



# Mana

The newsletter of Hawai'i Ki Federation

Fall 2012

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Christopher Curtis Sensei



Photos by Christopher Barensen

Ki-Aikido arts demonstration on Maui: page 2

## World Camp 2012

by Christopher Curtis – Chief Instructor HKF

We just returned from World Camp at Ki Society Headquarters in Tochigi, Japan, feeling renewed excitement and inspiration for the present and future of Ki-Aikido.

As many of you know, the facility was seriously damaged during the earthquake of spring 2011. With the help of donations from many of you, repairs were made, and now it is better than ever. During repairs, some significant changes were made. Primarily, the large partitions that separated the dining area from the lounge area were removed, creating a much larger and more integrated area for eating and socializing between and after classes.

This year there was a big contingent from each of both Russian Ki Federations, as well as many from Australia, Holland, Great Britain, Tahiti, Thailand, Singapore, Hawaii, and of course the United States mainland, primarily from the Eastern Ki Federation. Chief Instructors present from the U.S. were David Shaner Sensei, Clarence Chinn Sensei, Kirk Fowler Sensei, and Koichi Kashiwaya Sensei. We all enjoyed the sincere training and openhearted social interaction. I am reminded of what Shinichi Tohei Sensei noted in a recent magazine interview, when he was asked, “What was it that made you finally decide to follow in your father’s footsteps?” He answered that, in his youth, Koichi Tohei Sensei had taken him to a seminar in the mainland U.S. He said he had never experienced a gathering of people who cared more for, and were more open to, each other. He found himself with a deep desire and commitment to dedicate his life to this.

And now, the primary source of this inspiration is, of course, our Kaichou, Shinichi Tohei Sensei. His teaching, though always inspired, has become even more refined and clear of late. Of course, we were fortunate to experience him just recently here in Hawaii at the Keio University Aikido Club 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seminar. And at World Camp, with the presence of so many of the world’s top teachers present, he continued to emphasize this “intense connection” necessary between nage and uke during our practice.

On the Monday following World Camp, Tracy Reasoner and I were fortunate to be invited to a lunch and tour of the campus with Professor Ikuo Takahashi at Keio University, accompanied by several students and coaches of the Keio University Ki-Aikido Club. Following that, we were treated to a visit to the new Shinshin Toitsu Aikido Kai Tokyo Headquarters and dojo, and then a wonderful dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel with Shinichi Tohei Sensei and his wife Sachiko san.

As you know, this coming year, 2013, will be the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Aikido in Hawaii. We are planning a big seminar and event to celebrate this occasion, and all details about that will be coming to you within the next several months, so stay tuned for that.



## 55th Anniversary Seminar celebrated on Maui

Forty-three members of Keio University's Aikido Club, including coaches, students and alumni, accompanied Shinichi Tohei Sensei and Mrs. Sachiko Tohei to Maui for a wonderful seminar September 14 through 16, taught by Tohei Sensei in celebration of their club's 55th anniversary. This was the second time in recent years that the club and Tohei Sensei chose Maui for a seminar; they celebrated their club's 50th anniversary here in 2007.

Other Aikido students and instructors from Hawaii, the U.S. mainland and foreign countries made up the 100-plus aikidoka whose vigorous and happy training once again made the old-time Wailuku Gymnasium ring.

In addition to the outstanding instruction from Tohei Sensei, participants enjoyed a beach outing, a delicious and fun banquet, and a wonderful demonstration put on by the Keio students on the stage of the Queen Ka'ahumanu Center in Kahului.

We look forward to the next visit by Keio University's students and coaches, which they promise will be in 2016!



## Shinichi Tohei Sensei: "If you feel it, you can do it."

by Ilima Loomis

Shinichi Tohei Sensei invited students to not just understand, but feel unification of mind and body at the Keio University 55th Anniversary Seminar held Sept. 14 to 16 at Shunshinkan Dojo on Maui.

"You need to get the correct feeling of keeping one point," he said. "If you feel it, you can do it."

To practice, Tohei Sensei showed students an exercise for finding the correct posture, then relaxing completely. If you relax, he said, the weight of the upper body naturally comes down to the One Point.

In addition to checking for correct posture, it's important to also check for mental calmness, he said. One easy way to check is to wait until your partner is composed, then clap your hands near their face, or walk around them in a circle, then test their stability again.

"This is a mental test," he said. Losing physical stability indicates that the mind is no longer calm.

It's important to feel the difference between dead relaxation and living calmness, he added. With living calmness, the mind and body are always moving and engaged, even if the movement is imperceptible. "You can move freely," he said.

In contrast, "Zero is dead calmness," he said.

Shinichi Tohei Sensei highlighted two common challenges that crop up when practicing calmness.

*"If you feel it, you can do it" . . . from page 2*

Students may realize that their thoughts are disturbing their calmness, and then try to control or suppress their thoughts. One common mistake comes from simply trying too hard, he said.

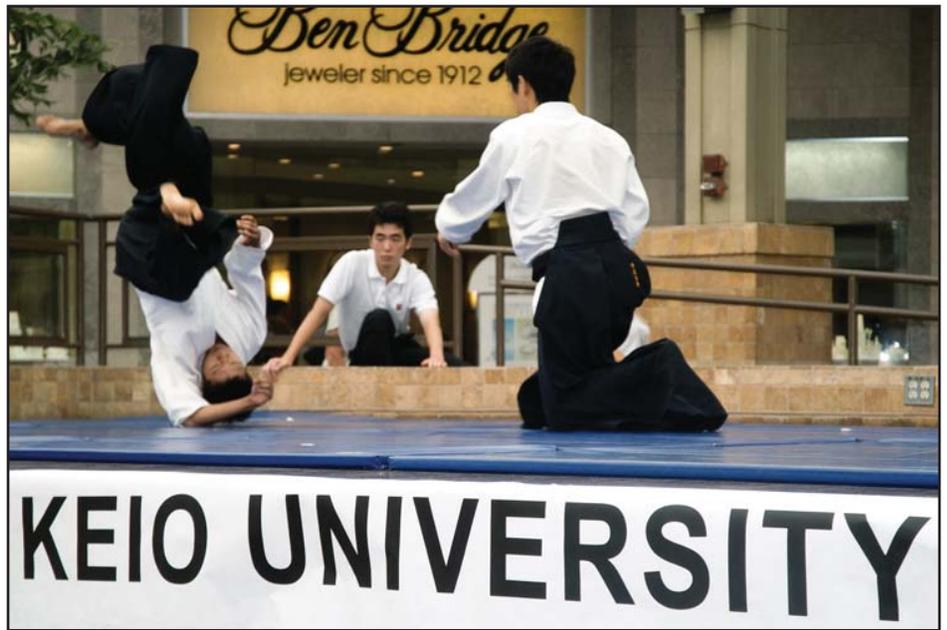
"Many people try to do it much better, much longer. This is thinking too much. All you have to do is just let it go, let it go."

Others may be able to achieve a sense of peaceful equanimity while practicing on their own, but lose their stability when another person gets involved.

"Many people lose the calmness when their partner takes hold," he said. "You have a fighting mind."

To learn how to maintain calmness, Shinichi Tohei Sensei urged his students to practice ki meditation every day.

**Photos taken at Keio U. Ki Aikido Club's demonstration**



Photos by Christopher Barens

# Hawaii Ki Federation news from dojos around the Islands

## Heiwa Ki Aikido Dojo joins HKF

The Hawai'i Ki Federation has welcomed a new member dojo. The Heiwa (Peace) Ki Aikido Dojo is located in Waianae on the island of O'ahu and is headed by Reid Nonaka Sensei. The new, 45-mat dojo replaces Nonaka's 10-mat Chinatown dojo in Honolulu. It now has 16 members, including George Copeland and Steve Litschauer who took Ki tests from Curtis Sensei at the Winter Omiki 2012 seminar at Lokahi Ki Aikido in November, and a number of children ranging in ages from 3 years old up. Nonaka Sensei says the littlest ones have the responsibility to fix all the slippers in a neat row, and that the parents are very supportive and enthusiastic about their children training Ki Aikido. Classes are held on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoon.



Reid Nonaka and daughter Keoni Ha'aheo Kaiyo Nonaka at the Heiwa Ki Aikido dojo

The Ki symbol used at the Heiwa Dojo (see photo) was contributed by Reid's grandfather, Takashi Nonaka Sensei, an HKF Senior Advisor, and dates to the 1970's, originally having hung in his Papaikou Dojo on the Big Island of Hawaii.

The Heiwa Dojo invites everyone to contribute recipes to a cookbook they are putting together as a fundraiser. If you would like to send in a recipe, the email for Reid Nonaka Sensei is [localboy46@gmail.com](mailto:localboy46@gmail.com)

## Aikido demonstration at the King Kekaulike High School Matsuri Festival, Maui

Joni Jackson Sensei of Maui Ki-Aikido led a demonstration of basic and advanced Aikido arts with 7 students from Maui Ki-Aikido on November 17 during a festival of Japanese culture at King Kekaulike High School in Pukalani, Maui. The Matsuri Festival was the senior-year project of Anna Gragas, daughter of former Maui Ki-Aikido yudansha Pat Gragas.



Photos by Chuck Carletta

Top: Mac Jiran and Eric Olsen. Bottom: Michah Roemmling dives over friends.



L-R: Joshua Roemmling, Mele Stokesberry, Eric Olsen, Anna Gragas, Micah Roemmling, Taka Tsutsui, Chris Zurcher, Joni Jackson and Mac Jiran.

## HKF dan promotions

Don Kamoku of Masakatsu Dojo successfully passed his Shodan test in June. Michael Dour of Maui Ki-Aikido received his Shodan November 18.

## My Shodan adventure

by Michael Dour

It all happened so quickly. I was having a great time out there, even though somewhere in the back of my mind I was waiting for the “yame” from Sensei, and freaking out a bit. Rondori was proving to be my favorite part of the whole Shodan test; I was thoroughly enjoying it, even while thinking that it seemed to be a bit longer than usual toward the end. When the signal finally came I was relieved but could have continued. I’m sure I was a bit spastic out there. I felt like I was really flailing around, all over the map. But it was fun. Was I keeping one point? Maybe for a few fleeting seconds. At least I didn’t have a total melt down.

Immediately after rondori, when the test was over and it had been announced that I had passed, Sensei asked me how I felt. I was a bit startled, as the question came unexpectedly. If memory serves, my response was that I was both relieved and exhilarated. However, I was definitely “upper side,” though it wouldn’t have been PC to say that. I would have preferred to honestly say that I was completely calm, “just another day at the office Sensei,” but that wasn’t the case. I was “amped.” So, probably more breathing is in order, and a lot more training on the mat too, and slowing ‘way down and expanding and...the list could go on. More than once during the Omiki seminar, Sensei asked me if I was in a hurry. “Apparently so,” I said. The whole thing flew by in the wink of an eye; so much preparation for 5 minutes in the limelight! Nonetheless it was a blast.

Perhaps the best part of my test came after we closed the class with the sincere congratulations from the seminar participants, particularly (Clayton) Naluai Sensei. He went out of his way to congratulate me, not knowing me from Adam. Indeed, I truly felt a great camaraderie with my fellow aikidoka and a greater sense of appreciation for Ki-Aikido. Everyone, it seemed, was actually rooting for me... go figure.

This test preparation, which became more focused after the completion of the Keio seminar, had become the focal point of my life. I must admit that initially I felt very confident about my grasp of the arts. However, after immersing myself in the training, I quickly realized that I had a lot of work to do, especially weapons, which were particularly bad.

Now that it’s all over, I have a sense of pride in my accomplishment tempered with the humility that the training has provided me, as well as the knowledge that I am only a beginner, that this laurel is only an embarkation point. I am happy to finally be a Shodan (beginner) and a yudansha.

On the final day of the seminar, Sensei remarked that everyone wearing a hakama should consider themselves a teacher. This really highlighted the significance of the rank I have earned over these past four years, and I am grateful for this privilege and honor. Mahalo to Curtis Sensei, my uke David Hewahewa, and all of you who helped along the way.



Don Kamoku, Masakatsu Ki Aikido



Curtis Sensei and Michael Dour, Maui Ki-Aikido

## Meet Garry Nitta of Maui Ki-Aikido

Garry Nitta is a Maui sandan youth instructor who is also a scientist. His day job is being a research associate for the Institute for Astronomy, often working at the top of Mt. Haleakala. He gathers data for solar telescopes, sometimes traveling to far-away places to photograph eclipses, and he designs parts for telescopes and spectrographs. But on Tuesday afternoons he comes down the mountain and teaches beginner children in Ki-Aikido.

Garry started Aikido in 1996 as a student of Shinichi Suzuki Sensei after moving from Honolulu to Maui. What led him to check out Suzuki Sensei's dojo started as the influence of his uncle George Nitta, a professional baseball player from Hawaii who played in Japan. Uncle George, an athlete who also quarterbacked on the UH team that beat Nebraska in 1959, and who taught Garry's 7th grade PE class at Washington Intermediate in Honolulu, was doing Ki breathing practice with other Japan baseball players. His mentor was Stanley Hashimoto, another pro-baseball player in Japan.



Uncle George told Garry stories about this Ki-breathing training, and "I noticed his change in attitude and how he looked at things," Garry said. Speaking of the influence of Ki breathing on his uncle, "He learned to apply Ki in coaching kids in the baseball clinics he brought around to all the islands."

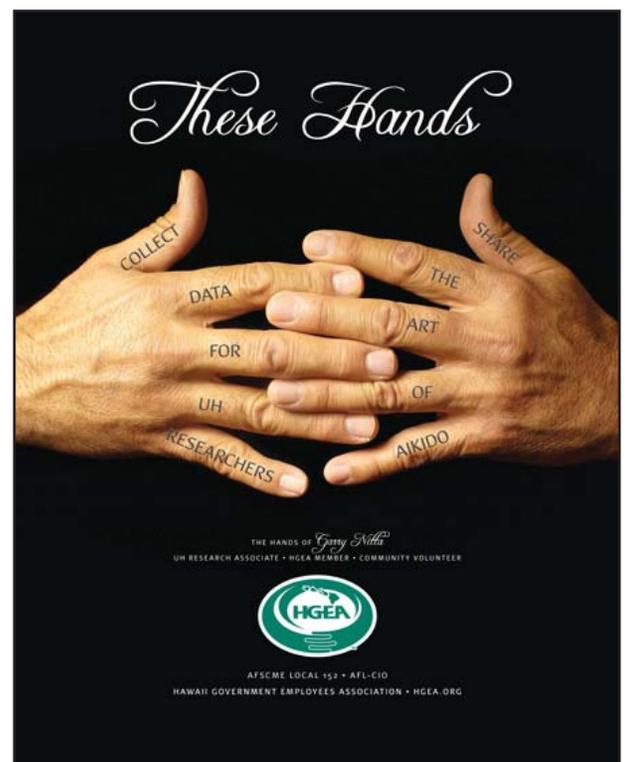
Luckily for us at Maui Ki-Aikido, when Garry got to Maui he had a connection to our Larry Shishido Sensei who steered him to Suzuki Sensei's classes.

Garry states that Aikido has "taught me to 'empty my cup' and see more clearly what is really worth fighting for." It helps him in interactions with his mom with whom he is very close. "I've learned it's not worth butting heads."

Garry is a political activist through his union, the Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA), and he cites Aikido training as also influencing his being more and more accepting of what happens in the political realm. "I don't think I get upset if a candidate I help loses his or her race. I just have to go out and do a better job next election."

In the children's Ki-Aikido classes that Garry teaches, he says he learns a lot from the kids. And he tries to teach them to respect one another. Part of that is willingly and openly training with everybody and learning to recognize and care about others' feelings; for example, "What if someone said that to *you*?"

Recently Garry's hands have become famous throughout the islands; HGEA, working with the agency Hendrix Miyasaki Shin, created an ad showing the community involvement of its members, and Garry's hands became part of a poster which was displayed on O'ahu, the Big Island, Maui and Kaua'i and which won the 2012 Pele Award. The hands ad, shown here, will go on to the national Addy Awards competition.



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Letting Go: Talks on Aikido is a collection of insightful, concise essays adapted from talks given by
Christopher Curtis, 8th Dan, the Chief Instructor of the Hawaii Ki Federation and sensei of the Maui Ki-Aikido
Dojo in Wailuku, Maui. A wide range of topics is covered, from the basic principles and techniques of Ki-Aikido
to the practical ways that Ki-Aikido can be applied to living a more centered, productive, and mindful life.

The book is a useful companion to related Letting Go lectures, podcasts and discussion available at Curtis Sen-
sei's blog, found at curtissensei.com.

Purchase and download Letting Go for \$9.99 in the following formats: Kindle (Amazon); Lulu (Viewable on
any device from Lulu);iBook (iTunes Store); and Nook (Barnes & Noble).

See purchase options on page 7.

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