

# HUNKERING DOWN

seido shibus weekly e-zine



SEIDO SHIBUS WEEKLY E-ZINE - THEIR HISTORY, OUR LEGACY

**“To know yourself as the Being underneath the thinker, the stillness underneath the mental noise, the love and joy underneath the pain, is freedom, salvation, enlightenment.”— Eckhart Tolle**

Within a historical context, we could liken Seido Karate to an iceberg. What we see on a ‘day to day basis’ is a reflection of the depths of Seido Karate Do. Our senior karateka are our taonga. They provide the depth to our Dojos. Take away this depth and the iceberg melts and disappears in a moment. This edition [no. 5] is a tribute to our senior Seido karateka.



To use a tangata whenua analogy, our seniors are our knowledge holders, our ‘values’ protectors, and their collective experiences, wisdom and legacies are that which Seido Karate Do relies most heavily upon.

Seido Karate Do practice is, by its very nature challenging, in order to build our mental and physical strength. This mental and physical strength is tested in promotions. Eleanor Roosevelt said “a woman is like a tea bag. You can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.” I would argue that both men and women can be likened to tea bags within the karate context. Promotions are ‘hot water’ for us all. Specialised armed forces have used this ‘tea bag’ principle to guide selection processes for eons - putting men and women under physical and mental pressure to check their ‘net worth’ before they invest significant resources into worthy candidates. Similar to our Dojo promotions, constant physical and mental pressure is designed, in part, to strip out candidates’

reserves so we can see what’s left and allow the candidate to reach the stage of original thought. Promotions are gifts. An opportunity to reset; to rediscover. Promotions offer us insight into who we are, as individuals, as part of the collective Seido Karate Do community. In this e-zine, our senior karate ka share their memories of their Shodan gradings.

Possibly the one difference today, compared to yesterdays practice, is that there is greater tolerance and greater choice. To use Kyoshi Kim Moore’s [Christchurch Shibu] sparring class metaphor as an example ... the ‘swimming pool has many depths. Find your comfortable depth and swim accordingly, until your skills and experience develop further’.

Kaicho’s meditation lecture last week focused on an old saying – ‘still waters run deep’. This saying dates back to first century AD, when the historian Quintus Curtius Rufus wrote a biography of Alexander the Great. “Altissima quaeque flumina minimo sono labi.” – “The deepest rivers flow with the least sound.” Water only makes a sound when it mixes with air. Think fountains, waterfalls, babbling brooks; if we can hear water it is always white water. And this mixing is much more likely in shallow water running quickly over rocks. This saying has become metaphorical, used to describe a person who is, a ‘swan in temperament’ and calm on the surface, but more of a Nutri-bullet beneath. We all know someone like this.

**Kaicho encourages us to “be that still water”.**

We rarely have moments in life when we feel the strength to climb up to a new level, to make a choice that’s different from the inevitable. We happened to take up Seido Karate Do in such a moment.

Please enjoy this tribute to our senior karateka. Due to space, we limited this to Sei Shihan profiles but have included photos spanning 1960s to 1980s and a few into the mid 1990s.



**Osu, Sei Shihan, when and where did you start training?**

Beginning 1973, at the Christchurch Dojo in Barbadoes Street.

**What was the culture of the Dojo like when you started?**

The Dojo definitely had an atmosphere. To be honest, it was a bit scary. The training was gruelling and very repetitive. At the end of each session in the changing room it was common to say "glad I survived that one"!

**Osu, can you please reflect on and describe the first and last ten minutes of your Shodan grading?**

The first ten minutes were totally unexpected. Hanshi Renzie asked me to do 1000 kicks on the bag which in those days hung in the foyer. In those days he found out everything you'd done to prepare and of course what you hadn't done and bingo, 1000 kicks. The last ten minutes were a blur. At one stage I started to walk out the door. I'd had enough. I thought I was fit but it didn't make any difference. I remember a lot of driving punches to the chest.



*Sei Shihan Neil Mathieson*

**What have been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido Karate-do for you, to date?**

All my black belt gradings apart from Nidan. I was disappointed with the latter and felt I'd let myself down. My Yondan grading; it was totally different and laid bare a lot of stuff which had been hidden. Truly a cathartic experience.

**Who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

Without a doubt the personality who stands out for me is Hanshi Renzie. His influence at the beginning was entirely karate and as time has evolved, he has been my 'go-to person' on many, many levels. I have to mention Hanshi Andy. There was always an uncertain edge to his classes and gradings. Definitely a tough, uncompromising teacher whose classes in the early days were very exacting. Besides Hanshi Renzie and Hanshi Andy, my first teacher was Senpai Brent Treavean who had the whitest, starchiest gi in the country!

**Sei Shihan, if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

The presentation of my Godan by Kaicho Nakamura. It was a remarkable occasion when my fellow karatekas, Peter Searle, Harry Roelofs and Ben Otang, and myself (all Sei Shihans now), presented for grading. We'd all gone for Yondan together so still had a strong bond. Now, here we were, together again, fronting up to Kaicho, Nidaime, Hanshi Andy and Hanshi Renzie. I was determined not to be overwhelmed by the occasion and focused on trying to enjoy this 'once in a lifetime' occasion.

**Osu, do you have one karate do moment that you recall reasonably often - and why?**

My Sandan grading. Can't say why. 😊 Withstanding multiple blows to the knuckles delivered by a piece of 4" by 2" in Honbu, 1975. I could not make sense of it and to this day, still struggle.

**Osu, what is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

Through karate I have learned to endure. With karate I have found a channel. I could well have meandered through life. Who knows? I started karate as a shy, impressionable, country boy brought up in a small rural town. To me, Christchurch was a big city. The Dojo gave me an anchor in life. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my future. I had tried University with mixed results. With karate I found a place to stand in life.

**Contemplate this Sei Shihan - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?** Very difficult to speculate. I doubt I would have a place where I could push myself to the limit. I know I wouldn't have the resources I have now. To my knowledge, there would be very, very, few activities which give one such a holistic training as Seido karate.

**What are the major differences now, if any?** One could go on about the old days but I know for sure that if Seido hadn't changed, I wouldn't be still training. The syllabus has expanded exponentially. The attrition rate in the past was very high. Now students keep training because the system is much more accommodating to individual needs.

**What keeps you involved Sei Shihan?**

The people that I have been associated with for nearly fifty years. The flexibility of requirements on me. The fact that I can train, and take my place, no matter what has happened in my personal circumstances. Hanshi Renzie.

**Osu, what would you like to see happening now, that is not happening now?**

The system has withstood the test of time. Etiquette has always been essential, and it was easy to maintain when the membership was smaller. Whether it is still upheld as irrefutable is an important question the club should ask itself. Some would question whether etiquette is important outside the Dojo. I think it is. It is not subservience. It's respect and acknowledgement. I think it's very important that an organisation should remember its roots.

**On reflection, what may be your legacy?** It would be my wish that I should be remembered as a fairly average karateka who persisted. Who kept going. Who prevailed. An example that it is possible.

**Osu Sei Shihan, how has your Seido karate do practice assisted you in knowing your true self?**

It has always struck me that the karatekas around us know us very well. They observe us under great pressure at times when our true selves are exposed and our original thought is laid bare. Seido karate has helped me be at peace with myself. It's been a long journey and it's not over yet. In my early karate career, I would be frustrated on many occasions. I would agonise over performance and failure. Now, I've come to live with myself and say, "you haven't done too bad."

*Sei Shihan Neil Mathieson, Christchurch*



**“What makes the desert beautiful,  
said the little prince, ‘is that  
somewhere it hides a well...”**

*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince*



### **When and where did you start training?**

I started Seido Karate in February 1973 at Shibu. I had met Hanshi Renzie earlier in 1959 when we both training in Judo at Can am Ju. I had started building my first house at 22 years old. Took me two years to build it while working full time. Moved into it when I got married in 1972. My neighbour across the road was none other than Shihan Gav. Shihan Gav was having a party late in 1972 and Hanshi Renzie turned up with the karate boys, we recognised each other, got chatting, and he encouraged me to start Kyokushin, as it was back then. Shihan Gavin was a green belt at the time. That's how it all came about.

### **What was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

The culture at the time was very regimented. Line work up and down the dojo, very physical, sit-ups and push-ups etc. We learnt Taikyoku 1-3. Back then when new to karate it was a case of survival. We still all had respect for those who took the classes as they had obviously walked the 'hard road' to get there.

I remember Warren Boyles taking the class one night and winding everyone up. Fought everyone. Up one line and down the other. Full contact. Punching to the face, the whole nine yards. I went home and thought, why I am taking this from this guy? I decided I wasn't going backwards after that. A month later he turned up again and I thought, I'm not taking this crap. I laid into him and thought, bugger you mate, I'm not taking a punch in the mouth from you.

Was very different for the women. And that's the way it should have been of course. You fight someone to their level of ability. Make it tough but fair. Nobody is made to take a hiding.



*Sei Shihan Peter Searle*

### **Remember my Shodan?**

Remember my Shodan? I can. I was living on the Coast then. I got my essay topic the week before. Had no time to write the essay while running the shop at Springs Junction so I booked into a motel on the Friday night before my grading and I wrote the essay, finishing it at 1am the day of the grading. I will never forget the day itself - 14 May, 1977. I was elated at the start. Shattered at the end, and quite literally bugged. Three hours, non-stop gruelling experience. But what a feeling of satisfaction. You asked about revenge. I thought about that too, don't worry. I got a pounding. We had an honoured guest in the dojo, the Japanese Consulate. I got a pounding from some of the guys. We had some hard hitters in those days. After the grading I went over to the Imperial and had a half a glass of beer. Was all I could manage. Had to leave in a hurry and threw up by my car parked along St Asaph Street. I then went to see my local doc to get my eye stitched up before heading back to the Coast. When the nurse said you can sit up now, I couldn't even sit up. She said 'I've never seen anything like it! Six stitches and not moving a muscle'. Compared to what I'd been through it was nothing.

### **What has been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

Stand-out experiences for me have been many – my gradings, the tournaments and heavyweight national titles in the 1970s. The 1996 world tournament was a highlight. Meeting up with Kaicho at Honbu. I have been fortunate to have had six trips to New York and Honbu and have enjoyed Kaicho's company, the dinners, the socialising etc. I was there in 1988 with a group from Shibu and we were all going to the monastery with Kaicho. Before we left, Kaicho came up to me and said 'you're not going. You spend time with your family'. They had just arrived to meet up with me. It was lovely of him to suggest this, but I was disappointed that I couldn't go.

### **Dominant personalities back then?**

Definitely Hanshi Renzie and Hanshi Andy. They were the kingpins back in those days.

### **If I had to think back to a specific time and why?**

If I had to think back to a specific time and why? Black Belt gradings, and the 1996 tournament. I got tremendous satisfaction out of getting fit and competing in this tournament. At 51 years old I proved to myself that I could do it, meaning having the fortitude to put my mind to it. It further strengthened my resolve to never give up. This has been helpful with tackling a few illnesses. The lead-up to this tournament was interesting as there was a down-turn in the building industry. I had to get a second job. I worked every Sunday helping a guy who was building his boat for \$100 a day, 9am-4pm. This financed my Honbu trip. I couldn't train with the team as they

trained on Sundays so did my own training. I lost 22lb in weight over the 6-7 months we trained. We didn't do much tournament fighting after the 1970s. We were busy judging and organising the tournaments. Kaicho's world tournament was an opportunity to 'have a lash'. We didn't do it very often. Another thing I'm proud of is the Martial Arts Hall of Fame award. It's all about persistence.

### **Greatest gift from my Seido karate practice?**

I have learnt humility and acceptance, and probably a bit of compassion.

### **Contemplate this - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

If I took Seido out of life it wouldn't be empty. It would be filled up with something different. I would devote more time to something else, and with the same enthusiasm. I don't think it would have changed much.

### **Major differences from then until now**

Everyone has progressed. Hanshi has been the main man in Christchurch since Hanshi Andy left. I have never been interested in another style. I don't know where they get the time to practice other styles. I am only interested in Seido. I don't need to do anything else. The more training you do, the more profound the experience. I have enjoyed the leeway to explore different aspects of Seido karate with Hanshi Renzie.

### **What keeps you involved?**

As to what keeps me involved, it is the enjoyment I get out of it and the people I meet and the fun we all have. I look forward to every Thursday night. We can't do what we used to do as we are all getting older. But we're not penalised because of our age. It's just one of those things. Just like people look forward to their birthdays, I look forward to Thursday nights, a beer, a laugh with friends. It's great.

### **Is there anything that's happening now that you would like to see changed?**

No, nothing really. There is lots of diversity now. One thing – it is nice when we don't train sometimes. Sometimes we arrive at the dojo and have a chat and chew the fat. I really enjoy that. It builds the connections.

### **Legacy?**

Well, when your times up your times up. I'd like to be remembered as a good guy, hard but fair, willing to help. I've been involved for 48 years this year. Three to four months ago Hanshi and I were punching the pads and Hanshi said 'do you think we'll still be doing this at 80'? Well, that not's too many years away.

### **Karate do training includes mental and physical pressure. How has this benefited you?**

What Seido karate has given me is resilience, resilience comes in here again, and self-satisfaction. Seido has shaped me into the person I am over the years. It has come in real handy at work. As a project manager, I was under pressure every day. It has developed my character. It's provided me with a platform to do what I love in a safe and controlled environment, along with other like-minded people and friends. I hope all this continues for many more years yet. I'm not ready to throw in the towel yet.

*Sei Shihan Peter Searle, Christchurch*

*A wee Editor's note here – not that I am supposed to tell you [sshhh] but Sei Shihan Peter and Sei Shihan Neil are planking for 6 minutes a day plus doing hundreds of sit-ups and a whole range of other stuff. Truly inspirational. A little bird has whispered of others in the senior ranks doing similar challenges during the 'shut-down' period. Another note ... Mr 'super nice-guy' Sei Shihan Pete [and there is no sarcasm here at all] was the first karateka to make me cry in the dojo. I cried twice from memory. As a young and naïve blue-belt back in 1980 I wore a mae-geri to the lower abdomen from Sei Shihan Pete that could have birthed a foal. A few minutes later, pretending to be fine and sneaking a look at him in disbelief, I realised he'd helped me take my first step in knowing what I'd signed up for.*



*Sei Shihan Peter Searle and Senpai Ray Thompson – circa 1985*

**Osu, when and where did you start training Sei Shihan?**

In the Christchurch Dojo in 1973. Trained on a Sunday morning in what was then the only children's class. My first instructor was a green belt. Senpai Dave Moraki took over from him. After that, Sei Shihan Gavin Lowe, then Senpai Charles White of whom along with Jenny White we all attempted our Shodan grading together.



*Sei Shihan Harry Roelofs and fellow seniors*

**Osu, what was the culture of the Dojo like when you started?**

Classes were two hours long. Mainly basis techniques and line drills. No combinations, just one-off techniques at a time. I recall warm up exercises at the start of the class. Lots of push ups and some stretching throughout class. Always sparring at the end of class in line-up fashion. It was a very strict format and a physical class. There was a consequence if you fell out of line. I recall that happening often. A beginner's class would have been 70 to 100 new members. I used to recall only 1 in a 100 would stay on over the kyu grade years. Not many could handle the discipline inflicted.

**Osu, Sei Shihan can you please describe the first and last 10 minutes of your Shodan grading?**

I was very nervous at the start. Not sure how I was going to go. I did heaps of training beforehand so I knew I was very fit but did not know if I would remember all the syllabus if asked. The format has not changed in all these years so you can relate to that. The last ten minutes was part of the sparring. There was no protective equipment used in those days. I was tired but knew the end was close so just did my best. I know I was hurt and in those days foot sweeping was well used so I recall being swept off my feet many times. I just told myself to just get up. That night I slept with the black belt on my bed and recall not being able to get out of bed for some time. Three days later I felt much better and was happy to have got through it.

**Osu, what have been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

Just the marvellous friends I have made in the Dojo. To train over a period takes a lot of will and effort. In order to sustain training, you need to be positive minded and highly energised. So, for that, the Dojo members are very positive minded which is so lovely to be a part of. There have been so many great experiences on and off the Dojo floor. It is hard to bring that together but it's all a very nice reflection and a big part of my life which I treasure.

**Osu, Sei Shihan, who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

Clearly, Hanshi Renzie has been my main mentor. He has been there for me and helped me with my journey on and off inside and out of the Dojo. He was my best man at my wedding which was very special for me and we have had many great years. Particularly when I first lived next door to him when I was 17 years old. I used to babysit his daughter and can recall 'wobbling' back home on many occasion. The Sei Shihans and Jun Shihans have all been a huge part of my life. I treasure knowing them the way I do and clearly that is a big part of why I am still there.

**Osu, if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

I don't think I would want to go back however, it was nice when I was younger. Fit as a buck rat, very flexible and never ran out of energy.

**Do you have one karate do moment that you recall reasonably often - and why?**

I think often more holistically on the spirit of karate and how that evolves and changes. I understand it in a different way to when I was training over the years at a younger age. Now I engage spirit more around humanity. The way in which we treat ourselves and towards each other.

**Osu, what is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

Respect yourself and be kind to others.



## **Contemplate this Sei Shihan - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

I'm sure it would have been fine. I had lots of plans in my life that didn't go to plan. I have always tried to be positive in life. Just had to adapt and go with what was the best way forward with what seemed right at the time. Life without karate would have been just part of the journey that I would have had no experience in. Must say, glad it has been a major part of my journey.

## **Osu, what are the major differences now, if any?**

I had the privilege of starting in the children's class. Training as a teenager and now as an adult. That has brought about a huge change in itself and appreciation for the different ages of our members. The classes training structure has changed. I think nowadays, so much more diverse. Much more experienced in technique. The knowledge base is huge with all the skills of the Instructors who share that within their classes. That strength has changed to allow a sharing of valuable information and experience on many levels. The Dojo has matured with time and age and I am confident it will continue to do so.

## **Osu, what keeps you involved?**

It's in my blood now. Been a big part of my life. I still enjoy the training. It's really the people around me that I train with that make it so special.

## **What would you like to see happening now, that is not happening now?**

The Dojo is evolving. Just like to see it carry on in the best way forward. Any change will happen as it is called at the time and I know that with the passion we all share, any changes will be good ones.

## **Osu, on reflection, what may be your legacy?**

I was the youngest to obtain a Black Belt at the time. It was nice to have experienced. I don't need a legacy. Whatever happens, happens. It was just nice to be part of.

*Sei Shihan Harry Roelofs, Christchurch*



*Sei Shihan Harry doing what he does best - kicking to the head*

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*Extract from "Seido Karate Christchurch – A Brief History" [authored by Historian, Jun Shihan Bronwyn Dalley, 2015]  
Full article is linked below as a pdf.*

# **The Christchurch Feel**

Every martial arts Dojo has its own unique feel or style. Many things form that: the martial art itself, the Dojo's history, people who train there, geography, the philosophies of the instructors. The feel of a Dojo can change over time as people come and go, instructors keep learning and growing, or aspects of training develop. So is there a Christchurch feel or style? Leadership A successful martial arts club is built by many people over many years, but head instructors play a special role. The first head instructor, Doug Holloway, set up the Dojo, and brought an emphasis on basics and strong technique, and this has endured.

The leadership of Hanshi Renzie Hanham has done most to mould the character of Christchurch Shibu. Few martial arts clubs can boast of such steady and imaginative leadership. Sei Shihan Gavin Lowe believes the club would have been a minnow, or non-existent without that leadership, and he sees Hanshi Renzie as one of a kind. Even after training with him for 40 years, 'Hanshi can still spring surprises. There is not another instructor who has the same repertoire of skills and knowledge', Sei Shihan Gavin says. There is the martial arts knowledge, of course – a grounding in judo, and an openness about the skills to be picked up from all forms of martial arts. But there is also a broader knowledge and desire to explore new ideas and approaches. Hanshi Renzie has long been interested in the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss psychiatrist famous for her work on grief and life stages. The influence of those ideas comes through in gradings, in meditation and relaxation sessions at summer camps, or in classes generally. Outside the Dojo – but so clearly connected with years of martial arts study and training – Hanshi Renzie is involved in the area of sports psychology and mental skills coaching. All of the knowledge comes back into Shibu, and it is there for students to access.

<http://advantagefire.nz/assets/a-breif-history-of-seido-karate-christchurch.pdf>

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### **When, where did I start training?**

Karate training started year, 1970, Josai Kan Club , Barbdoes St, ChCh.

### **What was the culture of the Dojo when I first started?**

Training, hard, very tough, repetitious. Started full sparring after about 5/6 classes, were viscious, full contact to head. Most common term used when sparring was "Maitamasuta". I really didn't know what the term meant, but when fighting with certain personalities, those words uttered seemed to have mythical powers when fear of danger lurked. Pleased I had boxing and weightlifting experience. Stubbornness kept me training, isolated myself to maintain discipline and composure to keep going. Main reason for selecting karate was to remove myself from drugs which became dominant in competitive weightlifting.

### **Describe the first and last 10 minutes of my Shodan grading?**

Prior to my Shodan grading 1975, the memory is vague, but for this purpose will have to assume my feelings only. I know that nervousness would have prevailed, I would have concentrated enough to expect the unexpected, armed with the knowledge that the pressure and the ordeal couldn't last forever.

Did it hurt? Yes plenty.

Angry? No a definite no. Reason being, I placed myself in the situation.

Did I want to carry on? Yes, why not . Reason, ego. Here, I was a Rooster, I was "cock - a - hoop".

Did I want to 'nail' anyone later?

Did it change my opinion of someone forever?

Did I feel I let myself down?

The answer to all above questions are a definite NO, NO, NO!!!

The reason again is that to be angry, lose my 'cool', at any situation, I'd be letting myself down, to show a weakness and a possible dark side of my nature, would be undignified.

Did I fire? Can't recall, but must have to remain in the system.



*Sei Shihan Gavin Lowe*

### **What have been the "stand out" experiences of Seido for me?**

The most dominant thing that I consider to have taken place at Seido is to have been a part of the changes, the growth of this institution that it is today.

Like a Phoenix that rose from the ashes, the club from modest beginnings of Josai Kan, to Mas Oyama Kyokushin, to Seido, the growth and development over the relative short period of time is outstanding.

This progress didn't just happen but occurred from the dedication, the foresight, the hard "yakka" of the founders, namely Hanshi Renzie, and Hanshi Andy.

I recall the day when I first met the two Masters , Kaicho Nakamura, and Oyama. I had heard so much about them, their achievements and exploits, truly it was as though I was summoned by the Pope for a special audience.

### **Who have been the most dominant people who have influenced me on my karate journey?**

This question can be answered without thought as my karate journey has been influenced and guided by persons of a high calibre, with whom I humble myself, thank them for their friendship, and comradeship. These people have been loyal, have always been at my side through happy, tough and adverse times:

Hanshi Renzie

Sei Shihan Neil

Sei Shihan Pete

Sei Shihan Harry

I would add many more names of younger persons of the next generation, but space prohibits publishing you. You all know to what I refer, each and everyone has made an impression upon me, I appreciate and open my heart and hand in true friendship embracing all.

### **If I could go back in time in my karate, when would it be and why?**

I don't think that there would be any specific time I would wish. I have no regrets at any time. Sure there would have been times when I embarrassed myself, (like my statements on our arrival @ the airport in US). We learn lessons from the experience.



On the other side , there have been so many happy times and these times are embedded in my memory to be cherished.

So there is no specific time in my karate period that is more or less memorable to me.

**Do I have a karate moment that I recall often?**

Answer as above.

**What is the greatest gift/lesson Seido has given me?**

The greatest gift that I have received from Seido is the gift of people that have come into my life. Seriously I have met numerous members from the club, there is not one person who I didn't like or didn't want to associate with. It says a lot for the club members, as I have associated with people from all walks of life, from business to social clubs, these of necessity through work. One soon finds the "goodies/baddies", and the lesson learnt is not to suffer fools lightly. So I have a lot to be grateful for when I thank Seido for the gift of life bestowed upon me.

**Take Seido out of my life, what would life be like?**

I really don't know and can't answer it in honesty.

I do believe that spirit guards and cares for all things of life, that opportunities are offered to each of us to accept or reject. So with Seido out of my life, I could have been an athlete of prominence. I could have been associated with a profession, but throughout my life , I always remember my Mums words of wisdom." I don't care what you do for a living doesn't matter how mundane, but promise me that you will always place your best effort to the task". As a cheeky, smart a-- kid, my response was "ta Mum, I'm going to be a crim with tattoos". Maybe that was my first lesson in karate, can remember dodging and unknowingly doing a jodan uke. We had great fun at home.

**What are the main differences now, if any?**

No none. I'm extremely happy and contented with my lot.

Old Chinese saying " he who is contented is Rich".

**What keeps you involved?**

I presume the question refers to training at Karate. I have to admit, which is very difficult for me, that through age, physically I'm no longer able to do the hard "stuff". So to keep being involved in the club I rely on gossip, oops sorry, comments made from members after being "bribed" with cups of coffee.

**What would I like to happen that is not happening now?**

I presume the question refers to the future of the club.

The transition from the now to planning for the future will not be an easy one, and any change prior to the instigation will require careful and delicate handling, with many items taken into consideration. The future and direction of the club is up to the new younger generation, change in all manners of the system, with running operation is inevitable, it will happen, but you youngsters please tread carefully before taking future steps.

Please take into consideration your peers, because never ever forget in the enthusiasm of youth, that your peers formed, built, and made the club what it is today. It's an institution that is highly respected by the community, it is known throughout the world of martial arts, and this of course is through the efforts of Hanshi Renzie.

**What will be my legacy?**

This is an awkward and difficult question to answer as it is unknown to myself what each members opinion is of myself, but would wish that people would remember me, say at my funeral service remembering the old coot as "not too bad a bloke". He was a happy sod always laughing at himself, always positive, was caring, finally at the burial site everybody says to themselves "poor Gavie" then, "let's go home and have a cuppa tea".

On that basis what more would be complimentary as a legacy.

**Karate training includes mental and physical pressure. How has this benefitted me?**

The pressures placed on me gave me the resilience to carry out tasks not only in my training but in the "wild west" of the business environment. It's quite tough out in the world where "dog eats dog", and the mental and physical training is beneficial in doing "battle" whilst attempting to earn a dollar for the table in an honest manner.

*Sei Shihaan Gavin Lowe, Christchurch*

# Sensei Andre Bertel

**Andre Bertel is a 7th Degree Black Belt in Shotokan Karate. He lives in Oita City, Japan. He was a personal student of the late Asai Tetsuhiko Sensei. Andre was introduced to the dojo many years ago and has visited Shibu to run workshops on a number of occasions in recent years. He has very kindly allowed us to reproduce this article. Gassho.**

What is most important? Kihon, Kata or Kumite? <<http://andrebertel.blogspot.com/2020/04/what-is-most-important-kihon-kata-or.html>

Many people spout about 'the trinity' of Karate training; namely, (Kihon—the fundamentals), (Kata—the 'formal exercises') and (Kumite—the various forms of combative engagement). Today, I'd like to explain what is the most important of the three, if one wishes to practice karate as an effective form of budo/bujutsu.

Most, who practice Karate-Do, claim that kihon is the most important aspect of karate as it underpins everything. The idea is that kihon is foundation of a building. You can put in gold doors, the best oak furniture, and whatever else; nevertheless—irrespective of aesthetic beauty, grandness, and/or the quality of its interior fillings—"...without a strong foundation, the building will eventually collapse".

Mae-geri keage is the most important kick, irrespective of style. When exhausted, our true kihon is revealed.

Likewise, other claim kata is the most important form of karate, as it essentially functions as a time capsule, which transmits knowledge from the past and, indeed, allows instructors to 'pass this on' to the next generation(s) of karateka.

While I agree with the above two statements; my personal belief is that kumite is the soul of karate—it is the epicenter of everything else; that is, kihon and kata are for kumite. To be more specific: JISSEN KUMITE (Real Kumite/Self-Defense).

Jiyu Kumite is essential. Many instructors now only demonstrate to look good. They only have movement. This not real karate.

Only from this vantage point, from my experience, can one truly practice karate in an effective manner: karate as budo/bujutsu. This is because, when function is the focus, clear targets/goals can be set and, consequently, the building and strengthening of one's foundational techniques through kihon practice, and 'the time capsules' can be maximized.



*Mae-geri keage is the most important kick, irrespective of style. When exhausted, our true kihon is revealed.*

# JAPAN 1969



*Farewell party in Japan 1969: Brian Fitkin, Wayne Wendelken, Trevor Trainor, Doug Holloway*



*Farewell party in Japan 1969: Left: Yamazaki (first All Japan Kyokushin kai champ) Soeno Kancho (head of Shidokan). Japan 1969*



*Photo shoot for 'Advanced Karate'- Hanshi Renzie, Kancho Matsushima - now president of IKO and Sosei Oyama: Japan 1969*





*Jun Shihan Meredith and Kyoshi Ellen [Seido Tournament 1984]*



*Sensei Murray Creighton and Hanshi Andy - late 1970s*



*Sensei Karen Hanham, first woman black belt, Christchurch dojo, December 1975*



*Demonstration at Town Hall: Senpais Warren Boyle, Bill Bowie, Brent Trevean, Jerry Yee, Jamie Tulloch, Jes Vilsbaek, Wayne Wendelken, Sensei Dennis Logan (Judo), Hanshi Renzie and Hanshi Andy*



*The Sawyer sisters:  
Jun Shihan Leigh, Jun Shihan Meredith,  
Kyoshi Kim*





*Seido Christchurch Shibu Tournament Team 1979, Back row: Art Pickering - Manager, Senpai Bob Breen, Sei Shihan Neil Mathieson, Sei Shihan Mike McIvor, Senpai Mike Berry, Senpai Terry Banks  
Front row: Hanshi Renzie, Senpai Murray Banks, Senpai Craig Barlow, Senpai Mike Drew, Senpai Stephen Cope*



*5th Dan promotion 2001 - Nelson, Back row: Hanshi Renzie, Hanshi Andy. Front row: Sei Shihan Danny Watson, Sei Shihan Murray Stewart, Sei Shihan Kelvin Lewis, Kyoshi Archimedes, Sei Shihan Jane Barber, Sei Shihan Richmond Grant*



*Jun Shihan Tony Cope and Kyoshi Brent Martlew*





*Seido Christchurch Shibu Tournament Team 1990, Coach – Sensei Steve Cope, Physio - Dr Barry Donaldson*



*Black Belt Clinic 1984*



*Sei Shihan Ben and  
Kyoshi Archimedes 1984*





*Black Belt Clinic Nelson 1987*



*Sei Shihan Danny Watson*



*Christchurch Tournament early 1980's*

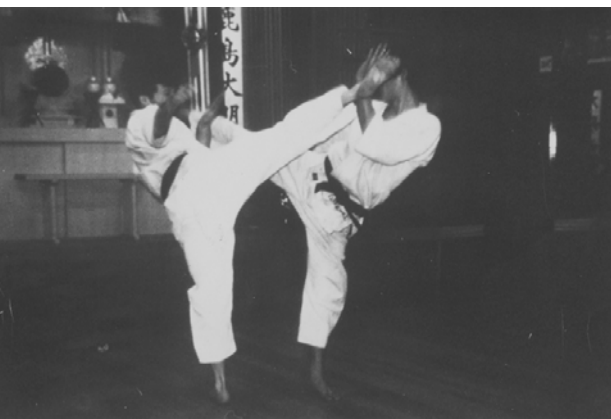


*Dunedin Trip 1981: Back row: Sei Shihan Peter Searle, Sensei Murray Creighton, Senpai Murray Banks. Front row: Dot Holling, Senpai Gordon Hamblyn, Sensei Julie Hughey, Kyoshi Ellen Hampson, Mike Holling, Sensei Mike Hughey.*



*Hanshi, Sei Shihan Mike Higgs, Senpai Richard Ivess, Sei Shihan Harry Roelofs*





*Hanshi and Yamakazi - Japan 1969*



*Jun Shihan Meredith, British Kyokushin Open 2020*



*Shihan Mervyn Nelis and Senpai Dave Paterson*



*Senpai Mike Drew, Sei Shihan Danny, Sensei Peter Wasley, fashion shoot.*



*Senpai Nicola Robertson*



*Tournament - early 80s*



*Getting serious*



*Training session with Kaicho, Sacred Heart gymnasium*



*Have no idea!!!*



# JAPAN 1990



*Demonstration at the Meiji Shrine: Japan Trip: on Stage.*

*Hanshi Charles, Shuseki Shihan Oliver, Hanshi Renzie, Hanshi Andy, Shihan Solly Said, Shihan Mervyn Nelis, Sensei Newton James*

*Back Row: Art De Lisle, Leighton Roberts, Stephanie Foster, Ino Maquirang, Mitsuko, Shihan Monte Allen, Alan Nathan*



*Meeting with the Governor of Tokyo: Stephanie Foster and Mitsuko kneeling down are: Left: Newton James, Leighton Roberts, Shihan Solly, Hanshi Renzie, Hanshi Charles, Alan Nathan, SS Ino Maquirang, Centre Chairman and Kaicho. Back right: Art De Lisle, SS Monte Allen. Front right: Shuseki Shihan William Oliver, Hanshi Andy, SS Mervyn Nelis*



*After match function:  
Hanshi Charles and  
Shuseki Shihan  
William Oliver*



# NEW YORK TRIPS



*New York 1975: Back row: Sei Shihan Peter Searle, Senpai Dick Ivess, Sei Shihan Gavin Lowe, Hanshi, Senpai Wayne Wendelken, Senpai Bill Bowie, Sei Shihan Neil Mathieson, Senpai Kevin McGuire. Front row: Sensei Kishi, Jacquie Hanham, Kaicho*



*1982 Trip to NYC – Hanshi Renzie Hanham, Hanshi Andy Barber, Sensei Murray Creighton, Senpai Mike Drew at the Mt Tremper Zen monastery with Zen Master Daido*



*Sei Shihan Gavin with Senpai Max*





Sei Shihan Ben and Kaicho



Above: Kaicho with Jacquie Hanham

Left: Sei Shihan Danny and the Statue of Liberty



Jun Shihan Grant taking care of business



Senpai Charles White, Sei Shihan William Oliver Honbu 1980s





61st Street dojo 1980



Standing group outside dojo: Shihan Matt Warshaw, Gigi Warshaw, Jun Shihan Billy Macagnone, Betty Zimmer, Hanshi Andy, Shihan Solly Said, Sei Shihan Mike Higgs, and Sensei Lynley Lowe



Sei Shihan Danny



Standing group outside dojo 1988  
Jun Shihan Grant Taylor, Senpai Tim Bennet  
Sei Shihan Danny Watson, Sei Shihan Peter Searle



Kaicho



# WORLD TOURNAMENT 1996



Part of the New Zealand team: Sei Shiham Danny Watson, Kyoshi Grahame Ironside (winner heavyweight), Jun Shiham Tony Cope (winner lightweight), Senpai Brent Martlew (winner middleweight), Senpai Anthea Robinson (winner middleweight), Senpai Carol Carlise (runner up lightweight)



Jun Shiham Aaron Barber (3rd place kata), Jun Shiham Billy Macaginone (first place kata), Jun Shiham Tony Cope (2nd place kata),



Jun Shiham Tony Cope receiving his first place trophy, 1st place lightweight sparring



Kyoshi Tamara Saxon, 1st Women's Brown Belt Kumite - waiting in the wings

Senpai Anthea Robinson



Sei Shiham Peter Searle, 1st place Masters heavyweight champion - sparring





*Hanshi Charles, Hanshi Renzie and Hanshi Andy and Kaicho, Sei Shihan Judy and Shihan William Oliver*



*Jun Shihan Tony Cope*



*Kyoshi Grahame Ironside, winner heavyweight division*



*Sei Shihan Bu (2nd place - Kata) with Senpai Anthea (1st place sparring)*

"Certainly human culture may have achieved great progress in the course of history. Suffering and unhappiness in the human world, however, do not seem to have decreased. The present situation of our world is so full of poverty, distrust, diseases, strife, that there seems to be no end. Hundreds and thousands of great men admired as saints and sages have appeared in the world in the past, and they have devoted their lives for the betterment of the world. Human suffering and unhappiness, however, do not seem to have decreased or ended. Over and over again they repeatedly, thanklessly endeavoured to fill up the well with snow. The true life of Zen is found here, when we all become true Great Fools and calmly and nonchalantly keep on doing our best, realizing well that our efforts will never be rewarded."

*Extract from Zenkei Shibayama's A Flower Does Not Talk*



**I started in the Timaru Boys High Gymnasium under Sensei Richard Ivess.**

There was a pretty aggressive culture at the time – half of the class was from Temuka and the other half from Timaru. Trainings were typically two-hour sessions with the first hour all physical and the second hour sparring.

**I was awarded my Shodan grading in 1983.** Hanshi Andy Barber took the grading. There were three of us – self, Jun Shihan Andrew Scott from Blenheim and Senpai Maureen from Dunedin. Sei Shihan Neil took the warm-up – 20 laps up and down the dojo, burpees, press-ups, and a whole lot of other things added in. It took the wind out of our sails. It was tough. The combination that Hanshi Andy gave us was one we'd done before. I couldn't get it right and ended up doing it eleven times before I got it right. The one-armed bandit was there, and he laid into me with the shinai. I was dragged up and down off the floor of the dojo. I remember my gi. It was a new woven, woolen gi. It got heavy with sweat, and then slippery, and kept falling off me. I was fighting to keep my gi top on. It was a real distraction.

**Stand-out experiences for me** have included getting Timaru up and running. We own the building. This was a massive achievement. We shifted about five times before we got that building. Each of us put in \$1,500 back then to buy the building.

**Dominant characters** back then were Hanshi Andy, Hanshi Renzie, Sei Shihan Neil, who scared the living daylights out of me, Sensei Murray Creighton, Senpai Bob Breen, Senpai Steven Prior, Sei Shihan Ben. I always had a lot to do with Sei Shihan Ben. Most of my training back then was in Christchurch.

**A specific time that I reflect on** is the period between my Shodan and Nidan. Seido was strong and united New Zealand-wide. There were only about fifty Black Belts all up. We all trained in each other's dojos. I was at my fittest. I was playing senior rugby as well. It was a good period of my life.

**Greatest gift?** The greatest gift bestowed on me as a result of karate practice is persistence.

**If I took karate out of my life right now?** It would be as it is now living in this time of COVID-19. I would work, eat, sleep. Seido karate is very social. I am missing those faces.

**The major differences?** In my opinion the major differences are around health and safety. Seido karate is toned down these days. Sessions are nowhere near as severe; and in a good way. I like the discipline and traditional aspect of karate. I train the way I train because of my early influences, when Hanshi Renzie and Hanshi Andy were running Seido Shibu in Christchurch. Back then the syllabus was still new. We didn't know all the syllabus like we know it now with Honbu updates available when you visit Honbu. Now it's all there for us. Karatekas still work hard but they don't have to work hard to get the syllabus 'under their belts'. We also have opportunities to re-learn our syllabus when needed.

**I am still involved in Seido karate because** of the comradeship. Training is not the top priority for me anymore – it's the camaraderie with my peers.

**What's not happening now that I would like to see in place?** A while back, I sat down with Sei Shihan Mike Higgs and we decided that there was a local need to look after our Shodan's and Nidan's. That's why we started the annual Black Belt Weekends. It was all about connections. We can sometimes forget that when we came through there was a lot of opportunity for connection because we were such a small group. A legacy I may leave? Possibly the way I train; my appreciation for traditional karate.

**Is the pressure that we are all exposed to via gradings useful for you?** I feel that sometimes we unveil our true self and true feelings within the karate context, and some get a glimpse of who we are. Growing up I had to hide this. Traditional kiwi parenting etc. The gradings are actually the only place I can do this. I am happy to unveil my feelings, express my original thought, but only if I am in a safe environment with people whom I share mutual trust.

*Sei Shihan Lance Puhirere, Temuka*

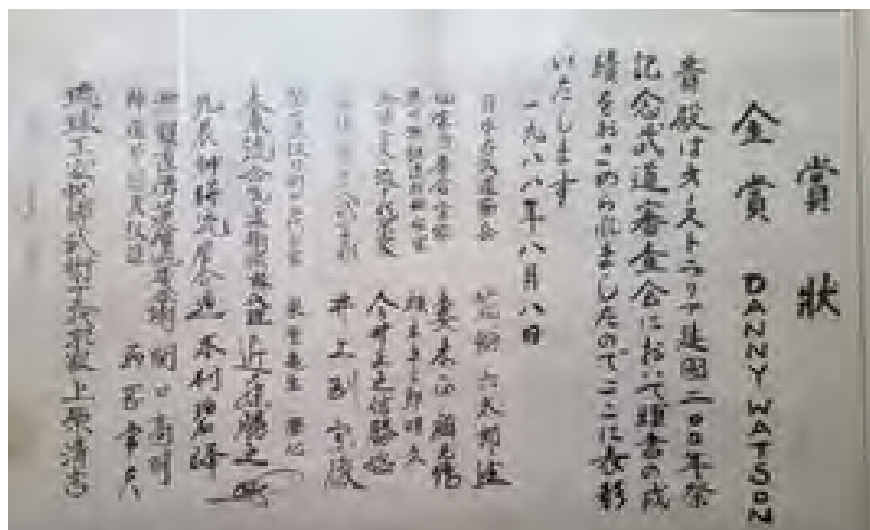


*Sei Shihan Lance Puhirere*





Sei Shihan Danny winner of the Grandmasters tournament in Adelaide with a group of Grandmasters at a world tournament on the 8・8・1988



Names of Grandmasters attending tournament:  
 Hyoho NiTenIchiRyu KenJutsu Grand Master, Imai Masayuki, Sekiguchiryu Iai Jutsu Master Yonhara Kameo Wingchun Kungfu Grand Master Sigung Tsui Sueng Tin Shindo Musoryu Jojutsu Grand Master Otofujii Ichizo Tennen Rishinryu Grand Master Katoh Isuke Yagy Shinganryu Heiho Grand Master Hoshi Kunio Eskrima Arnis Grand Master Ciricao Canete Bokudenryu Kenjutsu Grand Master Oama Hideo Motobu Udondei Kobujutsu Grand Master Uehara Seikichi Hokoshin Shinoh Ryu Iai-Do Grand Master Kimura Hekiho (Danny was training in this school at the time.) Tae Kwon Do Grand Master Choon Bong Lee Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iai Jutsu Grand Master Sekiguchi Takaaki (Danny went on to study in this school) Igaryuha Katsushin-Ryu Ju-Jutsu Grand Master Nemoto Kenichi Yoshin Ryu Naganata Jutsu Grand Master Oyama Takako Sambo USSR Grand Master Juri Borisochkin DaitoRyu Aiki Ju-Jutsu Master Kondo Katsuyuki Tamiyaryu Iaijutsu Grand Master Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi Nippon Kobujutsu Iai-Do Remei Master Mochizuki Takeshi



Mayor of Adelaide and 1st 2nd and 3rd placings



Grand Master Sekiguchi Takaaki from Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu





*Dinner at Kaicho's home. Hanshi Renzie, Hanshi Andy, Hanshi Charles, Mrs Nakamura, Kaicho, Nidaime and his two sons Tai and Issei.*

The planet does not  
need more successful  
people. The planet  
desperately needs  
more peacemakers,  
healers, restorers,  
storytellers and lovers  
of all kinds.

~ Dalai Lama



*Kindly contributed by Kyoshi Ken Szeto as part of the 'global poetry share' that many of us have been involved in.*



**These are from a book called Disorder in the American Courts and are things people actually said in court, word for word, taken down and published by court reporters that had the torment of staying calm while the exchanges were taking place.**

---

ATTORNEY: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

WITNESS: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

---

ATTORNEY: What is your date of birth?

WITNESS: July 18th.

ATTORNEY: What year?

WITNESS: Every year.

---

ATTORNEY: How old is your son, the one living with you?

WITNESS: Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which.

ATTORNEY: How long has he lived with you?

WITNESS: Forty-five years.

---

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: I forget..

ATTORNEY: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

---

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

---

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the 20-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: He's 20, much like your IQ.

---

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?

WITNESS: Are you shitting me?

---

ATTORNEY: She had three children , right?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: None.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Your Honor, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

---

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death..

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Take a guess.

---

---

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?

WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard

ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?

WITNESS: Unless the Circus was in town I'm going with male.

---

ATTORNEY: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

WITNESS: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

---

ATTORNEY: Doctor , how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All of them. The live ones put up too much of a fight.

---

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral, OK? What school did you go to?

WITNESS: Oral...

---

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 PM

ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?

WITNESS: If not, he was by the time I finished.

---

ATTORNEY: Are you qualified to give a urine sample?

WITNESS: Are you qualified to ask that question?

---

And last:

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No..

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.

*Supplied by Hanshi Renzie...not by the editor!*



**When and where did you start training Sei Shihan?**

When and where did you start training Sei Shihan? I started in June 1977 at the Bushodokai Karate Club in Carroll St, Dunedin. This was under the Kyokushinkai Karate system.

**Osu, what was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

The training was very similar to what we do today, repetitive, tough but enjoyable. Sparring basically started the very first day you stepped onto the dojo floor. It was reasonably social, often having a beer or two after training (quite often).

**Osu, can you reflect and describe the first and last ten minutes of your Shodan grading?**

I remember my Shodan grading really well as I had done it with JS Doug Clover. It was the first Black Belt grading in the Dunedin dojo, both Hanshis were there as well as most of the black belts from around NZ (well it seemed like that). There was a lot of people there to see the grading and it was very hot day. I was initially nervous but once we started, I felt quite at ease. We did some fitness routines and syllabus and the last ten minutes was the tail end of the 40 fights, and sparring just black belts. Although tough, it was what I signed up for so was not disappointed in my grading and the way I performed.



*Sei Shihan Kelvin Lewis*

**Osu, what has been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

Just really meeting and training with some great people from all walks of life.

**And who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

Thats a tough one, there are quite a few.

**Osu, if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

June 1977, the day I first stepped onto the dojo floor, was the start of something great!

**Osu, do you have one karate-do moment that you recall reasonably often - and why?**

I think it was after my first grading back in 77, as a 7th Kyu, I looked at the seniors, green, brown and two black belts and thought, there's no way I'll ever get to that level!!

**What is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate-do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

Respect for others.

**Osu, Sei Shihan, contemplate this - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

I'd be living and working on my farm in Central Otago.

**What are the major differences now, if any?**

Not really sure, the world is constantly changing in what we do, more prevalent now in what we will do as a result of COVID-19.

**Osu, what keeps you involved?**

The people, the friendships and the respect for each other.

**Osu, what would you like to see happening now, that is not happening now?**

To be back training in the dojo.

**What may be my legacy?**

No idea.

**Osu Sei Shihan, Karate-do training includes mental and physical pressure. How has this benefited you?**

In more ways than you can imagine, I'll leave it at that.

*Sei Shihan Kelvin Lewis, Dunedin*

**When and where did you start training?**

First started training in February 1974 at Christchurch Shibu as part of university class on Saturday mornings.

**What was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

The Dojo was quite a scary place as very few smiles and all Black Belts seen as pretty hard men. Training was very physical with sparring at white belt level. I remember getting kicked through an open door by Hanshi Andy. Frequent use of shinai to keep discipline. Hanshi Renzie provided the only light relief with his wise cracks.

**Describe the first and last 10 minutes of your Shodan grading**

The first ten minutes of my Shodan grading was a lot of physical jerks so got a good sweat up and settled into the grading. Feeling good as I was well prepared. I have few recollections of the last ten minutes. I was buggered and had lost count of number of fights. Was happy when I managed to put somebody on the deck but that did not seem to happen a lot. Strong desire to finish the job. At the end you always think that you could have done better, but it is very easy to say in hindsight. I think I genuinely put everything into the grading. Pretty emotional at the end.



*Sei Shihan Mike McIvor*

**What have been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

The stand out experiences for me? Competing in three tournaments in the 1970s, one month living and training in New York in 1989, meeting Kaicho for the first time, 1994 New York and London trip, spending a week training in New York with each of my sons, Hanshis New York trip around 8th dan grading. All occasions had very special memories associated with them.

**Who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

The dominant personalities since I started have been Hanshi Renzie and Kaicho. Both were tough but fair and had a knack of attracting people to them.

**If you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

If I could go back in time 1st kyu was a great period of about 18 months. I was young, fit and felt bulletproof. I was training hard for my Shodan grading.

**Do you have one karate do moment that you recall reasonably often - and why?**

Memories? I often recall the month spent in New York in 1989 with four travelling companions. SS Ben, Clive, Archimedes, John and Kim - it was a great month, training most days and socialising at night.

**What is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

Karate has taught me resilience. If you are 'down' you always get up again. Making an excuse not to is easy. Sometimes getting up can be very hard but it is great when you do.

**Contemplate this - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

Without Seido I may well be directionless. I value the relationships built over time and the experiences shared. There is a real sense of belonging to a very special group.

**What are the major differences now, if any?**

Seido now is softer than it was when I started. You can be appreciative of that fact as you get older and your body starts to deteriorate. In an effort to be inclusive we have eased up in some areas. I still think a Shodan grading should be close to what it was in 1979. On the other hand, many more people have got to experience the Seido system and I am sure have had their lives changed for the better.

**What keeps you involved?**

Friends and stubbornness keep me involved in karate still.

**What would you like to see happening now, that is not happening now?**

No comment.

**What is/will be your legacy?**

My legacy? I would like to think that people will say that I ran a great dojo and produced some great students. If they said I was tough but fair, I would be happy.

*Sei Shihan Michael McIvor, Te Awamutu*



### **When and where did you start training?**

I began my Martial Arts training at 4 years of age at the Titahi Bay Wrestling Club in 1957. Spent many years on the mat and although Mum didn't like it, I would mix it up with boxing club whenever I could.

### **What was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

I joined the Victoria University Kyokushin Karate club in 1971. What a first class that was. We went up and down the Gym doing line work and what seemed like, hundreds of press-ups. After an exhausting hour of this, several black belts appeared on the side-line, stretching out, a couple of them flicking their feet in the air, mawashi geri, flash stuff we had never seen before. They came onto the floor, no special bow in just a head nod, Osu, onto the floor, sparring time.

Now my older brother's mate, Bob Cheen, a big boy and very capable body builder, and I had never done this stuff before so it was interesting. We did find out that a couple of these young bucks had just come back from Japan. I think they had gone away with Bob McCallum who also took quite a few of these early classes.



*Sei Shihan Danny Watson*

It started slow like they were testing everyone out and then it was all on. They began kicking and punching most of the students around the Gym. Not too much blood, but several students spent quite a bit of time down on the floor. Needless to say, the class ended, bow out, a few pats on the back and "see you Thursday". Yeah right. Bob and I walked down the hill to the "Duke" on Manners Street. He was of drinking age and I was not, however as I was working at the Original "Old" Porirua Tavern, I wasn't too worried about age and that stuff. We're both sitting there at the bar, a nice cold seven-ounce beer in front of us, sound familiar? I looked at his black eye and he looked at my nicely bruised fat lip and he said, "are we going back Thursday?" I said, "you bet-cha." We did, and this time we were treated with a lot more respect than the previous class, maybe we were in the too hard basket. The interesting thing was not too many of the other beginners were back, all a bit too much really. Thank goodness the "good old days" are just that, gone and may they remain the good old days.

Karate and wrestling went onto the back burner when I ruptured my right knee trying a fancy throw. I was training with the American Olympic coach, Dale Thomas at the time. Thanks to science, I now have a new one, plus a couple of hips as a bonus.

### **Describe the first and last 10 minutes of your Shodan grading**

After my Ni-Dan grading Sensei Steven Cope said, "that was awesome. Your Shodan grading was shit, but that was awesome". Don't remember too much of my Shodan Grading however there were a few people I remembered. Bit like my first karate class, some people just like to hurt others. "As ye sow so shall ye reap", I have along memory around that one. The grading's were far more "intimate" back then.

As with all candidates you are not going to have a good time out there, however, something I didn't expect, once the swelling and bruising had eased, to find I had, or rather someone else had, fractured my Sternoclavicular joint, (where the collar bone meets the sternum) and still have a nice big lump there today. All par for the course.

### **What have been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

There are many stand out things about Seido Karate-do, in particular here in NZ. The biggies are that I have been accepted, unconditionally, as and for who I am. Thanks guys that is a rare thing, and the other, that my wife, Teresa and our four children gave it a go and through that understanding and love have indulged me in having a Dojo at our doorstep.

### **Who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

When looking for standout personalities we don't have to go far, my seniors, who have the ability to embrace us and in a very special and personal way, collectively are amazing. Go the straight arrows.

### **if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

Looking back there is no part of my karate journey that I hold a need to re-visit as it is all one big, beautiful continuum and it ain't over yet. One strong memory and that was during a senior grading, not mine, many years ago when a solitary voice yelled out, through the wall of cold and deathly silence, "yeah awesome". I remember the cold steel stare of my seniors and thinking that maybe this time I pushed the barrow a bit too far. Enough said, and the rest is history.

### **What are the major differences now, if any?**

Our karate has changed as have we all. Change isn't always good and it isn't always bad, it is just change. The changes on the most part have been really good and the number of students, the age and gender mix tells me that we are all getting something right. If it all stopped, as all things do at the end of our journey, that's cool, if it stopped a bit sooner, or I found I no longer could or no longer wanted to participate that's Ok because that's a conscious choice. However, if for some reason out of my control I could no longer put on my Gi and get out on the Dojo floor, I would find another way to maintain the contact and esprit de corps that is such a good and healthy part of my life, and perhaps I too may be a good and healthy part of the life of a few others.

### **What is/will be your legacy?**

Regards "legacy" there is only what others enact and remember of you that remains. The real legacy from my perspective is simple. We are not really karate students or karate teachers; we are all gardeners growing ourselves and if we strike the right chord, others around us. By enabling and empowering ourselves to be who we truly are we give others permission to do the same.

*Sei Shihan Danny Watson*



*Kindly contributed by  
Jun Shihan Patrick  
Holden as part of the  
'global poetry share'  
that many of us have  
been involved in.*

Obama's inauguration speech 2009:

**"Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends - hard work and honesty, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism - these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility."**



## **Osu Sei Shihan, when and where did you start training?**

Later in 1979 Christchurch Shibu

## **Osu, what was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

Osu, what was the culture of the dojo like when you started? The class sizes were quite large. I don't remember there being as big a gap in age groups like there is today. I felt comfortable and it was exciting learning all this new stuff called karate. The classes were very strict, also something that obviously appealed to me was the discipline and the feeling after class after you had a great work out. It's funny when you look at people writing about what or how you should exercise they talk all about using your own body weight and calisthenics etc. That to me is what Karate is all about; your core and strength gained from using the weight of your body to become stronger, so we've been doing it for years. We did a lot of basics for a long time, so your basics became good and something your mind and body never forgets.



Sei Shihan Murray Stewart

## **Osu Sei Shihan, can you describe the first and last ten minutes of your Shodan grading?**

The first ten minutes were pretty blank. Our grading was at the Glentui camp and thank God it was raining. Hanshi decided we wouldn't go for a run which for those that camped at Glentui would remember the stairs were pretty horrible in the dry, someone was watching over us. I was just happy to be there. I had five others to share it with which I think helped me feel relaxed. Michael Hughey was my partner for ippons. The sparring, even though a blur now, seemed to go on forever. I spent a lot of time towards the end getting up from the floor. It's amazing what your mind allows your body to do. My parents were there and my sister. That was the first and only time they had seen me do Karate so that will always be memorable for me.

## **Osu, what has been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date?**

Osu, what has been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you, to date? There have been so many stand out experiences throughout my journey. If I had to pick one it would definitely be our trip to New York in 1986 for the 10th Anniversary, to live and breathe NY for 6 weeks and to train with Hanshi in Kaicho's classes from 10am and leave at 9pm some evenings and make lifelong friendships, absolutely priceless.

## **Who have been the dominant personalities, in your opinion, when you reflect on your karate-do journey?**

Murray Banks, Craig Barlow, Peter Wasley, Roger James, Steve Cope....not all dominant personalities but dominated times in my journey.

## **Osu, if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

*If I could go back in time, if I could, it would only be to savour every moment. I have been very fortunate to have a history which has been relatively injury free, the worst being a snapped Achilles tendon which gave me the opportunity to reflect for 10 months and gave my body a rest at the same time.*

## **Osu, do you have one karate do moment that you recall reasonably often - and why?**

If I am honest I would have to say losing a fight in a tournament to a really good mate after going 3 or 4 extensions has to be the biggest stand out experience for me. To put so much into something and have nothing to show for all the effort and to come out the other end with nothing is such a deflating feeling. That was probably about 37 years ago. It wasn't enough to make me quit, even though I harboured those feelings. That may be my resilience answer to last week's e-zine.

## **Osu Sei Shihan, what is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

There are so many things I am grateful for but to be involved in a system that has family values at its heart has been the greatest gift for me.

## **Osu, contemplate this - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

My life hasn't been smooth sailing but without Seido Karate I am sure my life wouldn't be as balanced that it is now.

## **What are the major differences now, if any?**

We are all older, I think karate teaching has evolved with the many teachers it has produced.

### **Osu, what keeps you involved?**

When you do something for 40 years it becomes more about the people you share and have shared the whole experience with, the yin is the people and the yang is the physical stuff.

### **What may be your legacy?**

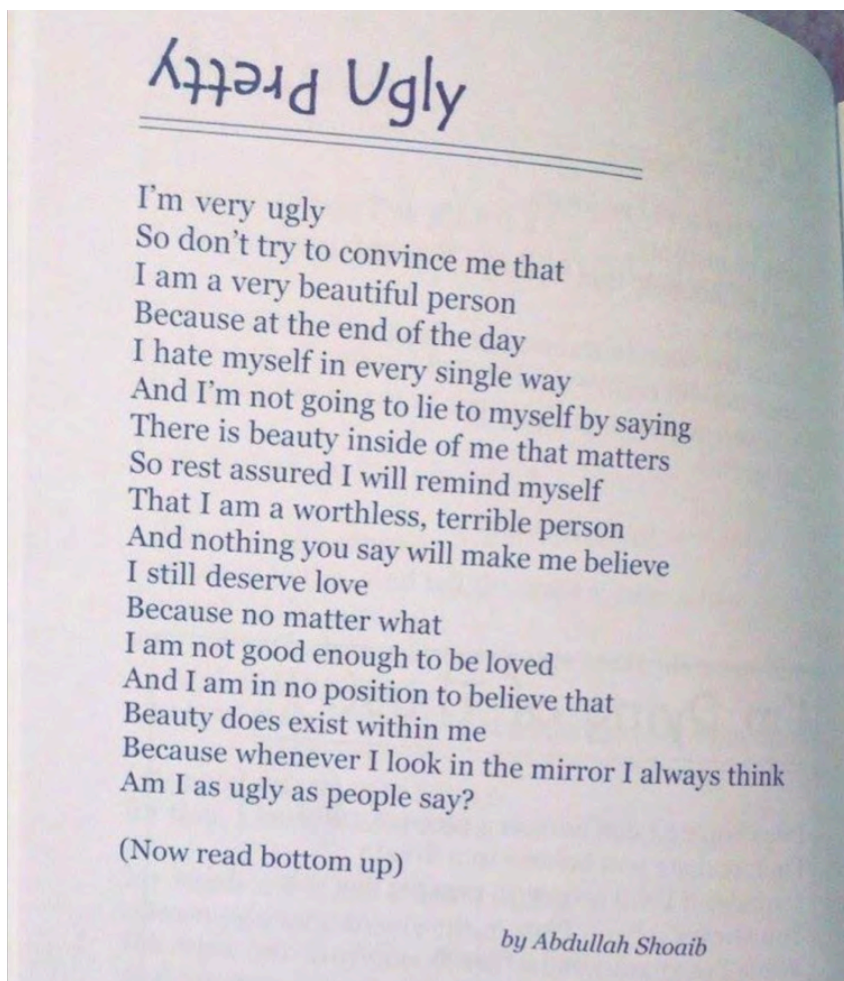
My Family is my legacy. I have a beautiful wife whom I love very much and three children also part of my journey and I love.

### **Karate do training includes mental and physical pressure.**

#### **How has this benefited you Sei Shihan?**

It makes me appreciate the years of instruction and teachings I have had and the lessons it has taught both my body and my mind, and while this sounds very cliché, it's the focus when you are focused, intention when you are intent, being in balance when you are balanced, all these things help you in everyday life whether you are at work or at home. I believe training both your mind and body are integral in everyday life. Gassho.

*Sei Shihan Murray Stewart, Australia*



*Having a bad day? Read this backwards! Kindly contributed by Senpai Sam Gray [Sunnybank Dojo, Brisbane] as part of the 'global poetry share' that many of us have been involved in.*



# What is mindfulness?

I often hear the term “mindfulness” used generally referring to being aware in some way - and wondering what it means to people. Perhaps being intentional with the meaning of words, or being considerate or thoughtful of other’s feelings, or even of our own feelings.



*Senpai Andy Welsh*

Just over a year ago, after some injuries, I found myself drawn to yoga as a way to achieve some suppleness and balance. Meditation and breathing play an important role in yoga practice - techniques to remain calm when dealing with the physical difficulties of challenging poses - much as we encounter in martial arts when challenged by fitness or pain. Or techniques to simply empty the mind and leave the day’s activities behind to allow focus on the class ahead.

I found the calming effect of focusing on my breathing quite fascinating (and pleasant) so put some time into reading about meditation. Here again I came across “mindfulness” used almost interchangeably with meditation.

What I’ve learned is that meditation is one specific way to practice and focus on mindfulness. Whereas mindfulness itself is a practice we can use throughout the day.

For me, I understand Mindfulness simply as awareness of how our own minds work, and how we can accept some of our own unique weird ways of thinking - both good and bad - without judging ourselves or our thoughts.

Mindfulness is a contemplative practice - thinking about thinking - with its origins in many similar religions and philosophical traditions through history and across many cultures. Historically the various cultures were geographically isolated and only in the last few hundreds of years have exploration and advances in transportation and communication allowed the world’s cultures to learn about each other and mingle ideas and philosophies. Where martial arts have all developed in relation to human anatomy, contemplative philosophical practices have all focused on the human mind.

Where we can easily see similar features in martial arts so we can find common themes in philosophies of mindfulness - admittedly though, some are wrapped up in cultural practices and beliefs which our western values can find impenetrable and strange. It is heartening to see that, in the last hundred years, these attitudes have softened, and increasingly people can see the value in alternative viewpoints, rather than finding them threatening. Indeed, mindfulness and meditation have enjoyed a renaissance since the 1960s - partially as a reaction to what is seen as the over medicalised American “shrink” industry, and partly as a rejection of the violence and war of the twentieth century.

## **So, what does mindfulness look like if you are doing it?**

Mindfulness meditation often uses your breathing as a way to focus and calm your mind. Sitting comfortably, with eyes closed, posture relaxed, deep and slow breathing through your nose has an immediately calming effect. Listening to your breathing and how it feels occupies the mind - by paying attention to each breath. Because an occupied mind is often calmer than an idle mind - we can drop out of our usual chaotic thinking into a relatively peaceful state. At this point, we have an opportunity to observe our own minds in action. Our minds are never completely idle or empty. Even sitting calmly, focused on our breathing, we will still find ourselves “lost in thought” - and the goal is to step outside our thoughts, to observe them, perhaps identify or describe them, and allow them to rise and pass without engagement.

The first meditations I tried were guided through an app called “Waking Up” published by Sam Harris - a leading advocate of mindfulness. I have since also tried “Calm” as well. The great thing about guided meditations is someone gently poking you when you drop back into the flow of your thoughts - you can regain your focus and return to observing your thoughts. This is a skill, akin to exercising a muscle. Over time I’ve extended my meditations from only a few minutes to ten and lately twenty minutes - with longer and longer periods of

silence in which I am able to maintain focus rather than drifting off or - more typically - becoming sleepy and even falling over! (yes, it's a great way to fall asleep too).

### **Why bother? What is beneficial about observing our thoughts?**

The important realization in all this is that you are not your thoughts. Ask anyone who is plagued by unpleasant or troubling thoughts whether the idea of silencing your mind and being able to step aside from unpleasant thoughts and emotions - and I guarantee they will be interested. More than this, the assumption that bad thoughts make you a bad person in some way can be extremely debilitating. Breaking this assumption and realising that your thoughts are largely out of your conscious control is liberating, often an immense relief. It offers the possibility of changing yourself in positive ways.

Buddhism holds that we create our own mental suffering - by being unconscious passengers washed along by the river of our minds. Mindfulness offers us the possibility of becoming conscious owner operators - differentiating the good from the unhelpful, the positive from the negative, accepting the whole and making choices about how our minds influence our lives. Once again - ask anyone who has lived for a period lost in negative thought patterns and they will tell you this can be a lifeline.

What about people who wake up happy and enjoy naturally positive thinking? Can mindfulness offer them anything? It has been my experience that a life without challenge is barely lived, and those who have never been challenged by circumstances outside their control can sometimes stumble when they are confronted at some point. Without being pessimistic - nothing lasts forever, we will experience happiness, joy and sorrow and loss in our lives. It is how we deal with these experiences that is key. Equipping yourself to deal with this reality makes sense.

Mindfulness then, offers us a set of skills in the most important part of our lives where we spend all our time - our own minds. This is basically completely neglected in our culture - especially for men. Never once in my entire education and upbringing was my mind even mentioned. If I ever had an off day, or someone I knew was having a rough time, this was almost embarrassing, was seen as negative, a failure and typically medicalised or hidden from sight, glossed over, or laughed off with a veneer of cheerfulness. It's great to see that "She'll be right mate!" is finally giving way to a new culture in which men can feel ok about admitting to their struggles and finding support in their peers.

Mindfulness is a growing thread in our culture and represents, I think, a maturing of our attitudes. The way we can now tap into thousands of years of philosophy and wisdom is quite incredible and is an amazing opportunity to discover new ways of being, living, and relating to each other.

If you are interested in trying mindfulness - and I suggest strongly that it is a perfect accompaniment to your martial arts journey - then start with guided meditations - and commit yourself to a few months of regular practice - at least until you start using your new viewpoint in your day to day life.

The lockdown and pandemic have been challenging for everyone. It has also been an unprecedented opportunity. If you find yourself worried about the future, about loss of income, future employment, paying the mortgage, or a more amorphous shapeless worry - begin by trying a new type of inner dialog. If I can catch myself worrying then I say to myself "there I go worrying about the future, about things I can't control" - "I wonder what's got me so worried about the future?". I give myself the opportunity to pause to decide if a thought is good for me or not. And often, if that thought is good for my loved ones.

Developing the ability to let your thoughts pass without automatically or impulsively embracing them is the foundation of a mindful life.

*Contributed by Senpai Andy Welsh, Christchurch*



# Bamboo and the Shinai

Some may wonder what this slightly evil looking weapon is sitting beside the Bo in the dojo racks. The Shinai is a weapon used for practice and competition predominantly in Kendo but is also used in other martial arts (ask Hanshi or one of the Sei Shihans about the liberal use of the Shinai in the early days). The Shinai represents a Japanese sword and is constructed mostly of bamboo.



The earliest use of a bamboo training weapon dates back to the early 1500's and was developed in an effort to reduce the number of practitioners being seriously injured during practice, where hard wooden swords were previously used. The more modern Shinai, constructed with four slats of bamboo, dates back to the late 1700's.

The slats of a Shinai are usually made from dried bamboo, although some modern Shinai slats are also made of carbon fibre. The four slats, known as take, are held together by three leather fittings, and are all secured with a string. "Madake" bamboo is regarded as the best material to use in Shinai construction due to its excellent fibre density, flexibility, colour, and feedback when striking (you might also like to ask the Sei Shihan about this!).



The botanical name for Madake Bamboo is *Phyllostachys bambusoides* and is also known as "Japanese Timber Bamboo". *Phyllostachys bambusoides* is the most commonly grown timber bamboo in Japan and is a symbolic of Japanese culture, however its origins are in China. It is an invasive running (underground) plant and has the potential to spread rapidly if not controlled. New culms (shoots) usually emerge in late spring and can grow up to 1m per day, usually to a maximum height of about 8m. It commonly only flowers every 130 years! Young shoots can be boiled and eaten as a vegetable. The culm wood is ideal for construction, as it is thick walled and straight. It is used frequently in Asia as scaffolding and also in the manufacture of furniture.

As bamboo timber is renewable, it is being increasingly used instead of traditional hardwoods in all sorts of applications, providing a solution to the environmental impact of deforestation. Their rapid growth means their culms are harvestable in 1-3 years as opposed to hardwoods that take at least 40 years to mature. Once harvested, bamboo begins growing again without the need for additional cultivation. During harvesting and processing, every part of the bamboo plant can be used with a much lower consumption of energy than hardwoods. Bamboo requires little fertiliser or pesticides to produce on a wide scale and absorbs carbon dioxide at a faster rate than most tree species.



*Contributed by Senpai Jennifer Dray*



*Senpai Jennifer Gray with daughter  
Senpai Eleanor, Christchurch*

# YANK WATCH ARIZONA

Still here despite some people's efforts!!! 😊 We certainly hope the emoji's will print, as our spirits are still okay. What can we say besides what you all have probably seen on the tele. It's hard to hide stupidity.

Anyway, here in Arizona our COVID-19 cases are still on the rise. Oh yeah, as well as in most other states (see chart)! On the good side, our wee community is still posting on FB garden goods, free spices, fresh meats, etc. One thing that is rarely seen overseas is the true goodwill that (IMHO and also, my hope for humanity in our country) we do see here on the "non-media" level. It seems the louder, dumber, and more ignorant you are, in America, the more coverage you get. The quiet, more intelligent, calmer ones tend to avoid the 'hullabaloo'. Hang in there, there are more "good" Yanks than bad (fingers crossed).

Per request, we have located a few historic memories from "the day".



Sensei Murray and Rowena Creighton



Christchurch Shibu early 1980's – Sensei Murray Creighton, Sei Shihan Peter Searle



Training in the Catskills, Zen Monastery 1982 – Hanshi Renzie Hanham, Hanshi Andy Barber, Sensei Murray Creighton, Senpai Mike Drew

Meantime, stay safe, missing the Mainland heaps, be kind.



	28-Mar	4-Apr	11-Apr	18-Apr	25-Apr
# Cases AZ	919	2019	3393	4719	6280
# Deaths AZ	17	52	108	177	273
# tested AZ	13712	27160	40530	51045	62508
# Cases Cochise	3	7	13	22	36
# Deaths Cochise		0	0	0	0
# tested Cochise		258	425	541	687
# Cases USA	122653	267436	525704	690714	895766
# Deaths USA				35443	50439
# States "Widespread"				27	36





# BREAD - THE STAFF OF LIFE

**Due to the historical influence of bread and the fact that it has been referred to as the 'staff of life' [bo of life, in karate terms]** we felt it had a place here. It is interesting how people around the world have returned to bread-making during the 'shut-down'. Amongst our Seido community, we have turned our hand to one of the oldest culinary pursuits. Long-time bread-makers Sei Shihan Peter and Mary Searle have had fresh bread each day right throughout the 'shut-down' period. Sei Shihan Danny has made his second successful brioche and is quite rightly stoked about this! Senpai Hamish MacKay has made some tasty sourdough. And me, just as many read a book when they have discretionary time at home, I like to make bread. Sometimes it turns out well, other times it doesn't. It's the 'making of bread' that appeals to me. It takes us back to an era when 'life was simple', so they say. But was it, I wonder? I personally love the fact that we can use a 14,000 year old process to make a food that has served mankind for eons, across every culture, and every divide. Acclaimed author of *The Gastronomical Me* [1943] M.F.K Fisher said "The smell of good bread baking, like the sound of lightly flowing water, is indescribable in its evocation of innocence and delight...it is one of those almost hypnotic businesses, like a dance from some ancient ceremony. It leaves you filled with one of the world's sweetest smells... there is no chiropractic treatment, no Yoga exercise, no hour of meditation in a music-throbbing chapel that will leave you emptier of bad thoughts than this homely ceremony of making bread" [1].

Until recently, we thought our ancestors were farmers first and bakers second. The discovery of ancient breadcrumbs around a firepit in Jordan [2018] that predate the advent of agriculture by at least 4,000 years means that 'our ancestors were bakers first —and learned to farm afterwards' [2]. It turns out, that processing food is a much more basic technique in human history than we thought and maybe as old as hunting and gathering. Last year, Seamus Blackley [Xbox creator and sourdough enthusiast] used yeast harvested from ancient Egyptian pots to make a sourdough recipe from 4,500 years ago! [3-5] How cool is that???

One of the world's oldest foods, cereals were crushed and mixed with water to form a thick paste that could be cooked over the fire. This early bread was particularly successful when wild yeast from the air combined with flour and water, starting a fermentation process and slightly rising the crust. I spent ten days making the sourdough 'starter' which I made from wholemeal flour and water and wild yeast from the air. The end result was not pretty, wonky even, but quite tasty and much lighter than other bread I'd made in the past. Sourdough bread making can become addictive. If this is you, you may wish to check out the amazing Sourdough Library in St Vith, Brussels. [A recent article here - https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/science/sourdough-bread-starter-library.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/science/sourdough-bread-starter-library.html)

For some of us, it is a holiday ritual. Symbolic of those times when we have control over our day. For many religions – the notion of breaking and sharing bread at the beginning of the meal is symbolic of unity – looking after one another, sharing, even going without to make sure our fellow man/woman can survive. We all love bread!

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/25/gastronomical-me-mfk-fisher-review>
2. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/07/24/631583427/14-000-year-old-piece-of-bread-rewrites-the-history-of-baking-and-farming>
3. <https://globalnews.ca/news/5736305/yeast-egyptian-sourdough-4500-years-old/>
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There is a traditional perspective that the Samurai from which modern karate takes a lot of traditions was dominated by men. Most of the images we see involve warrior men fighting other warrior men with the absence of the other gender. So that begs the question...

### **Were there women samurai?**

The short answer is yes! Called onna-bugeisha, which literally means warrior-women, there is evidence of a strong presence of females within the samurai class. Their origins can be traced back to as early as the third century and there are accounts of their actions right through to the end of feudal Japan.

### **What role did the Onna-bugeisha play in feudal Japan?**

The fighting women were often charged with the defence of the castle, with the command being that of the lord's wife, or a senior female retainer. Far from being a last-ditch effort from a group of reluctant women, the Onna-bugeisha were well trained, well organised, and well-resourced in their duty. Their position was highly regarded in military strategy at the time.

It was rare for onna-bugeisha to be involved in offensive campaigns, although examples do exist. Artwork and descriptions depict their weapon of choice as predominately a naginata - a pole with a curved blade at the end of it.

### **How did the role of Onna-bugiesha compare with broader Japanese society at the time?**

Most women at the time of the samurai were subject to strict social codes of behaviour. The rigid expectation placed on them was for the efforts of motherhood, marriage, and domestic duties. Onna-bugiesha, however, had legal rights such as stewardship over land, were trained in fighting, and could travel freely. They were as much an integral part of the samurai class as their male counterparts, with similar opportunities for displays of courage in combat.

### **How common were Onna-bugeisha?**

Unfortunately, there is little written record of the Onna-bugiesha that has survived to the modern era that documents how common they were, especially in battle. However physical evidence suggests that women often fought alongside men on the battle field such as excavations from the Battle of Senbon Matsubaru in 1580. Of the 105 bodies examined, a third of them were revealed to be women. This suggests that these warrior women were at the very least well trained and an active part of some conflicts.

### **Did the practice of female samurai fall out of custom?**

During the Edo period (1600 – 1868), the role of the Onna-bugiesha shifted and declined in prevalence. Societal changes meant that the concept of women having a dominant role in society was frowned on, while the notion of them being involved in fighting battles was inconceivable. It was also during this time that saw a transition for the samurai class in general from fighters to bureaucrats, concerned more with politics and diplomacy than the sword and spear.

As a result of the Meiji restoration in 1868, Japan underwent rapid modernisation and westernisation, which in some cases involved a re-writing of Japanese history. The reinvention and romanticising of Samurai as swaggering males in kimonos wielding katana unfortunately overlooks the heroic and pivotal role the Onna-bugiesha played.

Historian Stephen Turnbull considers “the exploits of female warriors as the greatest untold story in samurai history”.

### **Who are some famous Onna-bugeisha?**

In 1868 a young onna-bugeisha Nakano Takeko was part of a last-ditch effort to defend the Wakamatsu castle in northern Japan from the besieging imperial army. Armed with modern weapons including rifles, and artillery, the 30,000 strong force was formidable against the 3,000 defenders inside. It is said that Takeko led a unit of around 20 other warrior women in a counter attack against the enemy forces, felling several of them before succumbing to a bullet wound herself. A monument now stands in her honour for her bravery and sacrifice.

Arguably one of the most famous onna-bugiesha, Tomoe Gozen was said to have lived (and fought) during the Genpei war in the late 12th century. Accounts have her depicted as a fierce warrior, skilled on horseback, and deadly proficient with bow and sword. There is some debate whether Gozen was a real figure, or a fictionalised composition that represented multiple onna-bugiesha within the samurai ranks. With three sites in modern Japan claiming to be the site of her grave, it is none the less a testament to her legend, and the ubiquitous nature of these warrior women during the age of the samurai.



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*The Samurai: A New History of the Warrior Elite.* By Jonathan Clements

*Contributed by Senpai Hamish MacKay*



**Life and its success along the way is requiring of more than one thing in and out of the dojo; technique, timing, angle and balance. Simplify - if it's not working, change the angle. A simple example be found in Judo. An opponent in front with a stiff arm and a strong stance. On a pound for pound basis to attack or advance your position will fail, more so, if you're the weaker or smaller. So, change the angle of your direction of attack using their arm as a lever. SUCCESS. Now extend this thinking into the boardroom. One's day to day life, where there is not a physical situation rather, one mind / thinking / attitude against and or over another. If it's not working, change the angle!**

*Sensei Allard Mitchell [Judo] – sage comments from an old friend of Hanshi Renzie's*

**Osu Hanshi, when and where did you start training and what was training like when you started?**

Started karate as a 20 year old in 1965 under Hanshi Doug Holloway, the founder of Kyokushin in New Zealand.

**Osu, what was the culture of the dojo like when you started?**

We were a small group and we trained once or twice a week in the Judo clubrooms in London Street. Classes were two to two and a half hours long and consisted of basics, basics and for a change...more basics. Of course, we sparred straight away so it was quite intense.

**Osu, can you please describe the first and last 10 minutes of your Shodan grading.**

Two of us went. The other was Tony Young. We had held our national tournament the day before, so we were pretty battered and bruised. I remember having pain relief injections in my foot. The two examiners Sensei Doug Holloway and John Jarvis left half way through to go and watch the tournament coverage on television, came back and we carried on. In the sparring people were asked from the audience if they wanted to come on and have a go which of course they did.



*Hanshi Renzie*

**Osu, what have been the 'stand out' experiences of Seido karate-do for you to date?**

Too many really. First trip to New York. Being part of the New York team to Japan. Demonstrating with Shihan Oliver at Madison Square Garden and of course training under Kaicho, together with Hanshi Charles, Shihan William Oliver, Sensei Claude, Jean Battle and of course my friend Hanshi Andy plus the numerous other personalities back then. Kaichos and Shigeru Oyama's first trip to New Zealand.

**Osu, and who were the dominant personalities back then?**

In our own dojo there was the group that went to Japan in 1969 - Hanshi Doug, Wayne Wendelken, Jamie Tulloch, Trevor Trainor, Hilton Libeau and myself. Later on there were people like Jes Vilsbaek, Paul McNeill, Warren Boyles, Charles White, Bob Breen, Jim Bryce, Brent Trevean. The group that went to New York - Shihan Neil and Peter, Kevin McGuire, Bill Bowie, Wayne Wendelken and of course Sensei Karen, then there was Jenny White, Nicola Robertson, Jane Grice, David Paterson, Hans Van Der Voorn, Brother Dunstan, Murray and Terry Banks, Craig Barlow, the Copes plus of course all the shihans who have been members of this dojo to name a few.

**Osu, if you could go back to a specific time in your karate history, when would it be and why?**

Enjoyed it all. Obviously different things appeal depending on your age. And of course, 'the older you get the better you were!'

**Osu, Hanshi, what is the greatest gift/or lesson Seido karate do has bestowed on you/taught you?**

Not to make assumptions, everyone has their story and often we don't know what that story is. Be kind.

**Contemplate this - take Seido karate do out of your life - what would your life look like?**

It would look good because whatever I have learned would still be with me.

**What are the major differences now?**

Much more technical and accommodating of differing ages and physical abilities,.

**Osu, what keeps you involved?**

The people and the feeling that I might be contributing with something of value.

**Osu, and what would you like to see happening now?**

That we maintain the special nature of a karate dojo. That we avoid it becoming a 'club' that waters down what has made the Dojo special for many over many years.

**On reflection, what may be your legacy?**

Not for me to decide, that will be up to others.

*Hanshi Renzie Hanham, Christchurch*

*NB: For a more comprehensive overview of Hanshi's story you can purchase Sensei Garry Szeto's excellent book "In the Shadow of the Future" from the dojo.*



“The attitude of gratitude brings altitude”



Sensei Garry Szeto is the author of the book "In the Shadow of the Future" which captures a 50 year history of Seido Karate in New Zealand from its earlier beginnings, Kyokushinkai Karate. Sections include: Women Pioneers, World Champions, individual dojo stories, 40th and 50th anniversaries, Sei Shihan and Jun Shihan profiles and other stories of special interest. Osu, if you would like a copy of the History of Karate book – please go to this website <https://seidonorthlandwgtm.co.nz/book/>