



Mana

The newsletter of Hawai'i Ki Federation

Spring 2016

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Christopher Curtis, Chief Instructor, Hawai'i Ki Federation



Fincher Sterling displays his Yondan certificate received from Sensei at the seminar.



Lillian Paiva Sensei and Alaria Franzoni

Chief Instructor Message:

by Christopher Curtis - Chief Instructor HKF

I would like to use this spring's Chief Instructor message to detail some of the exciting seminar events that are taking place this year.

In early May I will be departing with otomo Carlos Boyer to Germany and Holland for our annual seminars, which will also include member dojos from Slovenia, Switzerland, and Belgium. In late May, Lynn Curtis, Jeff Baldwin, Ilima Loomis, and Dan Sidman will be joining Carlos and me in Amsterdam. Together, we will fly from there to St. Petersburg, Russia for an extended seminar and visit. Lynn Curtis Sensei will begin the events by teaching three evenings of children's classes for the Eastern Europe/Western Russian Ki Federation. Then for the next three days, I will be conducting a seminar for the students and teachers from throughout the region, with participants from St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as members from Belarus, Latvia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other areas of the former Soviet Union.

From there, we fly to Spain, where once again Lynn Sensei will begin by teaching a special evening class on "How to Teach Children" for all the children from the Valencia area dojos, as well as their respective teachers. This will be followed by my regular weekend seminar there in Valencia. Participants will come from Barcelona, Madrid, and other areas of Spain.

I was glad to find that so many of the HKF members have committed to attending these events in far-off places this year. The opportunity for them, and for the students of the various Ki Federations we will be visit-

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Dan promotions, Spring 2016

Maui Ki-Aikido's Fincher Sterling received his Yondan (4th dan), announced at the Kagami Biraki January 1 in Japan. Alaria Franzoni, student of Lillian Paiva Sensei of Honoka'a Dojo, tested and received Shodan rank at the Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki seminar at Lokahi Dojo March 6.

Also of note, great friend of the Hawai'i Ki Federation David Shaner Sensei, Chief Instructor of the Eastern Ki Federation and Japan HQ Advisor to the Eastern Europe/Russia Ki-Aikido Federation received the rank of Hachidan (8th dan), announced at the Kagami Biraki January 1 in Japan. ♪

Chief Instructor's Message . . . continued from page 1

ing, are unique. This is an opening not only for each of us to learn and grow while practicing together on the mat, but also to serve as informal ambassadors, spreading the good will of Aloha, as well as learning from the various cultures that we encounter during our travels. I am always grateful for this opportunity.

As some of you may already know, the Keio University seminar that was scheduled to be held on Maui this September has been moved forward to next March, 2017. So this left room for us to hold the second Combined HKF/Western Europe training camp at Ki Society Headquarters in Tochigi, Japan this fall. This year, in addition to students from HKF and Western Europe, we are welcoming members of the Eastern Ki Federation and the Eastern Europe/Western Russia Ki Federation to the camp. Teaching us once again this year will be Shinichi Tohei Sensei, Kataoka Sensei, and Kobori Sensei. Aloha to you all. ☺

A test is not really a test...

by Alaria Franzoni

I took my Shodan test at the Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki seminar on Oahu. I had the honor and opportunity to travel to Maui a couple of weeks before to train in preparation with Curtis Sensei and Reasoner Sensei, who gave very helpful instructions for the techniques I was doing, and helped to free up my demonstration with the Jo and Bokken. I feel incredibly fortunate to have trained with them and learned and practiced so much in just three days, and as a result I felt confident enough for the test.

Several people at the seminar told me that a test in Aikido is not really a test; it is a demonstration of what the student learned and part of the celebration that they already passed, and suggested that I keep that in mind as I perform.

It is said, "It takes a village to raise a child," and it also takes everyone in a class or dojo to help one person to prepare for and reach their next rank. I am grateful for each and every person who helped me and took uke, both in practice and during the test.

I am especially indebted to Paiva Sensei (Honoka'a Dojo Head Instructor) for her consistent commitment to my development in the past 10 years, every week, every year. I could not have reached this milestone without her. Mahalo Nui Loa, Paiva Sensei! ☺



HKF Seminar Kicks off 2016

by Ilima Loomis

Members of the Hawai'i Ki Federation gathered March 4 to 6 at Lokahi Ki Society's dojo in Honolulu for HKF's annual Shugyo Tassei Kigan Shiki seminar. Chief Instructor Christopher Curtis Sensei taught the seminar, which also included several tests and an Omiki ceremony to celebrate the new year.

Students and teachers from around the state shared their thoughts on the teachings, which focused on the theme of "calmness and intensity":

"My biggest takeaway was about the concept of change and the role our true practice plays in it," said Lokahi's Joy Ogawa. "Curtis Sensei taught us, 'Change will happen on its own, when it was meant to be.' In other words, numerous factors have to come together to even make change possible. Always do your best and one day, God, the universe, your spirituality will open a door you never saw coming, which is a part of your fate."

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HKF Seminar . . . continued from page 2

“Curtis Sensei spoke about calmness and intensity, said visiting student Charly Leys. “I thought about how agitation often comes with narrow focus on a single thing, whether it be the point of an attack, the physical contact of a ki test, or an experience that disturbs you. Sensei’s instruction of ‘including’ the whole training partner, the whole room, the whole of the experience helps one stay calm and centered, but also very present to the attack, test, or experience.”

“Open yourself to everything; there are infinite possibilities in life,” wrote Lokahi student Rob Oda. “A simple poem (by Ariwara no Narihira) sums up my seminar: I have always known/That at last I would/Take this road, but yesterday/I did not know that it would be today.

“It came from when Chris Curtis Sensei said that you need to free yourself from any perception of ‘me’ vs ‘them,’ and that liberating yourself in this way makes you more aware of the universe,” Oda said. “When you are able to open yourself up to all things in life, that is how we can live a very fulfilling existence.”

Hanapepe dojo head instructor Dean Mayer Sensei enjoyed fellowship. “The best thing about seminars is getting to see and train with all the different people that train in Aikido.”

Honokaa’s Lillian Paiva Sensei agreed, stating “Attending a seminar is part of who we are, not something we do. Without the teachings of Tohei Sensei our life would be a false condition. Curtis Sensei always puts so much into each experience that you can’t help but be moved and want to continue on this amazing journey.” ∞



Curtis Sensei demonstrating Taiji 20 with ukes Charles Boyer, Tracy Reasoner, and Jeff Baldwin.

Meet Rafael Gandia Pastor Sensei

He is the Chief Instructor of Spain in Ki-Aikido, to whose dojo in Valencia Curtis Sensei travels annually to hold a seminar. Gandia Sensei graciously gave us the following interview by email.

Mana: When and where did you start to train Aikido? How did you find out about it? What were the influences in your life that led you to decide to train?

Gandia Sensei: I started practicing Aikido in 1979. I was a first dan judo student when a personal crisis led me to seek a new sense of my life. So I went to a retreat for beginners in Zen meditation with a teacher named Jack Casterman who was himself a student of the head Aikido teacher for Europe, Masamichi Noro Sensei. The close contact with Casterman Sensei not only changed my life orientation but also brought about my discovery of Aikido. Ever since then, meditation and Aikido are practices that have accompanied my life.

From this experience I was convinced, and I decided to look for a place to practice. I was living in a small town then where there was nothing along this line. My search led me to the city of Valencia where I met Yasunari Kitaura Sensei who became my teacher in the Aikikai school of Aikido. Thus began my practice, making a 200 kilometer trip for each Aikido class between my town and Valencia. That's how it was for several years until I was able to form a group in my own town.

Mana: You used to train with different Aikido teachers other than C. Curtis Sensei. What led you to that eventuality?

GS: Yes, I had various Aikido teachers along my way until Curtis Sensei appeared in my life. Not until the student is prepared does the true teacher appear.

I left Aikikai at the Sandan level because I was feeling that it didn't encompass the teachings that Jack Casterman Sensei had originally transmitted to me. At that time I was reading the first books that talked about Tohei Sensei, and his teachings attracted me very much. But once again I ran up against the problem of no Ki Aikido dojo nearby.

I contacted Ki Society Headquarters in 1986, sending several letters. Finally I received an answer, and they told me that the Ki Society Chief Instructor for Europe would be holding an introduction to Ki in 1987 in a mountainous region of Spain. However that seminar was called off because the teacher had to be with Tohei Sensei on his Europe tour. The next year, in '88, the seminar was finally held and we got to discover the practice of Ki Aikido. Then I was sure it was the Aikido for me. My then student and now wife, Josefina, and I were very impressed with the experience and the teachings. At that time the Chief Instructor asked me to form Ki Aikido groups in Spain and by December of that year we organized the first seminar here.

I started in Ki Society from zero, in spite of my being Sandan in Aikikai. I took and passed all the tests from the first levels of Ki and Kyu. During almost 20 years we organized seminars in Valencia and Barcelona in which the chief instructor for Europe at that time was always hosted in my home. My wife and I always attended him with care and affection. However, he never seemed to show any of those things for us, which caused us to begin to question not the teachings, but the teacher.

During the first 10 years it was very constructive and beautiful, but little by little we noticed that the teacher's mind began to be disturbed. He seemed to be living in a state of complete confusion. For me it was painful and sad what was happening with the teachings of Tohei Sensei. Finally a crisis motivated me to leave this practice and once again to direct contact with Japan Ki Society Headquarters, which wasn't easy. But one fine day I received notice that they were sending me to Holland where the new head teacher for Europe was giving a seminar. There I



Rafael Gandia Pastor, Chief Instructor, Spain

Meet Gandia Sensei . . . continued from page 4

met Christopher Curtis Sensei and his otomo, Jeff Baldwin Sensei. For me, that was an encounter! There was an immediate connection between us, and I had no doubt. This was decisive.

I'd like to say that for this first visit to Holland I was accompanied by Jose Vicente (Costa) and Rafael (Gandia), my otomos, without whose help it would have been much more difficult. I am profoundly grateful to them both.

Mana: How has this decision affected your practice and your life?

GS: This decision has transformed my practice and also my life. Just as the practice has gone on evolving, my focus, my consciousness, my life has gone on changing. Everything, constantly. As Curtis Sensei says, "While teaching Ki Aikido, the instructor also learns and discovers new forms constantly." The practice and my life are now more than ever moving along conjoined.

Mana: Now that you've taken part in the training camp at HKF / Western Europe/Japan, how has that experience been for you?

GS: I can say unequivocally that after this first visit to Ki Society headquarters, for me there's been a "before" and an "after." I feel that all my searching and feelings from all these years have been worth the pain, as well as the continued effort to establish a good representation of Shinshin Toitsu in Valencia and in Spain. There all of us in the Spanish contingent attending recharged our batteries for many years. The experience left an indelible impression on us all.

Mana: Now that you've trained with Shinichi Tohei Sensei, how has that been for you?

GS: The first impression I had on meeting him was that I'd known him all my life. His teachings, his methods, and the profound understanding of the practice and philosophy of Shinshin Toitsu is spectacular. It gave me the sensation of seeing someone that was in another dimension of consciousness. All of this has left me with a new goal in my life: to go to Japan every year that's left to me in life that I can. Also, it has left me with a profound sense of gratitude and happiness, and also a deep gratefulness to our dear Curtis Sensei.

Mana: What are your hopes and vision for Ki Society in Spain, and for your dojos in Valencia?

GS: Our hopes for Spain's Ki Society are ambitious: that there be many dojos throughout Spain. Our vision is coming true each day that goes by with a slow but steady increase in the number of students in all the dojos. I look forward to having faithful students and good practitioners. I appreciate the confidence and mutual support established between myself and the instructors in our relationship of over 10 years. We are all hoping for, and constantly experiencing, all the benefits that the practice gives us. I hope that in 2016 the number of dojos in Ki Society grows, and that we share the experience with more students.

I don't wish to stop without expressing my great appreciation and that of all of us first to Curtis Sensei, and to his wife, Lynn Curtis Sensei, Carlos Boyer Sensei and Jeff Baldwin Sensei, for all their efforts, their dedication and their patience and affection that they show us each time we see each other. ☺



Maui behind-the-scenes team brings floral beauty

It might seem mysterious, as if the Menehune, or Hawaiian Little People, keep coming to Maui's Shunshinkan Dojo to replace one beautiful floral bouquet after another, but it's really the work of three dedicated and talented Maui yudansha. Joni Jackson Sensei is one of them. This rokudan instructor teaches the classes at our Upcountry Dojo plus a weapons class in Wailuku. Well-known artists Joelle Perz, a painter, and Sally Worcester, a glass blower, both yondan students of Maui Ki-Aikido and assistant teachers, round out the threesome who rotate the flower arranging and never miss creating something spectacular when Maui hosts a seminar. ☺



Continues with more photos on on page 8

Self-Defense Workshop



Tracy Reasoner Sensei taught the public Self-Defense Workshop at the Shunshinkan Dojo on February 20 with help from Maui students and teachers.



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The Haras bring Ki-Aikido to 3rd graders in Lahaina

By John Hara, Maui Ki-Aikido student

Our Aikido demonstration was held at Kamehameha III Elementary School in Lahaina on January 19. My friend Marybeth Frieday who is a teacher there asked me to share a little about Aikido in her class. My wife Chika and I checked with Curtis Sensei if it was alright, and he gave us thumbs up. So Chika and I went to demonstrate in the 3rd grade class. We emphasized that in Aikido the mind leads the body. We shared that a positive mind is a powerful thing, and a negative one is not so strong.

Chika used her fingers to make a ring, and I as uke tried to pull it apart. She first tried to hold her fingers together with a negative mind, "I can't hold my fingers together, I can't, I can't, I can't....." She repeated this out loud. I was easily able to pull her fingers apart. The second attempt was with a positive mind, "I can hold my fingers together, I can, I can, I can....." and as you can imagine, her finger ring was unbreakable and very strong. We brought two kids up to show the class that they could do it too, and then the entire class participated. They formed pairs and tried it. Many of the children were excited to recognize the difference. We told the kids that the object is not to be able to keep the fingers together, but to experience the difference when you use a positive mind or when you use a negative one.

We added that we can apply this same energy, or ki, to what we do in everyday life. Plus energy or Negative energy - what kind of energy are they using every day?

We finished the demo with some arts and were asked many question not really pertaining to Aikido: How old are we? How long have we been training? Since we have a child, how do we train?

All in all, we had fun, and the kids loved it too. Our demonstration went so well that Chika and I did the same demonstration at our Wailuku Jodo Mission New Year's Party on January 23rd with Sensei's blessing.



Why we support the Maui Ki-Aikido Endowment Fund

Aikido on Maui begins and ends with the premise that mind and body are one. Aikido training is a process of realizing not only the unification of mind and body, but also the innate sameness and ultimate union with all that surrounds us. Maui Ki-Aikido's mission for over 60 years has been to provide this kind of opportunity to the community of Maui.

At the core of this mission is the need to ensure that future leaders and instructors of Maui Ki-Aikido are supported and cultivated in order to perpetuate the training of mind and body unification for generations to come. How do we accomplish that, you may ask. The answer to that is twofold. First, we cultivate a dedicated cadre of instructors who volunteer their time to teach each of their students every week. Second, we create a "trust" or "endowment fund" to provide financial support that insures on-going instructor training.

The Maui Ki-Aikido Board of Directors created the Maui Ki-Aikido Endowment Fund to enable that training as soon as the financial fundraising goal for the Endowment Fund is met. We are within reach of that goal – which has been a major heavy lift. However, that just brings us up to the starting line. Now is the time to participate financially. Your contribution will ensure Maui Ki-Aikido's mission will be honored.

Aikido training is learning about ourselves and learning to live with fuller potential and integrity. It is training to lead a positive and successful life. Please participate by donating today to ensure training tomorrow.

Checks made out to Maui Ki-Aikido may be sent to P. O. Box 724, Wailuku, HI 96793. Please note "Endowment Fund" on the memo line. Thank you.

Floral Beauty . . . continued from page 5



Some more of the beautiful floral arrangements made by Maui Ki-Aikido teachers featured in article on page 5.

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zon); 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.

Hawai'i Ki Federation
c/o Maui Ki-Aikido
P.O. Box 724
Wailuku, HI 96793

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