



# Mana

The newsletter of Hawai'i Ki Federation

Spring 2014

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Christopher Curtis, Chief Instructor, Hawai'i Ki Federation



David Kaneshiro, an instructor at Hilo Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido

## Chief Instructor's Message

Recently, Sachiko Tohei requested an interview with Christopher Curtis Sensei for the Shinshin Toitsu Aikido Kai newsletter. Her questions (Q) and Curtis Sensei's answers (A) follow below, touching on the Shunshinkan Dojo and various historical issues regarding Maui Ki-Aikido, its founding teacher Shinichi Suzuki Sensei, and its practices today. Sayaka Reasoner provided translation of the interview into Japanese.

### Interview for Shinshin Toitsu Aikido Kai Newsletter:

Q: Please tell us about Suzuki Sensei and his relationship with Koichi Tohei Sensei.

A: Here is Suzuki Sensei's personal account of how he came to meet Koichi Tohei Sensei (from an interview I did with him before he passed away):

*"The first time I saw Aikido was in a movie news feature showing a demonstration at San Jose State College. The Aikido teacher threw five AAU (American Amateur Union) Judo champions with ease. I was impressed. That same year, the Maui Nishikai, a health group, brought Koichi Tobei Sensei to Hawaii mainly to teach good health and breathing to the members. As a Maui police officer, I was assigned to assist Tobei Sensei, and so I attended the sessions on Maui. I asked Tobei Sensei, "What is Aikido?" He told me to grab his gi and then he gave me a nikkyo. The pain was intense. I found out it was Tobei Sensei who had demonstrated at San Jose State College. I asked him if he could teach me taihojitsu. Tobei Sensei gave me special training every afternoon at 3:00 o'clock, seven days a week. At that time we trained at the Wailuku Hongwanji Dojo. I taught the Maui police self-defense techniques after Tobei Sensei left Maui, and I studied on my own. Tobei Sensei would come to Maui every two years, and he would correct my techniques. He usually stayed from one to two months."*

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## Meet David Kaneshiro

David Kaneshiro Sensei is an instructor at Hilo Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido, a member dojo of Hawai'i Ki Federation on the Big Island of Hawaii.

*Mana:* When and where did you start training Aikido?

*D.K.:* I started training in Aikido around 1976 or 1977 in Hilo.

*Mana:* What led you to Aikido? How did you hear about it, and what originally interested you about training in Aikido?

*D.K.:* I was in the sixth grade and at the time, sort of heavy, and not

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Master Koichi Tohei throws Suzuki Sensei at the original Maui Ki-Aikido Dojo, 1960's.

For well over 50 years, beginning in 1953, Shinichi Suzuki Sensei was devoted to, and unfliningly followed, the teachings of Koichi Tohei Sensei. Not only that, but both Suzuki Sensei and Tohei Sensei have related to me what good personal friends they became during this intense time of developing what we all know as Ki-Aikido. During the many years that Tohei Sensei spent in Hawai'i, and throughout all the time Suzuki Sensei spent visiting and training with Tohei Sensei in Japan, they were inseparable. Tohei Sensei constantly asked Suzuki Sensei to accompany him. On one occasion, according to Suzuki Sensei, Tohei Sensei was invited to a special dinner for all the top martial artists in the Tokyo area of Japan, and he asked Suzuki Sensei to accompany him. When they arrived, everyone else was already there. As they walked together into the hall, the entire community of martial artists rose to their feet and bowed to Tohei Sensei. Suzuki Sensei was astounded by how much Tohei Sensei was respected by his peers and never forgot what an honor it was for him to be invited by Tohei Sensei to accompany him. This must be one of the reasons why, through all of my 30 plus years of assisting Suzuki Sensei as his otomo and uke, he always insisted that I accompany him to all events.

Q: Talk about how you became the head instructor of the Maui dojo.

A: I always used to meet Suzuki Sensei at the dojo at 5:00 PM each day.

Formal class began at 7:00 PM in those days, so that gave us a couple of hours to practice together. Early on we usually trained with bokken or jo, but as time went on we would often sit together in the office, sometimes talking, or sometimes I would just sit while he wrote correspondence at his typewriter. On one such occasion, he suddenly said to me, "Chris, I want you to be my *atotori*." This was a shock to me. I knew that this meant a lot of extra work and responsibility for me, but at the same time I was honored that he had such faith in me, and I could see that someone needed to begin to prepare for the day when he would be ready to retire.

Suzuki Sensei was always the most generous hearted of instructors. Of course, there was not a certain day when Suzuki Sensei decided to step down as Chief Instructor of Maui Ki-Aikido. It happened gradually, as he saw that I was ready to take on more and more. In 1998, Koichi Tohei Sensei asked me to bring the Hawai'i Ki-Aikido groups back together and form the Hawai'i Ki Federation. Once that happened formally in 2000, Suzuki Sensei asked me to take on all of the teaching and administrative duties for Maui Ki-Aikido as well.

Q: And how about building the new dojo?

A: The original Maui dojo was built back in 1961. While the Mayor of Maui granted Suzuki Sensei a choice piece of land (which we are still on today), the group found an old nurses' cottage left over from World War II and moved it by truck across town, constructing the dojo out of that old building. As a result of the age of that original building, as well as the many termite colonies in Wailuku town, the old dojo was constantly being treated for termite infestation. We could hardly keep up with their chewing.

Then, sometime in late 1995, I was sitting with Suzuki Sensei in the dojo office, he turned to say something to me, and suddenly his chair fell right through the floor, with him sitting in it! As I helped him out of the hole in the



Shinichi Suzuki Sensei, Koichi Tohei Sensei and Christopher Curtis, 1993

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floor, he said to me, “Chris, I think maybe it’s time to let go of this old dojo and build a new one!”

Thus began our campaign around 1995 to raise the money needed to tear down the old dojo and build the new one. Suzuki Sensei placed the responsibility of organizing this effort in my hands, though every member worked and sacrificed during those years to make the new dojo a reality. There was quite a bit of money to raise, and I must say that if it were not for Suzuki Sensei’s many years of selfless teaching and support of the Maui community, we would never have been able to do it.

One day Suzuki Sensei and I traveled to Honolulu to see the governor of Hawai‘i to ask for the State to provide a portion of the funding towards the new dojo. The governor’s immediate response to our request was, “If I give you folks money for your building, then the state will have to give money to every other martial art group in Hawai‘i.”

“No,” I said, “because only Maui Ki-Aikido has taught the police and the state sheriff’s deputies for free for the past 50 years!”

“Oh!” he said. “Well, if you put it that way, then I think you can have the money.” This is just one example of how Suzuki Sensei’s generous past actions provided for us when the time came to ask for support in return.

In September of 2001 both Shinichi Tohei Sensei (accompanied by his lovely new wife, Sachiko san) and Yutaka Otsuka Sensei came to Maui to bless our new dojo, teach a seminar to students from around the world, and help us honor Shinichi Suzuki Sensei and all he had accomplished throughout his long Aikido career. At this time Koichi Tohei was ill and unable to make the trip to Maui but graciously gave the name our new dojo, the *Shunshinkan*. Tohei Sensei’s calligraphy of that name hangs over our entry.

Q: How does your volunteer management of the dojo work?

A: Following the strict guidelines set down by our original Maui Ki-Aikido leader, Suzuki Sensei, no one teaching or working administratively at the Shunshinkan Dojo ever takes a single dollar of recompense for their efforts. All work is voluntary. One evening each week is “cleaning night” when the class is closed 30 minutes early to leave time for the members to clean the windows, bathrooms, and floors, and once every three months, on a Sunday, we hold a “dojo work day” where everyone gets together to do a very thorough dojo cleaning, including the outside of the building and the manicuring of the beautiful landscaping.

Once per month we hold an administrative “Maui Ki-Aikido Board meeting” where our elected officers, President Lynn Curtis, Vice President Tracy Reasoner, Treasurer Bob Lightbourn, and Secretary Joni Jackson provide leadership and guidance in keeping all membership reporting and financial structure intact. The Board also designs and makes all related decisions on special projects, seminars, and other dojo-related events.

Q: Are there recreational activities with the dojo members other than practice?

A: Since we all enjoy the beaches of Maui so often on our own, we don’t often have “beach parties” as a group, unless of course we have visitors, such as the Keio University Ki-Aikido club group, and then we make a special beach event for them to enjoy our waves, sand, and sun.

We do have many special events, however, such as a New Years brunch at my home in Haiku, a dinner at Jeff Baldwin’s home in Kula where I personally cook something for all members, and special gatherings at the dojo after each testing, for Shinen Enkai and Bonnenkai, and on birthdays and such, for food and drinks. Our dojo parties are always “pot luck” which means that each person brings their favorite dish to share. We find many occasions to join together and socialize, which we all consider to be an extension of our practice.

Aloha, and thank you for this opportunity to share! Christopher Curtis – Chief Instructor.

Throughout most of May, Christopher Curtis Sensei will be teaching at Ki-Aikido dojos in Europe. In the Netherlands and in St. Petersburg, Russia, he will be joined by David Shaner Sensei for joint seminars.

Curtis Sensei’s third Europe seminar will be in Valencia, Spain. Traveling as otomo with Curtis Sensei will be Charles “Carlos” Boyer, Head Instructor of Lokahi Ki Aikido. Curtis Sensei said, “My otomo just happens to be a college professor of Spanish history in Honolulu, and has lived in both Madrid and Barcelona for extensive periods of time, so it is like traveling with an encyclopedia of Spanish history!”

The two will spend May 12 through May 15 in Madrid, sightseeing and meeting with new students there before traveling to Valencia.



David Kaneshiro . . . continued from page 1

involved in any sports or really any extracurricular activities. My mother who previously didn't drive, had gotten her license, and that created an opportunity for my brother Robert and me to get involved in activities. Mitsuo Murashige Sensei was a good friend of my father, so he recommended that we take Aikido. He provided us many of Tohei Sensei's books to study, and I was also able to acquire a copy of *This is Aikido* from a relative. These writings, illustrations, and photos really helped capture my interest.

*Mana:* Who were your teachers along the way, and in what dojos? When did you receive your dan rankings?

*D.K.:* My first teacher in Hilo was Tokuichi Segawa Sensei. He was quite an inspiration – a man with a beaming personality and a ready smile. (About 28 years after I started training with him when I went to Headquarters, I realized how exact his movements were and how consistent they were with Tohei Sensei's teachings.)

I later advanced to classes with Leonard Nagata Sensei, Jitsuo Niwao Sensei, Richard Okano Sensei, Roy Yonemori Sensei, and most importantly Takashi Nonaka Sensei. I also attended many classes with Koretoshi Maruyama Sensei in the days when he would spend a month each summer in Hilo. All along the way, I was fortunate to have been noticed and trained by Nonaka Sensei who has been a very important person in my life – like a lighthouse to a ship at sea.

In California, I had the privilege of training with Clarence Chinn Sensei, Masao Shoji Sensei, Charlie Honma Sensei, and Ed Grover Sensei along with the members of the Southern California Ki Society.

I received my Shodan as a sophomore in high school (1981) and tested for Nidan around the time I graduated from Waiakea High School in Hilo (1983). After attending school in Colorado (where I trained some with an Aiki-kai instructor), I moved to Los Angeles and received my Sandan in 1990. Of the 20 years I spent on the continent, 15 were in or near Southern California. During the time I spent in Ohio from 1994-1998, I trained with a friend who ran an Iwama Style dojo but who appreciated the way we practice in Ki Society. Before I left California in 2007, I received my Yondan from Chinn Sensei.

This year, Curtis Sensei, upon the recommendation of Leilani Pakele Sensei, will be presenting my Godan certificate at the Hilo Workshop in July. It is like a dream to be receiving this honor in the place where I started my Aikido training.

*Mana:* . What has your experience been like training in the Hawai'i Ki Federation?

*D.K.:* It's been great! Before I moved back to Hawaii, Curtis Sensei was a visiting instructor in Southern California, so I got a somewhat eye-opening introduction to Hawaii Ki Federation. Naluai Sensei also visited occasionally, so we always had a sense of connection to Hawaii. But I previously had remembered Curtis Sensei as Suzuki Sensei's Otomo from back in the 1980's, so it was very interesting to see who he had become. I appreciate how supportive he was during my participation in the 2004 Taigi competition at World Camp. Having been part of Hawaii Ki Federation now for seven years, I feel like part of the family again. But of course the family has changed – such is life. I'm grateful for the teachings and the opportunity to train and for all those who help make it happen.

*Mana:* At Hilo Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido, what classes do you teach, and what has that been like for you?

*D.K.:* Before discussing when I teach, I'd like to first mention that I am a student in Nonaka Sensei's Sunday morning class. He continues to be an inspiration to us all setting high standards. To share what I know (or think I know), I teach a class Tuesday evenings and also assist with the Children's Class taught by my brother Robert. I sometimes attend the afternoon class and occasionally cover for Leilani Pakele Sensei and Mike Matsui Sensei. I really enjoy teaching classes. Each interaction is very engaging and I like to find ways that help each individual student gain something from the few moments we share.



David Kaneshiro Sensei

David Kaneshiro . . . continued from page 4

*Mana:* . In what way(s) does your Aikido training possibly affect or help you in your life, say for example in your work or your recreational pastimes?

*D.K.:* It is completely interrelated at this point. It helps me understand and maintain the “eye of the typhoon” so to speak.

*Mana:* Would you like to share some experiences training at World Camp, or anywhere, with either Master Tohei or Shinichi Tohei Sensei?

*D.K.:* Well, I’ve shaken hands with both of them and benefitted greatly from them. Mainly I appreciate the fact that they have created and maintained a tremendous opportunity for us to learn the Way of the Universe and to practice and teach it.

*Mana:* What are your hopes or your vision for HKF and for your dojo?

*D.K.:* My hope is that we can continue to learn and grow as members and to share the experience with others.

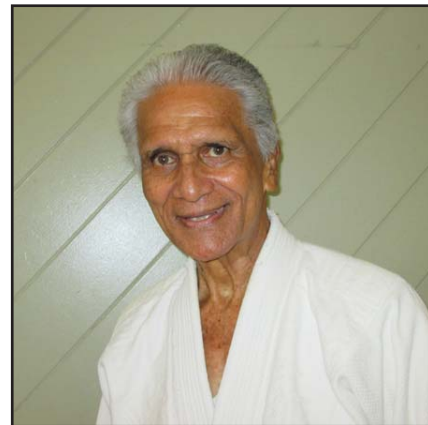
## Hawai‘i Ki Federation news from dojos around the Islands

### HKF Dan and Den promotions

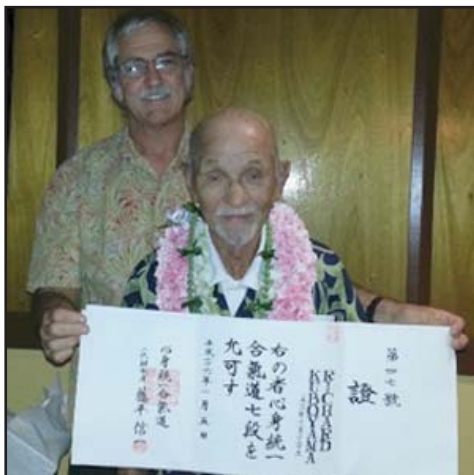
Congratulations to Hawai‘i Ki Federation senior advisors Clayton Naluai Sensei of Lokahi Ki Aikido in Honolulu and Richard Kuboyama Sensei of Hanapepe Dojo on Kaua‘i who were each promoted to Nanadan, and to David Kaneshiro of Hilo Shin Shin Toitsu Aikido, promoted to Godan, on January 1, 2014.



*Curtis Sensei presented Naluai Sensei's Nanadan certificate at the Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki Seminar at Lokahi, Feb. 15, 2014.*



*Clayton Naluai Sensei, HKF Senior Advisor and founding teacher of Lokahi Ki Aikido.*



*Richard Kuboyama, HKF Senior Advisor, with his Nanadan certificate, held by Dean Mayer Sensei.*



*Members of Kaua'i's two Ki-Aikido dojos, Hanapepe and Kapa'a, at the party March 5, 2014, celebrating Kuboyama Sensei's Nanadan promotion.*



HKF Promotions . . . continued from page 5

Congratulations also to the following HKF instructors and students who took and passed dan tests this spring: Celine Boyer and Harry Daguman of Lokahi Ki Aikido, Nidan, and Ilima Loomis, Maui Ki-Aikido, Shodan, on Feb. 16. On April 11, Layke Yamauchi of Maui Ki-Aikido tested for and passed Shodan.



Ilima Loomis, Christopher Curtis Sensei, Charles Boyer Sensei, Celine Boyer, Harry Daguman after tests at Lokahi Ki Aikido, Feb. 16, 2014.



Layke Yamauchi and his uke, Corin Nishimoto, stand with Curtis Sensei.

## Generations of the Nonakas of Hawai'i Ki Federation



Reid Nonaka contributed the historic photo on left: (L-R) Great-grandfather Satoru Nonaka, Eric Nonaka Sensei holding baby Reid, and Grandfather Takashi Nonaka Sensei. Taken Feb. 16, 2014, at Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki Seminar, photo on right: (front) HKF Assistant Chief Instructor Eric Nonaka Sensei and grandson Hau'oli Pomaika'i; HKF Senior Advisor Takashi Nonaka Sensei and great-granddaughter Keoni; (back) Nicole and Reid Nonaka.



## Maui holds Ki-Aikido Intro Course in July

We kindly request that you tell your Maui friends who are interested in trying Ki-Aikido for themselves that there will be a public introductory class on 4 Thursday nights in July. Tracy Reasoner, Godan, will teach the course which covers all aspects of Aikido training, on Maui from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Shunshinkan Dojo, July 10, 17, 24 and 31. The cost is \$40 and includes the training manual *Ki-Aikido on Maui*.

## David Shaner Sensei to be guest instructor on Maui in August

The Hawai'i Ki Federation is pleased to announce that the 2014 Guest Instructor Seminar will be led by David Shaner Sensei, 7th dan, Okuden in Ki Development, and Chief Instructor of the Eastern Ki Federation. The intensive three-day seminar entitled "Living with the Wind at Your Back: Five Principles of *Kaisho*" will take place at the Maui Ki-Aikido Shunshinkan Dojo August 1-3. Visit [www.mauiaikido.com](http://www.mauiaikido.com) for more information and registration.

Shaner Sensei is also Japan Headquarters' Advisor to the Eastern Europe/Russia Ki-Aikido Federation and was an uchi deshi (live-in student) at the International Ki Society Headquarters in Haramachi, Shinjuku-ku, Japan. He taught at Furman University from 1982-2012, where he served as Chair of the Department of Philosophy for 15 years and holds an endowed chair emeritus as the Herring Professor of Philosophy and Asian Studies.

Shaner Sensei's most recent book, [Living with the Wind at Your Back](#), will be released soon. A second edition of his 2010 book, [The Seven Arts of Change: Leading Business Transformation That Lasts](#) (Union Square Press) combines lessons drawn from four decades of Aikido and knowledge gleaned from his 30-year consulting career into techniques for achieving successful organizational change and development. More information about Shaner Sensei's work, as well as a book trailer video, can be found at [www.davidshaner.com](http://www.davidshaner.com).



## How I learned to stop worrying and love my Shodan test



Ilima Loomis

by Ilima Loomis, Maui Ki-Aikido

When Curtis Sensei told me last year that it was time to start preparing for my Shodan test, I felt excited to be faced with a new challenge, and proud that he believed I was ready. But I also felt nervousness, anxiety, and fear.

Like a lot of people, fear of failure is something I've struggled with my entire life. As I've grown older, I've seen how it limits me. So I decided not to avoid my fear this time, but to face it by taking my Shodan test.

I knew I had a lot of work to do, so I wanted to start learning my arts right away: I knew I'd be in the hot seat for the next six months, and I didn't want to be embarrassed by having Sensei call on me in class when I wasn't organized.

But memorizing all my arts was harder than I thought. I could learn a technique in practice, then as soon as I was called to demonstrate in class, I seemed to forget everything. I started to get worried that I wasn't learning fast enough.

I decided to combat this by training harder -- coming to more classes, scheduling extra practice, and walking through my test solo at home. The solution, I thought, was just to be so prepared that it would be impossible for me to forget.

And it worked -- a little. I could finally remember and perform all my arts. But they weren't very good. I had to concentrate so hard on each technique that I didn't have any flow. With just a couple of weeks to go before my test, I started feeling downcast and frustrated.

In the back of my mind, I knew that fear of failure was still my problem, so of course I decided to deal with that problem. I spent more time sitting and practicing Ki breathing and meditation -- willing myself to *stop worrying*.

Guess how that worked?

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*How I Learned to Stop Worrying . . . continued from page 7*

At this point, my mentor, Tracy Reasoner Sensei, must have decided it was time to intervene. In one of my final practices before my test, he called me to the front of the class, and had me demonstrate my arts, over and over, without stopping, for an hour. He had me do them backwards and forwards, in sequence, and out of order, with one, two, three, four, and five uke at a time.

When we were finished, I was exhausted -- but I was no longer afraid. Nothing that could happen to me on my test would be harder than what I'd just experienced. And I finally accepted that, if I just stopped thinking about it, I really did know my arts after all. I believed in myself.

Traveling to Lokahi Dojo to take my test the next weekend was a wonderful experience. Because I was no longer full of fear, my heart felt open and free, and I was ready to savor every detail of the experience. I also felt so much more aware of the support and love that was all around me. Friends like Tracy Sensei, David Hewahewa and Michael Dour had spent so much of their own time helping me. But others had supported me with encouragement, friendship and Ki.

After nine years of practicing Aikido, this experience has given me a better understanding of what Curtis Sensei means by keiko and shugyo. I would not have been able to perform my test without keiko practice. However, without the shugyo experience, it would not have had any real meaning or impacted me personally in such a profound way.



*Group photo at the Hawai'i Ki Federation's February 14-16, 2014, Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki seminar, taught by Christopher Curtis Sensei at Lokahi Ki Aikido, Honolulu.*



*Curtis Sensei demonstrates kiatsu with a seminar participant.*



*Celine Boyer practices at the seminar for her Nidan test with Michael Dour.*



**Order Form: Please write in the number of items you are ordering after each price.**

*Letting Go* by Christopher Curtis Sensei..... (non-member) \$25\_\_\_\_  
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*Ki-Aikido on Maui*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, by Christopher Curtis Sensei (non-members) \$12\_\_\_\_  
 The training manual used by all Hawai'i Ki Federation dojos. (HKF member) \$8\_\_\_\_

*50 Years of Aikido in Hawai'i, A Book of Days* ..... (non-member) \$20\_\_\_\_  
 Perpetual keepsake calendar with historic photos that chronicle the birth, evolution and (HKF members) \$15\_\_\_\_  
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 Shinichi Suzuki Sensei over the past 50 years.

*Norito CD*, as read by Christopher Curtis Sensei ..... \$25\_\_\_\_

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

**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 Head Instructor of Maui Ki-Aikido 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 *Letting Go* book is a useful companion to related Letting Go lectures, podcasts and discussions available on Curtis Sensei's blog, found at [curtissensei.com](http://curtissensei.com).