

Events: Shiai & YEP 2011, and NYG 2012

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The 7th Kaifukan Intramural Shiai on Dec. 27 & 29, 2011

Most Western sports have their origin from some forms of battle tactics of warfare. Hence, if you don't compete with some contenders, by definition it is not considered a sport. Martial arts, as the name indicates, should be warlike, combative, and thus closer to its original militaristic format and less recreational. In other words, for all martial arts and Western sports as well, fighting is their origin and competition is the basis for their training. However, there is something more to "budo" than mere fighting; in fact, there is something much more important than



simply being competitive that should not be overlooked. That something is the aspect of spiritual training. There are two kinds of spiritual training. One is that you train to become mentally strong in order not to fear a fight. The other is to become spiritually noble that goes beyond the realm of physical kendo practice, by using kendo as the means to find a higher objective as human beings. The Charter of All Japan Kendo Federation expresses the same spiritual objective as I mentioned above. But in reality, the main objective of all kendoists today throughout the world is to win in shiai. Sadly, the more important and true

objective, the training to become spiritual noble, is forgotten. The consequence of the 'sportification' of kendo, its objective to win the game at any cost, is the utter disregard of the quest for noble spirituality, which further results in a dreadful digression of the correct use of the Japanese swords.

Kaifukan shiai is free from these impediments. A shiai at Kaifukan is a "tryout" as the Chinese characters, "shiai" literally means. In Kaifukan shiai, the contenders learn the effectiveness of the correct swing that would earn them "ippon" under the strict surveillance and precise guidance from Sensei.

Having said all that, we still had a very enjoyable and meaningful shiai in terms of learning what the art of kendo is in its depth. Everyone made a lot of progress.

Joette later asked me a question to the effect, "how applicable is what we learnt in shiai to our ordinary practice sessions (jigeiko)?" The answer is "all very applicable."



Our aim is to practice our jigeiko (ordinary dojo practice) as if it is shiai, and compete in the shiai as if it is a dan-exam, and challenge the dan-exam as if it is jigeiko. Of course,

all this is easier said than done since the three, on the surface, seem to be a totally different ball game, each one giving you different levels of tension and adrenaline rush.

Here are the results of the Kaifukan Shiai 2011. Note the winners are awarded for their precise and correct performance of kendo skills.

The Champion 2011: Jim Tamura.

The First Runner-up: (tie) Linda Goldstein and Dain Osedo.

Congratulations!

Year-End Party 2011

On Dec. 26, 2011, Kaifukan students gathered for our annual Year-End Party at my house by inviting Jeanne and me. It is a tradition at Kaifukan to re-examine our unity, nurture friendship and wish for increased good health, and to remember all good things that happened during the year. Interestingly enough, the Year-End Party in Japanese is called “Bonenkai”, and it means to “*forget the bad things that happened in the year.*” Well, since it is mentioned, I do have something to regret. That is we lost a few core students two years in a row. Another peculiar happening for 2011 is that quite a few new students who joined in Jan. of this year – namely, Chris, Eli, Shin, Leland and Andrew -



have all miraculously disappeared or quit before the turn of the year. Although we still have some hope for Chris and Shin to come back eventually. So our annual YEP or *Bonenkai*, especially this year, seemed to be a good opportunity for me to reassess the current situation at Kaifukan, appreciate the present Kaifukan students even more, and resolve to make a even better new start for Kaifukan in the year 2012. After all, what makes Kaifukan unique, is the family-like unity and the feeling of closeness and caring among our dojo members.

I have written the following e-mail recently as my reply to someone whom I expelled long time ago in the past. If you let your ego take over your behavior and disregard Sensei's directions you are only bound to dig your own grave. That's what happened to him. I know he regrets his behavior, which triggered his expulsion, and I sense that he now longs to come back to Kaifukan.



“It is essential for any kendo practitioner to find a good sensei & vice versa. If a sensei and a student have a strong tie in trust and respect each other and work for the same objective, whatever it may be - for many dojos it can be winning many shiai trophies whereas Kaifukan seeks for something beyond - they will achieve their goal and accomplish their objective. On the other hand, if a sensei and a student have no unity and don't have the same objective they will get nowhere. From that perspective it was good, after all, that you left me as you found we were not compatible.”

In summary, “striving to form unity” is the key to happiness of the family, success of the group, achievement of any organization and peace of the country. What we learn through all the Kaifukan activities, whether it may be OH, Anniversary, YEP, NYG or other gatherings or even keiko & shiai, is about learning to work together, to strive for unity, to care for each other, and to listen honestly to your sensei by peeling away one layer of egotistic self at a time. Kendo, or more precisely, sword technique has no meaning in our modern society. However, Kaifukan kendo dojo is a great place to learn the merits of



humanity and these basic rules of human life because this is where you receive an instant painful repercussion to right the wrong when you don't follow your sensei's instructions and go against the rules of righteousness.

The party started at 1 PM, with Linda & Ken arriving a bit earlier to set up the tables, chairs and put up decorations. This year we had two honorable guests: Kathy Nekomoto, the HKF President, and Melvin Imai from the Rec. CTR. Both Kathy and Melvin were truly great in their support of Kaifukan and we wanted to show our sincere appreciation to them. As soon as everyone arrived on time, we started with a lei presentation to Jeanne & me, and followed that by commemorate photo-taking session. It was unfortunate that some of the students

couldn't make it, but all those who were there were looking good and happy as they should be.

We immediately started to quench our thirst with beer, but of course, that made us even thirstier for wine and sake. We enjoyed the variety of food that some cooked, while some



chose to pick up from some eatery to satisfy our gourmet tastes. Fine drinks, good food and great company...these are the best moments of our life.

Right before the party started, the Dixons, now

living in Texas, gave us a phone call. It was great to hear from them. They promised to accompany some of their students to visit and train with us some time in the coming year. I took their call as the Dixon family - Charles, Lynne, Maddie & the boys' participation to the party.

After Dan presented this year's limerick that poured out from his mouth that very morning and showed an abundant talent with his words, it was time for him to take care over the round-of-exchanging-of-present game. No one can feel certain until the end if you can actually keep the gift you chose. It was exciting, at times calculating, and at times disappointing, nonetheless, a lot of fun. It was very thoughtful of students to provide the gifts for Jeanne & I, and for our guests as well. Thank you. Finally we welcomed the coming New Year to be prosperous with our small party poppers that topped off the party.

New Year's Greetings

On the second day of Jan. 2012, Kaifukan students visited Sensei's house for their annual New Year's Greetings. On this day traditionally students pay respect to their sensei and his wife by visiting them and wishing them a happy and prosperous New Year. Since this occasion is considered to be one of the most auspicious and important events of the year, setting the tone for the rest of the year, this must be done in the proper manner with your respectful presentation of yourself.



As students pay their respect as such Sensei in return expresses his respect to them and they mutually pledge to make effort to have a productive New Year. We celebrate the

New Year's Day with festive *sake* and 'ozoni broth' with *mochi* in it, which represents longevity and other dishes bringing in lots of good fortune.

We started to gather at 1 PM, and immediately decided to take commemorative photos before our eyes turn red from drinking sake. We then made ourselves comfortable to seriously enjoy the festive traditional New Year's dishes Jeanne prepares each year. Jeanne appreciated all the ladies (and some offers by gentlemen) for their help in the kitchen. We missed some students – either due to sickness, work or deployment. A few were 'no show' without informing me, and this is when I feel we failed each other to teach and learn about "rei," the very essence of kendo, which should be learnt above all else.



This is also the occasion to award the shiai winners of 2011, and commend students for their best attendance and outstanding contributions in the last year. Awarding started with the winners of the shiai, then the students with the best attendance, followed by those who made outstanding contributions. Shiai winners are already mentioned above.

The top attendance went to, who else, but Joette for both Kendo and Iaido classes. And Dain tied with her for the Iaido class.



From the bottom of my heart, congratulations to both of you. There are not many dojos that practice three times a week like us. As a matter of fact, there is only one I can think of, and that is Kenshikan at the JCC. But even there, one class out of the three is designated only for the beginners. That makes Kaifukan the only dojo where every student comes to practice 3x/week. Regarding the number of weekly sessions, Kathy Nekomoto uttered to Jeanne, "It's a big commitment." No one can make 129 attendances out of 141 sessions like Joette did without a true sense of dedication and a very strong sense of

commitment. Human beings are creatures of habit. If you put yourself in the situation where you are learning regularly that is when you really do learn. This many classes bring out the true meaning of '-do' of kendo, that is to say, kendo truly becomes your way of life. For your information, it's Jim for the second place (112/141) and Linda for the third (104/141).

The outstanding contributors of 2011:

1) Jim - for his TLC to help his kohai, particularly helping Joel and Dain for their Iaido practice. If I were not able to have his help I am not sure what I would have done with their Iaido lesson.



2) Terry - for finally completing the long awaited Kaifukan Iaido DVD. Terry and I took many hours and months to complete it. During this time Terry never showed any displeasure to my uncompromising demands. I cannot thank Jim & Terry enough.

New Year's Day is when people make various resolutions. It is true for

Kaifukan students, and they must do so for their kendo/iaido practice. We referred back to the notes we wrote for the last year's resolution to reflect back on how well we accomplished it. Rome was not built in one day. Likewise to accomplish our kendo goal is not easily done. Many students may have to write the same resolution again if it is not accomplished. That is fine. After all, we do believe in the saying "perseverance is power."

