

PACIFIC SHINTAIDO



Pacific Shintaido Bulletin

Vol. I • No. 5 • March 15, 1997

Contributions, please

Please send articles, poems, pictures, information, letters, to the Pacific Shintaido Bulletin, care of:

Stephen Billias
36 El Cerrito Avenue
San Rafael, CA 94901

Next issue in June.

Kangeiko a Smashing Success!

On January 18-20, Pacific Shintaido sponsored Kangeiko 1997, *Joy in Community*. The event was a big hit, with many events--keiko, exams, meetings, potlucks. Over 45 people attended!

Pac Shin Meeting Notice

There's a Pac Shin meeting coming up, and we'd like to see you there! Details below.

Exam Results

Results of the examinations at Kangeiko 1997. See page 2.

The Fourth Graduate Chimes In

Michael Buckley writes of his years in Shintaido. See below.

The Fourth Graduate

Michael Buckley

In the last issue of the Pacific Shintaido Bulletin, three of the honorees at last summer's International Gasshuku wrote their stories. Michael Buckley adds his tale in this issue.

The Graduate Certification is a remarkable honor. Thank you Senior Instructors for this tribute. Since I am neither a formidable martial artist nor an inspirational instructor or organizer, I was pleasantly surprised to be recognized in this way. I imagine this honor may be connected to an enduring history as a practitioner/assistant and my role as weapons maker/armorer.

Longevity could also be a factor. Nearly 14 years ago I came to Shintaido, truthfully not for spiritual enlightenment or to gain confidence from martial arts training: I found Shintaido by chasing a woman. The

chased woman left. Looking for love and finding it in a different configuration. I continued in Shintaido for keiko experiences. Much later, I met my wonderful wife Mary Helm at a gasshuku. I learned lessons from amazing instructors, especially Ito sensei, Jim Sterling, Kazu Shibao, and Shin Aoki.

The unanticipated love I found is an energetic integration of body/mind/spirit. From the practice of the Shintaido form springs centering, awareness, and balance. Energy expands! This energy may also be exchanged with others via partner practice. I have a suggestion for other practitioners: before attempting a challenge - job interview, medical procedure, requesting a raise, etc. - do Tenshingo!

I may be more than twice as old as younger practitioners. Still, I stretch and practice regularly. These days vigorous residual impressions take the place of hard keiko. Some of these

impressions translate effectively to other relationships.

To those who admire this award: Gambate!

Pac Shin Members Meeting

Date: **Sunday, April 6**
Time: **10:00am - Noon**
Where: **Laurence Mourey's house, 691 16th Ave. San Francisco**

Come volunteer for something!

This is your organization. It is run entirely by volunteers. We can't do it without you. Here's a slate of people who are interested in being on the Pacific Shintaido Board of Directors:

Robert Gaston
Stephen Billias
Juliette Farkouh
Roby Newman
Laurence Mourey

If you'd like to vote, or present other candidates, or be on the Board yourself, please come to this meeting!

Group Leaders Keiko

Date: Sunday, April 13
Time: 8:30-10:00am
Where: San Domenico
Instructor: Jim Sterling
Organizer: Laurence Mourey

Open to anyone who is teaching or may teach someday in the future. Jim will demonstrate and explain gorei techniques.

Exam results

Here are the results of the exams that were conducted at Kangeiko 1997

Boh
Richard Griffith 10 kyu
Stephen Billias 3 kyu
John Seaman 2 kyu
Chris Nash 1 kyu
Michael Bogenschutz Sho-dan
Bela Breslau Sho-dan
Eva Thaddeus Sho-dan

Karate
Robert Gaston 2 kyu

Shintaido
VirginiaWelford Advanced Student
Peter Avildsen Advanced Student

Sales Position Open

Pac Shin is looking for someone to take over equipment sales. Juliette Farkouh held that position for many years and did an outstanding job. Some of the money from equipment sales has been used to finance scholarships for Pac Shin members to attend gasshukus. Please contact Stephen Billias if you are interested in helping the group by running this side of the organization. Anyone who volunteers to handle equipment sales will not be asked to do any other job at future Kangeikos or gasshukus!

Kangeiko 1997

Kangeiko 1997 was a wonderful event. Much thanks to Ito sensei and Jim Sterling for their instruction, to Michael Thompson for providing Guest Instruction and discussion

facilitation, and to Roby Newman, Gasshuku Manager, for his hard work.

Beginner's Questions, Intermediate and Advanced Responses!

Richard Griffith of Albuquerque, New Mexico, wrote to the Pacific Shintaido Bulletin to ask questions about what he had observed at Kangeiko 1997. I answered some of his questions and deferred others to Jim Sterling. Here's a composite of the dialog, which others may find interesting. As background before answering specific questions, Jim told the story of his first Shintaido question:

Jim: When I first started Shintaido, I would try and read everything I could related to the Martial Arts and Japanese culture. At that time, the book "Shogun" was on all the shelves and I decided to buy it. To my surprise, it was quite a "good read" and I came away with a number of questions related to Shintaido.

So, one night, after a long keiko followed by a dinner and meeting with Ito, Michael and a few other Shintaido members, I decided to ask Ito a question related to the book. It was something like, "What is the difference between Christian martyrdom and Japanese Seppuku (suicide with a knife or sword, aka Hara Kiri)". His eyes opened wide, he smiled and said, "Since I arrived in this country, I've been waiting for someone to ask me this kind of question!"

So, thanks for asking. It gives me a chance to share my thoughts with you. I think all of your questions show keen insight and a genuine desire to learn more about our practice.

I hope you take the opportunity to discuss them with Eva and Michael.

Richard: Who chooses partners for someone who is testing? Doesn't the choice of partners have a huge effect on how good you look to the Examiners? If your partner is really good they can make the other person look good, but if they are tired or don't know the specific kumite very well it

seems like it could also make the person testing look bad as well. As a result there seems to be a lot of randomness to how well you might do, since you might have various partners tossed out onto the floor to work with you as you test.

Jim: Exam partners are selected in advance by the Exam Goreisha with guidance from the Examiners. People who test for the same level are usually partners. If someone takes an exam and he or she is the only person at that level, we ask someone to stand in who has an equivalent or higher rank to partner with them.

These "stand-ins" are asked in advance to participate. Your are correct that one's partner can make a big difference. Some can help, some hinder. This is not a random choice but, sometimes we are limited and must use partners who are not completely prepared.

Richard: What is important in taking an exam? Is it technical perfection, or the expressiveness and emotional intensity and "excitement" of the performance? It almost seemed like these different things were more important to the individual Examiners, so I am having a hard time understanding what is important and what exactly the Examiners were looking for as people tested.

Jim: Both technique and expression are important and to make it even more complex, one's ability to use his or her body as a conduit or channel for the spirit is also taken into consideration in the higher level exams.

You are correct when you noticed "different things were more important to the individual examiners". This is why we always have at least two qualified examiners sit for every exam.

Richard: Is there anything you would recommend that I read to help me understand the Examination process? I had the same feeling that I get when I watch Olympic Diving or Ballroom Dance competitions; the athletes perform, but two performances that looked equally good to me would get vastly different scores from the judges because they

are looking for things that I just don't understand; I might SEE the same performance, but I miss all the little nuances that the judges are watching for that let them declare one performance to be "9.1" and the next to be "9.9". Does that make sense?

Jim: I think the more you practice and learn about Shintaido, the more you will understand about examination and what to look for. Also, try to keep in mind that much of Shintaido is subtle and even invisible. This makes it difficult to judge in a logical fashion.

Regarding Bo and Karate exams, it is important to be precise in your technique but also to show what you have learned in Shintaido. Sometimes we say, "show your Shintaido through your Bo". In LA, I think I mentioned that Bo kneading is one of the links between Shintaido and Bo. This is a great practice!!

One point for your practice. If you have attained a certain rank, you ought to know the techniques leading up to that position. So now make sure to always remember what is required for 9 & 10 kyu even when you become Sho Dan!!!

Richard: I am confused about the "levels" in Shintaido and in boh.

Stephen: The order is as follows: Advanced Student, Assistant, Graduate, Instructor, Senior Instructor, General Instructor, Master Instructor.

Richard: Are the boh levels different than the Shintaido levels? Are they treated as two separate, distinct tracks?

Stephen: There are three paths in the Shintaido exam system: Boh, Karate, and Shintaido.

You can choose to follow none, one, two, or all three. The "dan" levels, begin with Sho-Dan, then Ni-Dan, San-Dan, Yon-Dan, Go-Dan. You start at 10 kyu and work down to 1 kyu, then up to Sho-Dan through Go-Dan.

The same levels apply to Karate. Ni, San, and Go (2, 3, and 5) are the same as when we count "ichi, ni, san." "Yon" is another Japanese word for four. Sho, I don't know.

One of the two people in this picture is Richard Griffith, the author of the questions in this article. The other person is Robert Gaston. Can you tell who is who? (DNA testing may be required to distinguish them.)



Richard: When can you teach? When you teach do you wear the Hakama, or do you teach and then get to wear the Hakama when you reach a certain level?

Stephen: You get to wear the hakama after passing a graduate exam. To be a certified Instructor, you still need to take the Instructor exam.

The folklore is that "anybody can teach Shintaido," but there is the path to follow that you asked about above, pertaining to levels of certification in Shintaido.

Richard: Is there some etiquette about when I am allowed to provide this sensei care in terms of my experience? Do you provide sensei care (hot towels, snacks, hakama-folding) after each keiko, or only at formal gatherings like Kangeiko?

Stephen: I would like to say a word about sensei care. Its purpose is to help the teacher, to create the best possible conditions for the teacher and to let them think about only teaching, so that they can give the best class that they can offer. So, it's more than giving tea and cookies and oshiburi (hot wet towel) and folding their hakama.

It's about being attentive without being obtrusive, meeting their needs before they ask for things, being at their side when they want to take off their jacket or hakama, keeping strangers and dogs out of the dojo space, helping with new people.

It's the kind of thing you could study for a lifetime. It's not obsequiousness or servility or sycophantic, because the benefit comes directly back to you in the form of better teaching.

Richard: What is the "right" way to hold your hands in eiko? I noticed that people have very different hand positions: arms close together or spread much more widely. Are BOTH ways OK? And if there are different "acceptable" ways to do eiko, are there different acceptable ways to do other Shintaido movements? I will ask Michael and Eva this as well, but I wanted to hear how other people see things as well. Is there an East Coast/West Coast flavor for various movements?

Stephen: Holding one's hands wide open is considered the "artistic," more expressive form, closer together is the more sword-like, martial form. Different teachers might suggest different ways for different people at different times. Or they might say if you're doing it one way, try the other.

Jim adds: There is no right way to do Eiko.

Current Class Schedule

Class	Instructor	Date and Time	Place
Shintaido	Laurence Mourey (contact Laurence at 666-3864)	Tuesdays at 6:30pm-8:00pm	50 Oak Street at Van Ness in San Francisco
Advanced Shintaido	James Sterling (contact Robert Gaston at 454-4749)	Sundays at 8:30am-10:00am	San Domenico School, end of Butterfield Road, San Anselmo
Kenko Taiso for Health	Sandra Bengtsson(contact Sandra at 454-4749)	Mondays 7:30pm-8:30pm	San Rafael Community Center 485-3333
Shintaido	James Sterling (contact Stephen Billias at 459-5803)	Wednesdays 7:30pm-9:00pm	Nautilus of Marin, 1001 4th Street, San Rafael
Shintaido	Robert Gaston(contact Robert at 454-4749)	Wednesdays 4:30pm-6:30pm	San Rafael Community Center 485-3333

Pacific Shintaido Phone and E-mail List

Shin Aoki	510-284-3318		
Peter Avildsen	415-324-9806	peter@thirdculture.com	
Barbara Barnard	415-826-0243		
Sandra Bengtsson	415-454-4749	RobGaston1@aol.com	
Stephen Billias/Bela Breslau	415-459-5803	swbb@pge.com	Bela's work numbers: 415 4549-9115/ 415 456-7981 ext. 120
Connie Borden	415-695-2888	71344.303@compuserve.com	
Michael Buckley	415-331-6254		
Debra Buddie	415-381-2965		
Boni Cruz	415-584-8026	kshibao@aol.com	
Porter Davis	510-208-3592		
Charles Denefeld	415-731-9047		
Juliette Farkouh	415-864-0369	japoof@aol.com	
Haruyoshi F. Ito	415-731-9364	eikodai@aol.com	
Robert Gaston	415-454-4749	RobGaston1@aol.com	
Mila Gelman	415-566-0269		
Chris&Mushim Ikeda-Nash	510-428-9198	ina@dnai.com	
Rob Kedoin/Gail Rossman	415-821-7238	kedoin@aol.com, Gail_Rossmann@peoplesoft.com	
Cheryl Martin	415-775-1657		
Steve Marylander	415-584-6624	Steve_Marylander@peoplesoft.com	
Jonathan Mensing	415-648-2021	onsite4@aol.com	
Sergi Mineyev	510-655-2146		
Laurence Mourey	415-666-3864		
Tomi Nagai-Rothe	415-221-0463	tomi_nagairothe@grove.com	415-221-1810 fax
Peter Nagai-Rothe	415-221-0463		
Roby Newman	415-668-2591	namwen67@aol.com	
Florent Neyret	415 431-0540		
Pamela Olton	415-668-4989	stepto@eworld.com	
David Palmer	415-861-0443	30411.335@compuserve.com	
Jennifer Peringer	415-824-0456		
Gail Rossmann	415-821-7238		
Ben Schiresen	415-566-2351		
Mike Sheets	415-695-2888	71344.303@compuserve.com	
Kazu Shibao	415-584-8026	kshibao@aol.com	
David Sirgany	415-386-6884		
Steven Stepto	415-668-4989	stepto@pop.slip.net	
Cheryl Williams	415-441-3317		
Brenda Wong	415-343-1676		
Jim and Toni Sterling	415-721-7270	JimTech1@aol.com, jrsz@pge.com	415 453-5938 fax
Kazu Yanagi	415-567-8335		