

The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Honbu Dojo

9th Annual Seminar Reflections

By Kancho Sukh Sandhu

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Dayton Ohio USA

Well what a week! The 9th Annual Gi Yu Dojo Honbu seminar has passed. I had to catch an early flight the day after to go across the country for work. While traveling, I had an opportunity to think and reflect on the awesome event we just had. I always say this statement to others and I will repeat it now; "I am so honored to be surrounded by so many wonderful people." This past weekend was no exception to that statement.

The students of the Honbu dojo (too many to mention) spent several weeks getting the dojo in "tip top" shape. Cleaning, repairing and making our dojo presentable to all our out of town guests. A lot of hard work went in to this event and for that community support and action, I Thank You All for making our association so great.

Our "theme" for this year was "Shoshin Wasuru Bekarazu" or *We should not forget our beginner's spirit of excitement & humility of starting something new. In other words, find the passion in yourself for continuing on in budo.* This set the tone for the training we did over 4 days of the seminar, however, I hope it stays with each participant who was there.

Thursday evening we began with our Atlanta Gi Yu Dojo-Cho and Sempai helping teach the CORDS kids classes. Very fun and entertaining. It is good for our youth class to see others in the art form. We then went in to the adult class of No-Gi grappling. Mainly working on arm bars and then using that same movement to work on knee locks. Everyone was spent after an hour and half.



With no time to waste we went in to the DAN level testing. We had seven people test and though only 5 passed our rigorous exams, I am so proud (as were the other Black Belts on the testing panel) and impressed with what I saw from all exam challengers. Those 2 individuals who did not pass, showed great dedication and perseverance and I expect to see them achieve their objectives next time around. We tested 2 folks for YON DAN, and Sam Foster passed with flying colors. A VERY difficult test, and both folks showed EXCELLENCE. Sam as able to personify the lineages and the many techniques required for this level. Then moving to NI DAN Todd Engelman, Matt Wooton, and Brittney Mooney passed with a superb showing of technical skill. Finally 2 folks tested for SHO DAN and Laura Benton passed with a flawless exhibition of her skill. A Big milestone to achieve Black Belt under The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos high expectations. Of course after the exams that lasted till almost 1am, "budo" beers were passed along to everyone as a sign to remember what they each had done that day...win or try again.



Friday morning, the official first day of training for the seminar began bright and early. After a brief discussion about KukiShinDen Biken no Ho Sword fighting, we jumped right in to the on guard postures, basics cuts and then the techniques. It was so cool to see so many folks training in this ancient-traditional form of Japanese sword. I almost could see the old spirits of the past in the dojo. Apparitions of samurai warriors floating above the students training in the dojo that morning. After a brief lunch break, we headed in to the ShinKen Gata Jujutsu grappling. Rather “street fighting” forms. For several years we have been studying this lineage and now we were in the final top level scroll. Brutal is one way to think of this type of combat. Needless to say, after Kamae (on guard postures) review, basic movement we went in to the GoDan no Maki techniques. Strong, effortless and devastating.



After all the Keiko (training) we went in to the KYU level testing. A 3 part exam of technical skill, written exam and Randori against each Black Belt (at the appropriate pressure level per belt exam). A test of “Shin Gi Tai”, Mind – Spirit – Body. We had 6 folks test and we had all six pass! Incredible. Green Belts were awarded to Mary Ellen Smith,

Jeremy Smith and Bryan Chunasamy. Terrific work on their part of starting their journey in our budo. Next was Justin Hunnicutt and his ability to pass his Purple Belt level exam. Nice work! Then the last KYU level rank in The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos rank system before venturing in to Black Belt...the Brown Belt. Both Will Grilliot and Chris Zapata fulfilled their required qualifications for this level. Well done Fellas!



Saturday morning started with “TameShi Giri”, or live cutting on rolled tatami mats with very sharp blades and even more honed skill. We warmed up with some basic sword safety, etiquette, drawing and sheathing. Then off to basic cuts and ultimately the Kingfisher cut, “KawaSemi”. We cut through over a hundred rolls of tatami that morning. I am continually amazed at how I see the skill level of our students continue to grow.



At this time I was also watching Dojo-cho W.S. Bumgarner complete the second part of his ROKU DAN (6th Degree) Black Belt exam. He had tested the technical skill part of his exam a few days earlier with flying colors. He now had to prove he could cut the 5 basic cuts on one roll of tatami seamlessly. And of course as expected...he did! Dojo-cho W.S. Bumgarner of The Atlanta Gi Yu Dojo is now the highest ranked and most senior student in The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos association. He has also been granted responsibility and opportunity to test students anywhere in the world for rank from Green Belt to 2nd Degree Black Belt (Ni DAN) on his own. I am very proud of his achievement and very honored to have him in our group of leaders.



Later that afternoon we were back in to complete the ShinKen Gata Jujutsu techniques. Another day of hard training which evolves in to growth as martial artists and more importantly as people. Once you know the devastation you can inflict, you find peace in your quite strength to not have to implement your power...unless pushed to where it must be doled out.



That evening, we had the annual seminar banquet at one of our favorite Japanese Restaurants, Ariake Sushi Bar. Miko-san, Sasaki-san and Shin-san took great care of the 70 folks who showed up for dinner and drinks. We also, then congratulated all the students who passed their exams. We singled out Sam Foster for his YON DAN 4th Degree Black Belt achievement and I awarded him a set of swords (DaiSho) of the "Tonbo" (dragonfly) from my personal collection. I wanted to honor the man who is a business partner in the dojo and does so much and sacrifices so much for others. I am very proud of his success, and I wanted to let him know that with my gift. We then awarded the KYU and DAN level students of the year. Will Grilliot was the KYU student of the year and was awarded a plaque and tanto . Dojo-cho Chuck VanDine was awarded DAN level student of the year and was granted a plaque and new cutting sword. Well-deserved gentlemen, your support and focus earned your peer's respect! The Black Belts all around the globe vote on each of these coveted acknowledgements. They are based on several criteria: *Class Attendance, Technical Skill Advancement, Understanding of Koryu Arts, Selflessness, Character Development, Sincerity, Humbleness, Confidence and Honor* . They achieved all those metrics and much more.



We were then granted a thank you speech from our friends from the CIREds (Cincinnati Reds Baseball Organization) . We have spent a lot of time working with them mentoring inner city/at risk youth and they thanked The Gi Yu Dojo for all it has done in supporting the community.

I was once again honored by the students of the Kyo Kai when they presented me with another award/gift. It is truly a work of art, a plaque with an armored samurai on it with the kanji for love on his helmet. That says it all for me. Thank you all for all your support and dedication to our dojos, our martial art forms and our communities. I will hang that in our dojo proudly



Sunday morning we completed the 9th annual seminar with KukiShinDen Biken no Ho sword. Strategy is the name of the game with these sword fighting techniques. Another day of cleansing the soul and strengthening the spirit through keiko.



So, I leave this journey behind with what I started with, *“Shoshin Wasuru Bekarazu”* or *We should not forget our beginner’s spirit of excitement & humility of starting something new. In other words, find the passion in yourself for continuing on in budo I know I will! Till next year! Ganbatte (do your best everyday) !*