

SEIZAN®

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Editorial: Americanism and AAKF

Each member of the American Amateur Karate Federation is bestowed with the dual heritages of Americanism, and *Budo* as learned from Nishiyama Sensei. For this member, it means upholding the concepts of freedom, justice, and pursuit of happiness per US Constitution, and to seek perfection of character according to *Budo* principles. AAKF Executive Board subscribes to the tenet that each member has ownership of our organization, and has worked hard to inculcate a democratic policy-making process, transparency and engaging our membership at large.

You will be receiving from the AAKF Executive Board of Directors a semi-annual report that summarizes recent accomplishments in the first part of 2012. A

highlight was the presentation of the 2012 "Distinguished Service Award" to Sensei Robert Fusaro. Apart from his decades of service, Sensei Fusaro has come to symbolize the true meaning of traditional karate and AAKF. *Seizan* heartily applauds Mr. Fusaro for this well-deserved and overdue recognition.

Seizan also welcomes our new 2012 club and individual members, and the recently formed Eligible Style Organization (ESO), *Seizan-kai* US (SKUS). *Seizan-kai* US is an inclusive US national style organization and its members are eligible for ranking and other qualification certifications by SKUS. The membership of SKUS is free of charge and open to all.

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All's Well That Ends Well: 51st AAKF National Championships

Los Angeles, June, 2012

By Taichiro Kaijima



"I don't think we can" - I almost said it in 2010 when the AAKF Board of Directors asked me if Western Region can host the Nationals in 2012. Last time our region hosted the Nationals was 2006; Sensei Nishiyama was still well and active, and we pulled it off under the leadership of Albert Cheah. This time around it was a completely different situation; no Sensei Nishiyama, and Albert was unavailable due to a busy business schedule and family commitments. To be honest our region probably was the most incoherent in the AAKF - partly due to geographical challenge and partly because of some members' strong personalities. I doubted if we were going to be able to pull it off this time.

Fortunately we had Ron Vance as the regional director. He took this challenge with a true spirit of *Budo*. He decided to use this

as an opportunity to bring us together; we held numerous regional seminars and facilitated better communications among members. Slowly but surely the preparation had began. We were never able to recruit dozens of people to volunteer for the tournament organizing committee, but we did find a few core members who were strongly dedicated. Web programming (online registration), designing (T-shirt, events program), food and drink (snack bar, banquet), etc.; each of us had special talent or strength. Ron assigned a specific task to each of us in a way we can contribute with the best of our capability and with the least stress. You're right, "the maximum effect with the minimum effort" is one of the key elements of traditional karate Sensei Nishiyama taught us!

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Mid-Atlantic Region Perspectives: 2012 AAKF National Camp & Championships

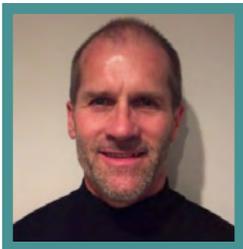
By Donna Lee, MD, Mid-Atlantic Region



Donna Lee



Donna Lee is an Internal Medicine physician with the Mid Atlantic Permanente Medical Group. She trains under Sensei Mahmoud Tabassi in Virginia.



Al Kotula



Al Kotula started karate training in the 1960s and teaching karate in high school operating a dojo and two college clubs for several years. In the early 1970s he started training under Sensei Robert Fusaro.

The 51st AAKF National Championships and 2nd Youth Nationals were hosted this year by the Western Region in Los Angeles, California, with a total of 100 participating athletes from eight regions of the United States. This year, two new events were added to the Championship: men's *kogo* and women's *kumite*. Each athlete worked long and hard and dedicated many hours of training to arrive here. This would be their opportunity to compete to be the best. More importantly, this was their chance to test their own physical and mental ability and strive for the highest standards of karate and *Budo* principles. Ultimately it is not the act of winning or losing but rather perfection of character that is vital. This year's competition continued to be highly spirited and showcased the highest technical skills of the best athletes around the nation.

Senseis Robert Fusaro, Mahmoud Tabassi, Alex Tong, Falah Kanani, Richard Kageyama, and Albert Cheah led the camp instructions with Sensei Funakoshi and Sensei Nishiyama looking down in spirit. The first day of the training camp focused on *kata*. Sensei Fusaro led the morning off talking about proper structure. Alignment of the joints particularly the hip, knee, and ankle is needed for stability and balance during *kata*. The connection of the lower body to the floor is important in generating power. Sensei Tabassi focused on form and stance. Proper stance and tension in the muscles, whether it is inside tension or outside tension is needed to sustain connection to the floor, and

generate the continual energy to flow forward into the technique being performed. Structure, form, and connection to the floor all need to be present to transfer energy outward the target.

Sensei Tong worked with *Sochin* and *Nijushiho*, breaking down the first 3 steps of each *kata*. His focus was on using stance pressure to sustain continuity. Sensei Kanani discussed accuracy of target during *kata* performance, where precision and intent are important focuses. *Kata* done properly can help one with *kumite*. In the second half of the day, every participant got to either perform or judge *kata*. *Kata* was evaluated on form, transition, power, and body dynamics. Each *karateka* had the opportunity to do their *kata* in front of three different panels of judges, giving them an optimal chance to receive pointers and loosen up before competition. Further, the judges had the opportunity to increase their experience as they reviewed competitors' *katas* and provided feedback. It was an organized system that allowed both judges and athletes to work together and learn from and support one another. By the end of the day every person had something to work on physically and/or mentally. This type of feedback was invaluable. Judging was also done for *kitei*, a compulsory *kata*, which must be performed precisely and without individual variations: stance, level of punches, hand positions must be on target to avoid deductions.

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Mid-West Region Perspectives: 51st AAKF National Championships

By Al Kotula, Mid-West Region

Thirteen members of the Midwest North Central Region karate team traveled to Los Angeles to attend the 51st AAKF National Championships. Led by Sensei Fusaro, everyone was optimistic about whom they would meet, what the competition would be like, and what they would learn about karate, themselves, and life in general.

As I entered the registration room in the dormitory area at Loyola Marymount University, I noted the freshly printed tournament brochure. While waiting to confirm my competition events and judges' training, I landed upon the page starting with the 1976 Philadelphia tournament. I zoned out momentarily and drifted back to that time and place. I was a young black belt, training since the late 1960's, and had made the trip

to Philadelphia to represent my region in *kumite* and *kata*. I only lasted into the second round but remembered it opening my eyes to a larger vision of martial arts. I had the opportunity to train with and listen to the Japanese masters of that time, performed kicks, punches, and *kata* to a point of exhaustion, and witnessed the champion, Tanaka, fight Evans in an explosive exhibition match. I brought home stories and ideas to share at my small town dojo and college clubs. Would young athletes get so absorbed into karate that they trained, saved, and traveled just to improve their skills so slightly ever again? Would karate ever get any better than these 'good old days'? I was not sure it ever could.

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Editorial: Americanism and AAKF Continued

Many of you may also be aware of the outstanding financial matters with the International Traditional Karate Federation (ITKF), which stemmed from separation of the two organizations' offices in 2008. Seizan understands that the Executive Board of AAKF has, and will continue to seek good faith avenues towards bringing these issues to a meaningful end. The AAKF Executive Board pledges to seek final solutions that preserve the interests of our members without sacrificing the identity of AAKF. Our organization is mindful that the age of

colonialism is long past and will resist any attempts of veiled assimilation.

On a parallel note, this issue of Seizan celebrates the strengthening of AAKF's national identity. The National Seminar held in Wilwaukee, WI, this spring, as well as the June National Seminar and 51st National Championship in Los Angeles, CA, was met with unsurpassed support. Our organization is clearly thriving by the day.

Alex Tong
General Editor



*The AAKF Executive Board
pledges to seek final
solutions that preserve the
interests of our members
without sacrificing the
identity of AAKF.*



Great Lakes Region Perspectives: AAKF Spring National Seminar

By Vassil Peytchev
Director, AAKF Great Lakes Region

The AAKF Great Lakes Region was proud to host the 2012 AAKF Spring National Seminar, presented by members of the AAKF Technical Board. The gracious hosts from the Shotokan Karate Association Wisconsin club in Milwaukee, led by club director Dr. Ravi, provided a wonderful venue for the trainings, which took place on April 27, 28, and 29. The big bright gym with a nice clean wooden floor set the stage for fifteen hours of workout on the fundamentals of traditional karate as relate to *kata* and *kumite*. The opportunity to meet new and old friends from the region and from all over the country added to the enjoyment of this great training event.

We would like to thank Sensei Robert Fusaro, Chair of the AAKF Technical Board, and the members of the Board, Sensei Mahmoud Tabassi, Sensei Alex Tong, Sensei Albert Cheah, and Sensei Richard Kageyama for the engaging and informative instructions, which left a deep impression on the seminar participants. Several of the participants have shared their perspective of the event, and it is clear that lessons learned will stay with us for a long time in our training. An essential part of training for all of us to renew our understanding and appreciation of traditional karate and its connection to *Budo* as developed and passed on to us by Master Nishiyama and his students.



*Sensei Vassil Peytchev,
performing Nijushiho at
the seminar during AAKF
National Seminar.*



Perspectives: Traditional Karate from Chicago to Milwaukee

By Denise Nacu, Sandan
Enso Shotokan Karate

As perhaps many of us have realized at some point, karate training is never finished. I was reminded of this tenet, upon participating in the AAKF Spring National Seminar recently. The beauty of karate training, I think, is in experiencing the layers of meaning and complexity that reveal themselves with deeper practice and study. Even the basic stances and punches that we first practiced as white belts become novel once again with guidance from senior instructors. *Zenkutsu-dachi*, for example, is not merely a matter of bending the front knee and keeping the back leg straight. As our seminar instructors emphasized, it involves a number of components such as floor pressure, compression, and proper alignment. For me, the seminars provided a wonderful opportunity to return to fundamentals and gain valuable insights to

integrate into my training and teaching. The technical knowledge was excellent and informative regarding the physical aspects of training. The experience itself renewed my belief in keeping a humble attitude and a "beginners mind."

We were happy to bring fifteen members of our dojo in Chicago to the three days of training in Milwaukee. Our students enjoyed the chance to learn from the many Senseis who presented their lessons and gave us feedbacks to improve. In addition to the notes scribbled into notebooks between sessions, we came home with new friendships too. We wish to thank Dr. Ravi for hosting the event, and express our gratitude to the AAKF sensei for their instruction.



*Denise Nacu
performing kata at the
AAKF National Seminar*



All's Well That Ends Well Continued

By Taichiro Kaijima



Contestants of the 51st AAKF Junior National Championships



Al Kotula received his Shodan from Sensei Nakayama in 1974 with subsequent ranks through Godan from Sensei Nishiyama.



Mid-West Region Athletes at the 51st National Championships help in Los Angeles, June 2012.

The day of the tournament arrived. Children's competition went amazingly smoothly despite having more participants than expected. It even finished within the scheduled time frame! The opening ceremony went beautifully. Adults' competition ran smoothly too, with no major accidents or serious injuries. It was in general a very positive atmosphere and we received tons of "thank you" from so many participants. Did you see how relaxed Ron looked at the banquet, listening to his favorite band? As you've seen he lost all his hair from the stress, but it was worth all the efforts, I'm sure. We thank the AAKF for giving us this great opportunity. We may still be an incoherent region, but we proved that

we could get the job done. Please visit our regional website with over a thousand pictures from the events (<http://www.aakfwesternregion.com>; link to the photo album on the bottom left).

Born in Japan, Taichiro started karate training at the age of 15 at JKA Headquarters, Tokyo and received Shodan at 18. He moved to Los Angeles in 1993 and continued training under Master Nishiyama until his passing in 2008, receiving Yondan in 2005. Taichiro currently serves as Chief Instructor of Valley Traditional Karate and continues training and teaching at the National Karate Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

Mid-West Region Perspectives Continued

By Al Kotula

I was wrong. Upon entering the gym at Loyola the next morning, seminars were getting started and information poured forth from several instructors and training partners. In the warm ups, a young *karateka* illustrated kicking with arms out front, in close, to help connect your abdomen. Senseis Fusaro, Tabassi, Cheah, Kagayema, Tong, and Kanani emphasized connection to the floor, pulling your opponent, breaking their rhythm, and relaxation to create more speed and force. Age can be a benefit if you can read and make your opponent react, and capitalize on their mistakes. Much, much more was covered over the next two days, followed by two additional days of excellent karate competition and more learning.

Did others from the Midwest share my thoughts about the camp and tournament? Jon Hodapp noted, "More speed and positive pressure...dancing with the opponent while sparring". Dennis Olson explained his key point of "Take control of the *kata* by relaxing and saving your energy for the end of the technique". Laurie Elliott has competed many times and yet observed "Great friendships are made in the heat of the battle. You bond over the common experience of competition." One younger Midwest competitor, Sean Sullivan, exclaimed, "Think of every *kata* as your last and treat it as if it is your final chance to blow the minds of the audience, judges, and other competitors." Jon Rosenau, looking ahead also reflected, "Competing at this level, I will

need to focus on increasing my speed and explosiveness." The Le family of Mitch, Cassi, and Trong competed, judged and gained karate insights.

Judge Amy Sperling said, "Judging is very difficult. I need to practice on breathing with the contestants when being center judge." Art Wong sees judging as a new challenge even though experienced, "You can learn rules and hear judging ideas but to execute those items with your eyes and muscle reaction takes years to develop." The funniest comment, with much truth, was from Keith Sullivan, "Keeping my connections during my transitions during my *kata* and..... I also learned Barry Power can hit like a mule."

Example after example of each Midwest student reflected favorably upon the 51st AAKF Traditional Karate National Championships. All indicated our traditional karate today continues to develop and improve well beyond those good old days. Our sincere thanks to the Western Region for a great event!

Al co-teaches at the Lakeville, MN club and assists North Central Regional Director Sensei Ertl and Technical Committee Chair, Sensei Fusaro, in regional affairs. Today Al resides in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, works at Northern Tool & Equipment, and periodically teaches business courses as an adjunct professor.



Mid-Atlantic Region Perspectives Continued

By Donna Lee, MD



Ms. Maile Nacu, age 7, of Enso Traditional Karate, Chicago, IL, competing at the Junior National Championship.

The last session of the day involved learning a choreographed fight, *enbu*. An *enbu* routine must encompass a straight punch, a front kick, a round-house kick, and a back kick. Sensei Tabassi taught a short *enbu* where everyone either had the opportunity to perform or judge. Sensei Tabassi emphasized that the exchanges should communicate energy and realism. Each attack must be completed and blocked.

The second day of the camp focused on *kumite*. Sensei Fusaro started off with an overall discussion about technique. Body dynamics, power, form, and transition all need to be present. The upper body should be connected to the lower half. All muscle groups have to work together to press to the floor so that energy can be generated and projected forward, while breathing and movement of the diaphragm needs to occur properly. Sensei Tabassi applied the above within the context of distance. Significant

contact is prohibited but the punch needs to be close enough that if the target were actually hit, the force would penetrate the target. If a punch falls short of this, it is a dead punch. Sensei Tabassi also noted that one must keep their "engine running" and be ready at all times. He emphasized learning to move or "dance" with one's opponent rather than "self-dancing". Once this is achieved, effectively implementing strategy – another key element in *kumite* – becomes more feasible. Senseis Cheah and Kageyama followed up on the concept of strategy by working on the finer aspects of *sen* and *go-no sen*.

The final afternoon of the camp focused on judging training, reviewing flag systems, and concluded with *kumite* and *kogo* matches. The entire camp experience and structure was filled with great instruction, practice, and camaraderie that together prepared us further for the Championships.

Student Perspectives: AAKF Spring National Seminar

By Aditya Medicherla

Madison Japanese Karate Club



Aditya Medicherla (green belt, third from left), listening to an explanation given by Sensei Albert Chea

It was the first time I attended a National Seminar. Being fairly new to Karate I had no idea what to expect. Looking at the instructor roster, I was intimidated by the level of experience that was at the table. I expected the agenda to be advanced and beyond my level of comprehension. The opportunity to meet and greet members of the national team and watch them perform was probably the only attraction that made me participate. However, once I was at the seminar I realized I was wrong. The entire seminar was about basic concepts that karate-ka of all levels could benefit from.

Each day started off with a basic warm up, after which each sensei took turns in addressing us as a group and delivering their perspective on the most basic but nonetheless important aspects of karate namely, Form, Body Dynamics, Power and Transition. Day one focused on applying these concepts to *kata*, whereas day two was applying these to *kumite*. Both days were filled with a variety of individual and partnered exercises. These exercises facilitated the understanding of these concepts at an internal level and we actually came to realize how they work externally. My favorite part of the three days of training was the Q&A sessions on day two, when we

divided up into smaller group and were allowed to interact with each sensei. This was a very good opportunity to benefit from others' understanding of what was being taught. Having participated in more than twelve grueling hours of training over three days, the AAKF Spring National Seminar in Milwaukee gave me a new perspective in training. Prior to the seminar, I always preferred *kumite* to *kata*. After the seminar, I realized that a balance had to be maintained between the two. *Kata* allows the practice of basic techniques keeping the aforementioned concepts in mind. It does not involve the anxiety and pressure of *kumite* that results in subpar techniques. The more one practices *kata* with these concepts in mind, the easier it becomes to apply them in *kumite*, resulting in effective techniques under pressure.

Overall, it was a great learning experience. Getting a chance to meet other *karateka* and gaining from their perspective was priceless. I left with a sense of accomplishment and returned to training with a newfound energy and excitement. I consider having such an experience at the beginning of my Karate training highly advantageous and I hope I can effectively inculcate what I learned into my training.



Picture: Ms. Labouret (purple belt, left front) listening to instruction during the seminar



AAKF 51th Nationals Final Results

Sanctioned by American Amateur Karate Federation
Hosted by AAKF Western Region and National Karate Institute
June 15-16, 2012



51st National Traditional Karate Championship

Women's Individual Kata

1. Abooali, Soolmaz (MA)
2. Elliott, Laurie (NC)
3. Rinat, Shiri (W)
4. Nacu, Denise (GL)

Men's Individual Kata

1. Kaijima, Taichiro (W)
2. Wenner, Marcus (SW)
3. Panic, Sasa (SA)
4. Power, Barry (C)

Women's Synchronized Kata

1. MN: Laurie Elliott, Meghan Ertl-Bendickson, Cassie Le
2. TX: Andrea Keidel, Elena Liskova, Bertha Rodriguez

Men's Synchronized Kata

1. MA: Bryan Hays, Michael O'Malley, Nicholas Swift
2. MN: Al Kotula, Jonathan Hodapp, Dennis Olson
3. IL: Jay Nacu, Gerardo Fernandez, William Bates

Man/Woman Enbu

1. VA: Soolmaz Abooali, Bryan Hays
2. MN: Laurie Elliott, Mitchell Le
3. TX: Andrea Keidel, Marcus Wenner

Man/Man Enbu

1. VA: Bryan Hays, Michael O'Malley

Women's Fuku-Go

1. Abooali, Soolmaz (MA)
2. Elliott, Laurie (NC)
3. Rokah, Ruth (W)

Men's Fuku-Go

1. Kaijima, Taichiro (W)
2. Wenner, Marcus (SW)
3. Power, Barry (C)
4. Panic, Sasa (SA)

Women's Ko-Go

1. Abooali, Soolmaz (MA)
2. Elliott, Laurie (NC)
3. Lee, Victoria (SW)

Men's Ko-Go

1. Power, Darrell (C)
2. Wenner, Marcus (SW)
3. Kaijima, Taichiro (W)
4. Hays, Bryan (MA)

Women's Individual Kumite

1. Abooali, Soolmaz (MA)
2. Keidel, Andrea (SW)
3. Rokah, Ruth (W)

Men's Individual Kumite

1. Power, Barry (C)
2. Power, Darrell (C)
3. Panic, Sasa (SA)

State Team Kumite

1. CA: Assaf Dekel, Robert Dobes, Kamil Kroczewski, Joerg Kohring
2. MO: Darrell Power, Barry Power, Sean Huchzermeier
3. IL: Jay Nacu, Vincent Chung, William Bates, Gerardo Fernandez
4. MN: Jonathan Hodapp, Mitchell Le, Keith Sullivan, Jon Rosenau



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Photographs

published courtesy of:

Juan Balmaceda, Janet Hethorn, Al Kotula, and Vassil Peytchev

Judges Examination Results

Congratulations to All

	Kata	Kumite
Mr. Juan Carlos Balmaceda	(D)	(D)
Ms. Laurie Elliott	(D)	-
Mr. Al Kotula	(D)	(D)
Mr. Ken Mitchel	(D)	-
Mr. Vassil Peytchev	(D)	(D)
Mr. Gene Price	(D)	(D)
Ms. Amy Sperling	(C)	(C)

Dan Examination Results

Congratulations to All

Juan Carlos Balmaceda	Yon (4 th) Dan
Steven Wong	Sho (1 st) Dan
Ryan Lam	Sho (1 st) Dan

AAKF National Traditional Karate Championship Judges

Chief Arbitrator and Chief Judge

Robert Fusaro

Vice Arbitrator and Vice Chief Judge

Mahmoud Tabassi

Medical Judges

Phil Smith
Ken Mitchell

Judges

Juan Balmaceda
John Bell
Albert Cheah
Tati Eugenio
Janet Hethorn
John Hyatt
Richard Kageyama
Falah Kanani
Trung Le
Vassil Peytchev
Gene Price
Amy Sperling
Alex Tong
Susan Vance
Brad Webb
Art Wong



*Stellar competitors from San Diego
(Sensei Juan Balmaceda's dojo)*