has now metamorphosed into a cool bluish gray colored floor with white and blue sprinkles that is good enough to disco dance on. I was most willing to pay for the job professionally done. But not only did he refuse charging for his labor, he would not accept money for the materials he used. He says he wishes he could do more. Let's not forget, he put up the stone benches in the garden, too.

Besides all those mentioned above, I want to thank those who work selflessly and tirelessly behind the scenes. It's good to have you all. Thank you.

