

# SEIZAN®

Newsletter of the American Amateur Karate Federation

September, 2011

Volume 2, Issue 3

## Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

### Editorial Staff:



Alex Tong



Amy Young



Bradley Webb

"We are dwarfs astride the shoulders of giants. We master their wisdom and move beyond it. Due to their wisdom we grow wise and are able to say all that we say, but not because we are greater than they".  
Isaiah di Trani (c. 1180 – c. 1250).

Close to a hundred qualified athletes from all geographical regions participated in spirited competition in adult and inaugural youth events at the AAKF National Championship in Atlanta, GA, making this one of the best attended National Championships, as was the National Seminar preceding this event. As befitting to AAKF's Golden Anniversary, the Board of Directors honors posthumously the indelible contributions of Sensei Hidetaka Nishiyama and Ms Aiko Torii with the first AAKF Distinguished Service Awards at the moving conclusion of the National Championship.

The exciting future of AAKF is founded on the unmitigated spirit and hard work of our instructors, athletes, and members.

The strong turnout by the National Junior athletes, and their high level of competition bodes well with AAKF's efforts to perpetuate the next generation of competitors. To recognize the contributions of our senior members, Seizan highlights the early history of AAKF with part two of Sensei Robert Graves' interview, and profiles of Joel Ertl and Anita Bendickson. Joel and Anita have been tirelessly promoting our way of training in the North Central Region for 30+ years. Also in this issue, Dr. Scott Wietecha, DDS, Director of the South Atlantic Region, provided eloquent accounts of the National Seminar and Championships in separate Current Events articles. The photography of John Bell and Vince Seay captured the energy and excitement of these events.

Help celebrate the 50th Anniversary of AAKF by sending us your thoughts of AAKF's past, present, and future to [office@aakf.org](mailto:office@aakf.org).

Alex Tong  
General Editor

## Q & A with Robert Graves Part 2

Seizan interviews Robert Graves in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the AAKF

This concluding segment of a two-part Interview with Sensei Robert Graves spans perspectives of AAKF early history to his counsel for young members.

**S:** *Seizan understands that you were a shodan in Wadoryu when you first visited Nishiyama Sensei's dojo, and as they say, the rest is history. What were the key elements of Sensei's teaching that captured your imagination and maintained your tenure in Shotokan training all these years?*

**R:** I bought Sensei's book in 1960. When I returned to stateside in the same year, I was a shodan in Wado. By that time, I've met a lot of karate people in Japan and the US and been to numerous tournaments, which were basically brutal blood baths. In Japan, tournaments were more or less brawls among university clubs trying to outdo each other. I myself had also sustained injuries in competition. I was thrilled to hear that Nishiyama Sensei was in California. This was the

period that I was teaching Wadoryu at the California marine bases. I didn't have the opportunity to train with him while in Japan. He was like a superstar, very popular and difficult to get the opportunity to train with.

I sent a letter back to my previous Sensei, Yoshio Kawaguchi (who was a Sergeant in the Japan "Kwan Tong" army), seeking permission to train with Nishiyama Sensei as there were no Wado dojos in Southern California. My sensei's response was that I'd be a fool if I have the opportunity and not train with Sensei Nishiyama.

I first met and started training at Sensei's dojo in September of 1961. I was simply stunned that Sensei Nishiyama's karate was so much better than any of the karate instructors that I've met or trained with. At that time I was living in Santa Ana at the El Toro Marine base. I did not get discharged until Christmas of 1962.

Continued on Page 4

### Inside this Issue:

Letter from the Editor

Q & A with Sensei Robert  
Graves Part 2

Current Events: National  
Championships

AAKF Member Spotlight

Current Events: National  
Seminar

Photo Gallery

Upcoming Events



## Current Events: 50<sup>th</sup> National and Jr. National Traditional Karate Championships

June 17-18, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia by Scott Wietcha, DDS



*Taichiro Kajjima, Western Region during Men's Individual Kata Competition*



This year marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AAKF and the South Atlantic Region was privileged and honored to host the AAKF National and inaugural Jr. National Traditional Karate Championships. On the first day, 53 competitors from 10 different regions competed in the elimination rounds, vying for the coveted spots in the National finals to be held the following day. The competition was spirited during the elimination rounds leaving a slate of competitors anxious to move on to the next level.

Saturday began with an electrical march and introduction of our National Junior athletes. Rhythmic clapping ushered the 44 young participants into the gym and tears of joy and pride filled the eyes of parents and those of us who recognized we were looking at the future of our great organization. The competition took place in three rings simultaneously and we were entertained with dialogue from Sensei Richard Kageyama, whose continual commentary explained the finer points of the competition to those in the

crowd. To see such wonderful talent at such young ages was truly remarkable. Ending with a joyful award ceremony, the Jr. Nationals was a resounding success waiting to be replayed next year in Los Angeles.

After a brief lunch, the adult AAKF National Tournament began. We were honored by the presence of Senseis Enrique and Alberto Obregón González from la Federación Mexicana de Karate Tradicional. The program was efficient and the com-petition impressive as new and familiar competitors performed in the rich tradition of Shiai. A particularly special encounter occurred in the men's final of individual kumite where brothers Barry and Brian Power faced each other in an outstanding match of powerful intensity and measured control. The number of participants, quality of performances, standard of judging, and lack of serious injury attested to the adherence of principles outlined by the late Master Hidetaka Nishiyama. The tradition continues.....

Continued on page 3

## AAKF Member Spotlight: Joel Ertl and Anita Bendickson St. Paul, MN.



*Joel Ertl*

Joel Ertl and Anita Bendickson met at the Minneapolis dojo in 1979. Thirty-two years later, they remain partners in life and in karate, running Midwest Karate Association (MKA) of St. Paul. Joel and Anita were married in 1982 and had their only child, Meghan, in 1987. They are the current owners of Midwest Karate Association of St Paul, which they purchased from Sensei Robert Fusaro in 1992. Senseis Ertl and Bendickson have produced over a 100 black belts. Their dojo currently has over 120 current members and 42 active black belts with 11 ranked Sandan and above. Joel and Anita formed E/B Productions in 1990, and have sold their instructional DVDs all over the world, in more than twenty countries including India, South Africa, and Israel.

Joel started in 1973 at MKA St. Cloud when he was 15. He received his Shodan two years later. He became the instructor at MKA of St Cloud in 1976, the same year he received his Nidan under Sensei Nishiyama. He moved to St. Paul in 1979

to teach at MKA of St. Paul. Joel became the first Yondan in the North Central Region in 1985 and his Godan in 1995. He received his 6<sup>th</sup> Dan in 2004, making him the highest ranking black belt in the North Central Region besides Sensei Fusaro. Joel was recently elected as Regional Director of the AAKF North Central Region.

Anita started in 1975 as one of the first students in MKA St. Paul. She attained Shodan in 1979 under Sensei Nishiyama, and her Godan in 2005 from Sensei Nishiyama. She currently teaches karate, self-defense and yoga at Macalester College, and self-defense at the Universities of Minnesota and Wisconsin. She has made a series of self-defense DVDs with Mary Brandl, her teaching partner, as well as a beginning yoga DVD. Anita currently serves on the NCR Board of Governors as the MKA St. Paul representative.

Continued on page 3

## AAKF Member Spotlight Continued

Both Joel and Anita have had extensive careers as competitors. Sensei Ertl was AAKF national champion in team kumite in 1982, in individual kata in 1989, and in man-man enbu in 1997. He competed in Enbu in the world tournament in Italy in 2000 with Laura Ocampo.

Sensei Bendickson has also had distinguished tournament accomplishments, including representing the US in team kata competition in the 1983 ITKF World Championship in Egypt, and again in Italy in 2000. She was a member of the

Women's kata team that took eight first places in AAKF National Championships between 1983 and 2001. She also took first in kumite in 1984 and 1989 and in individual kata in 2001.

*Anita and Joel continue to sell their DVDs and teach at their Dojo in St. Paul, MN along with their daughter Meghan (Nidan). They may be reached at [office@karatevid.com](mailto:office@karatevid.com). Their websites are [www.mwkarate.com](http://www.mwkarate.com) (dojo) and [www.karatevid.com](http://www.karatevid.com) (E/B Productions)*



*Anita Bendickson*

## Current Events: 50<sup>th</sup> National Tournament Continued

The South Atlantic Region is known for their parties and this year was no exception as everyone moved into the banquet that evening following the competition. Bar-B-Q and dancing created a Southern atmosphere of joy and just plain fun! The banquet began with a solemn observance of the 1st AAKF Distinguished Service Award. Sensei Hidetaka Nishiyama and Ms. Aiko Torii were posthumous recipients of this special appreciation for their decades of devotion and significance to our organization. Interestingly, a single firefly suddenly appeared as their awards were being conferred leading some of us to feel it conveyed the spirit of these two very special lights in the history of the AAKF. Dean NeJame also received a SAR service award for his remarkable dedication to the needs of the region. After the award ceremonies and some delicious food, the band cranked up and the night turned to

dancing and laughter!

Sunday morning found the hotel lobby filled with luggage and hugging, smiles and laughter, and promises of reunification in Los Angeles next summer. The AAKF is vibrant and this special 50th Anniversary year was a perfect time to express the present, past, and future paths of the art which we all so enjoy. Commemorative Programs of the 50th Anniversary are available for a limited time for purchase at [nejame@att.net](mailto:nejame@att.net).

*Dr. Scott Wietecha, current Regional Director of the S. Atlantic region, holds the rank of Nidan and certifications in kata and kumite competition judging. He also serves on the AAKF Medical Committee. Dr. Wietecha has trained in JKA/Shotokan since 1995. He lives in Lexington, S.C. with his lovely wife Sally, his 3 wonderful children and 2 fabulous grandchildren.*



*Parade of athletes with Sensei Robert Fusaro giving opening address at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Traditional Karate Championship*

## Q &amp; A Continued

Sensei was supposed to stay in the US for 4 months. To my good fortune, he stayed for 6, then some more. If anyone had seen Sensei perform Unsu, they would never forget it. Years later at one of the camps, I think Mexico City, Joey Gayle was talking about that and we had just met. I said that I had one look at that kata and I was hooked. Joe also had one look and walked away from Tae Kwon Do. I asked him if he saw the "fire" and he said, "You saw that?" I said yes and he said, "I thought it was just me and maybe I was seeing things!" Joe was in New York and I was in LA at that time. I can't really say that I have ever seen a kata like it ever again---ever.

After training for several months with Nishiyama Sensei, alongside my friend, Master Sergeant Lee Edwards, I decided that it was more proper to change styles, and start all over as white belts under Nishiyama Sensei. Lee was also a shodan in wado and we both had started training under Nishiyama-san at the same time. He had been training in Okinawa at Ishinryu. He was 4<sup>th</sup> dan there and became Tatsuo Shimabuku's secretary. I had started first in a dojo line from a Sensei Kyan. Ishinryu was a down line of the same line. Wadoryu back then did not have kyu ranks, and one trained as a white belt until being told to take the *shodan* examination. At that time, Sensei had a kyu ranking system comprising of white, green, purple, and brown belts before progressing to black. I was not partial to purple because I thought that color was "feminine" and convinced Sensei to drop that intermediate color. We voted as a dojo about this and arrived at a basic system of white, green, brown, and black.

Though I first tested for shodan in 1963, I did not achieve rank until 1964. Sensei Fusaro also tested for nidan in 1963 and he didn't make it the first time either. It seemed that nobody passed

dan rank in 1963 other than Mr. Yabe. I remembered it succinctly because Mr. Yabe passed his nidan in the same month that President Kennedy was assassinated. 1963 was the year that the third AAKF Championship was held, where Mr. Yabe won kata and took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in kumite. I remembered seeing Sensei Richard Kim in the audience. At that time, Nishiyama Sensei refereed all the matches.

Over time, I've also come to understand how Sensei being born into a Samurai family has also taken on an inordinate level of significance in his teachings. He had a vision of martial arts training that evolved around budo, such that his teaching went beyond sheer techniques. Certainly, the political platforms never did go away. It is still very much alive today and benefits the vision of our organization.

**S:** *Nishiyama Sensei has sustained a strong and enduring following in the Pacific Northwest, long known to be an independent lot if nothing else. To what do you attribute this loyalty?*

**R:** I had to confess that it was largely my doing. Sensei arbitrarily divided AAKF into 14 governing regions in 1963 based on geography. I was appointed Regional Director of the Pacific Northwest, and over time, I have been fiercely loyal to Sensei, and my students are very much in tune with that. I did everything that Sensei told me, trained hard and gave spirit to everyone else. Though I also trained with Nakayama Sensei and Yaguchi Sensei, most of all I followed Sensei Nishiyama's path. Times were often tough financially, I eventually went bankrupt, picked up the pieces, reorganized the region, and then expanded to 5-6 dojos to the structure that we have today.

When the Pacific NW council was formed, it followed Sensei's vision of having the athletes taking charge of the organization. He often said that an organization often falls within one generation without its titular head due to loss of financial control. That was the reason why the Pacific Northwest developed a democratic administration on financial matters of our region. Visitors may be dismayed at the level of dispassionate arguments in our meetings, as Mr. Shimoji witnessed some time ago, but this is our way of exercising democracy without conspiracy. I encourage each region to take ownership of its organization such that members can share the growing pain and yet have a strong sense of belonging.

Continued on page 5



*Sensei Ron Vance, explaining the concepts of kumite timing during the National Seminar*

*"He had a vision of martial arts training that evolved around budo, such that his teaching went beyond sheer techniques."*

*Robert Graves*

*Brothers at arms (from left: Darrell and Brian Power, Central region) during the 50<sup>th</sup> National Championship*



## Q & A Continued

**S:** *What is your fondest memory of Sensei Nishiyama?*

**R:** Over the years, of course, there were many, many fond memories of Sensei. Some of the funniest moments came in the early days, when Sensei did not have a strong command of English or the American culture.

Sensei had the habit of being very physical with his students, because for him, the human body was just that, regardless of gender. When he taught at the Central dojo, he had the habit of using his finger to push on student's butt to reinforce the idea of "tailbone tuck". Though this usually was accepted by men, the training method often elicited squeals from his female students. One day, I took it upon myself to take Sensei aside and suggested that in the American culture, it would not be proper for women to be touched in that manner. Sensei looked puzzled for a short while, then he said "Ahhhhh, how about I use a small stick?"

These cultural misunderstandings often evolved into fond memories of a great man. It was a hell of a ride for this life's journey with Sensei.

**S:** *Looking to the future, what advice would you give to the young aspiring members of AAKF?*

**R:** One of my major concerns is that our

organization may be too in-grown in technical studies to the point that we ignore other styles of traditional martial arts training around us. Sensei kept reminding me and others that when he was young, he trained under Sensei Funakoshi, as well as Senseis Yamaguchi Gogan, Mabuni, Osaka. Sensei also came from a Samurai family with kendo background. I myself also had judo training under the renowned Sensei Ito of Kodokan. It was through his letter of introduction that I was able to get into my first karate dojo that was a descendant of the Kyan line of Okinawa.

I urge compassion and open-mindedness about what other people bring to the table. There are many "serious" techniques that our routine training does not touch on that may be worth a study. I remembered Sensei was open to that suggestion. It is often said that bunkai for each technique can have up to 7 levels of applications. We should strive to understand these levels.

I look upon the future as opportunities to explore novel ideas, thereby adding new perspective on the karate that we love. For me, I still favor the shotokan style as the most solid foundation that allows us to reaching out to other techniques and methods.



*"I look upon the future as opportunities to explore novel ideas, thereby adding new perspective on the karate that we love."*

*Robert Graves*

## Current Events: AAKF National Seminar

June 15-16, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia by Scott Wietecha, DDS

The South Atlantic Region hosted the AAKF National Camp, June 15-16, in Atlanta, Georgia. The instruction and training was directed by a highly experienced and talented group of senior AAKF instructors. The camp format comprised 30-minute segments by each of the instructors. In this way, a wide range of topics was covered in a highly efficient manner. Seventy-eight participants attended, representing 10 different regions from 14 states.

Day one began with an in-depth explanation of the fundamental principles regarding stance. Once stance concepts were clear in our minds, the training expanded into utilization of these principles in body dynamics, power, form and transitional movements. By utilizing multiple instructors, important concepts were delivered in a variety of ways. But, refreshingly, they all ultimately pointed back

to the simple physics of effective energy transfer. There is something so beautiful about the clear observance of simple truths. Our instructors did an excellent job in conveying this to us.

In the afternoon session, the participants broke into groups and the AAKF instructors and National Judges rotated among the groups providing individual guidance in kata performance. Where else can you get personal input from such a large group of competent karateka? What a privilege for those in attendance! The National Judges "sharpened" their eyes as they rotated about. Conversations about the finer aspects of kata performance filled the gym. Everyone benefited in such a comprehensive learning environment.

[Continued on page 6](#)



*"There is something so beautiful about the clear observance of simple truths."*

*Scott Wietecha*



## Current Events: National Camp Continued

The following day addressed kumite. The morning session began with a discussion regarding kicking, moved on to other attacking and blocking considerations, and eventually ended up in timing and strategy aspects of kumite. With the input of the senior AAKF instructors and multiple partner encounters, the concepts began to become incorporated into our techniques. The afternoon dovetailed into group kumite encounters with National Judges and Senior Instructors to solidify the standards of kumite performance and judging.

The camp ended on a positive note of camaraderie and learning. With the National Tournament to begin the following day, the judges and athletes were ready and focused for the

challenges ahead. The enjoyment of old and new friendships and the delivery of high quality traditional karate instruction were the prizes for those in attendance. Want to discover proper body connections? Try doing your kata on the balls of your feet! And, where else can you learn to move your energy sphere under your opponent to raise him up into a state of kyo? Those who missed the training will have other chances in the AAKF Instructor Camps throughout the year. No two camps are alike. Plan to catch them all to keep the passion alive! All of us in attendance offer a special thanks to Senseis Fusaro, Tabassi, Kanani, Tong, Cheah, Kageyama, Shimoji, and Vance. Your gift of time and instruction to us is much appreciated.



*Seizen during the National Seminar  
June 15-16, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia*



*Heian Nidan Study during the National Seminar  
June 15-16, 2011, Atlanta, Georgia*

Photo Gallery



*Minnesota Women Kata Team (from left: Meghan Ertl-Bendickson, Laurie Elliott, Jana Kramer)*



*Women's Individual Kogo competition (from left: Soolmaz Abooali, N. Atlantic region, Eiko Murato, Western region)*



*A lighter moment for the Southwest Region Enbu team (from left: Kerman Iriarte, Doug Ramsay)*

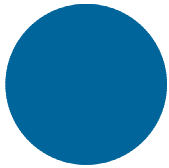
# 西山

**American Amateur  
Karate Federation**  
National Office  
445 S. Figueroa St.  
Suites 2600 & 2700  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

**Phone:**  
(888) 939-8882

**Fax:**  
(888) 939-8555

**E-Mail:**  
siezan@aakf.org



*We're on the Web!*

*See us at:*

**[www.aakf.org](http://www.aakf.org)**

*Become a fan of the American  
Amateur Karate Federation on  
**Facebook** and receive  
notices when the website is  
updated.*

## Results from the 50<sup>th</sup> National Championship

### **Kata Individual women**

1. Abooali, Soolmaz
2. Elliott, Laurie
3. Rinat, Shiri
4. Ertyl-bendickson, Meghan

### **Individual men**

1. Kajima, Taichiro
2. Wenner, Marcus
3. Power, Barry
4. Panic, Sasa

### **Synchronized, women**

1. MN (L. Elliott, M. ErtI-Bendickson, J. Kramer).

### **Synchronized, men**

1. MO (B. Power, B. Power, D. Power)
2. VA (L. Swift, B. Hays, M. O'Malley)
3. IL (J. Nacu, G. Fernandez, A. Fernandez)
4. MN (J. Hodapp, A. Kotula, D. Olsen)

### **Kogo/Kumite Individual women**

1. Rinat, Shiri
2. Elliott, Laurie
3. Aboolai, Soolmaz
4. Murata, Eiko

### **Individual men**

1. Power, Brian
2. Power, Barry
3. Panic, Sasa
4. Swift, Larry

### **Team, men**

1. MO (D. Power, Ba. Power, Br. Power, S. Huchzermeier)
2. CA (N. Salcedo, T. Kajjima, K. Kroczewski)
3. TX (K. Iriarte, M. Wenner, A. Antonio)
4. VA (B. Hays, M. O'Malley, L. Swift, R. Stadnyk)

### **Fuku-go Men**

1. Power, Barry
2. Kajjima, Taichiro
3. Panic, Sasa
4. Salcedo, Nick

### **Women**

1. Abooali, Soolmaz
2. Elliott, Laurie
3. Rinat, Shiri
4. Krishnan, Anjali

### **Enbu, woman/man**

1. VA (S. Abooali, B. Hays)

### **Enbu, man/man**

1. MO (Br. Power, D. Power)
2. VA (L. Swift, B. Hays)
3. TX (D. Ramsey, K. Iriarte)
4. MD (R. Stadnyk, II Stadnyk)

## Upcoming Events:

**Nov. 12-13, 2011**

AAKF National Masters Seminar, N. Atlantic region; Southhampton, NY (subject to change).

**Nov. 25-26, 2011**

*al XVI Torneo Panamericano de Karate Tradicional* / XVI Pan-American Traditional Karate-Do Championship, Gimnasio Club Palestino, Santiago, Chile (subject to change).