



Wonderful Holiday in New Zealand ... Once again

During the NZAF Annual Gasshuku held in Auckland during the month of March, I was informed of a further seminar with both Sawada Shihan and Takase Shihan was to take place in Tauranga, at the end of June.

I wanted so much to try and attend the June seminar as I truly enjoyed the first time I had met and trained with both Shihan at the 35th Anniversary of the NZAF which was held in 2005 where I was also given the opportunity to meet Doshu.

Last year in March after the 37th National Annual Gasshuku, I was able to visit Alan Wade Sensei and his students in Gisborne where we covered many techniques during the class. After class we even discussed the correlation between aikido and the triangular shape of wedges and the circular nature of a pint of Guinness... definitely great moments and I thank you very much Alan!

Takase Shihan once again extended an invitation to the Aikido practitioners from New Caledonia to join Shinryukan New Zealand at the Winter Gasshuku to be held in June, but I had two possibly three major problems:

- 1 – A very important meeting with fellow Aikido federations within NC was scheduled to discuss the future of NC Aikido with the French federation.
- 2 – It was our family's anniversary of emigrating to NC, which is also a very important occasion.
- 3 – My travel schedule for 2008 was already looking rather booked up with trips to Auckland in March, Japan in October, could I really expect to squeeze in yet another trip to New Zealand in June?

Thankfully fate was to prove too powerful to resist as the dates of the meeting had changed and I was able to convince my lovely and very understanding wife Colette of the importance of the June Winter Gasshuku... Incredible! Now, there was no reason why not to enjoy the winter weather in New Zealand for several days.

In NC, it is currently 24 ° C to 29 ° C during the day... Yes, we are also in the winter with our members enjoying our last seminar only one week ago in a place called Bourail, a beautiful beach 160 kms north of Noumea. The seminar on the beach ended with "shihonage" in the water of the Bay of Turtles (Bourail)



A full day of training and fun with Sawada Shihan leads well into the evening during the winter gasshuku.



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Before coming to the winter gasshuku I asked Takase Shihan if I could accompany him to Christchurch for their grading and seminar... I also wanted to visit friends of the South Island, made on the tatami in Auckland and Noumea!

On numerous occasions I have been fortunate enough to kindly receive invitations to visit the South Island and enjoy training with the Shinryukan contingent lead Andrew Williamson Sensei. Each year we invite Takase Shihan to NC as our guest instructor for our Annual National Gasshuku. This is the 4th consecutive year since 2005 we have enjoyed his tuition and the Shinryukan members that have also traveled to NC to participate in our events.

Several days before the Christchurch examinations were to be held I gratefully accepted Kevin Allen Sensei's invitation to stay at his home with him and his lovely wife Debbie. I managed to visit sightseeing spots around Christchurch, the coastline and the surrounding mountains.

While training in Auckland during the Annual Gasshuku's I have always enjoyed training with Andrew Williamson Sensei, which has come with several surprises in the past... This time around Andrew Sensei kindly offered me to teach for two hours!! In recognition of my 20th anniversary in Aikido! Interesting first experience! Thank you Andrew ... Come to Noumea please!



Andrew Sensei enjoying the moment as uke.

Another reason that I came to Christchurch to practice was in order to be ready for the Seminar of Tauranga. I was given the opportunity to lead the class in Kevin Allen Sensei's dojo the Thursday evening before and my legs and buttocks were frozen as hard as stone! So I thought to myself that I had better practice as much as possible before reaching Tauranga.

Sunday examinations began and to my surprise Takase Shihan arrived having only just landed and began immediately to grade the students a total of 63 of them eagerly awaiting their turn. Even with only 5 minutes break at 12.30 ... The examination process was completed no earlier than 3:30pm. The room temperature could have been no more than 10 or 12 ° C and I was literally frozen with my sweater, jacket and socks on, but I was amazed to see the Christchurch Sensei and senior grades sitting in seiza the entire time.

Takase Shihan left shortly after the examinations as the day before he was in Tauranga for their examinations as well as further examinations in the coming weeks. Interesting enough he did not seem tired or even a little frozen...strange!

The experience in Christchurch was fantastic training with the members and even simply observing the students enthusiasm on the mats.

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The next stop for me was Auckland; although the weather and temperature was cold I was thoroughly enjoying being on the tatami and training with new and old friends!

The city of Auckland reminds me of Toulouse in the south of France when I was a student in high school. The city was constantly alive with the many university students throughout the city centre. Every time I attend the NZ Gasshuku's in March, I stroll a few hours in the religious pilgrimage of family shopping and of course to verify that the Guinness is still its usual top quality! But beware... No Guinness in New Caledonia! When you come try tasting No.1!

I honestly envy Auckland Shinryukan members as they have access to a Sensei whom I consider to be very talented Aikidoka and of course that person is Takase Shihan, the Technical Director of Aikido Shinryukan New Zealand and the NZAF. The immense enjoyment I receive from learning from Takase Shihan and training with the members at Hombu Dojo in Auckland I can only describe as simply loving every moment of being there! Even if my friend Simon is currently in the UK for now.

I was given an even bigger surprise while I was there as Takase Shihan proposed that I take his lesson, this was not only a surprise but a great honor... I was a little nervous too! Let alone having a great time.

Friday finally arrived and the dojo mats were loaded onto a truck and was sent off heading in the direction of Tauranga, we headed towards the airport to greet Sawada Shihan and his wife Kimiko Sawada who were also accompanied by Aaron, Chie san and Kouketsu san all yudasha from Kimori dojo.

Arriving in Tauranga 3 hours later we began placing the mats down and eventually located our accommodation along a mountain road next to a river. During the evening and leading up to dinnertime more arrivals from throughout NZ joined us next to a wonderful wood fire... the atmosphere was fantastic and of course brisk. During the evening we light candles and though the night was chilly there was much laughter and in the morning it was breakfast with everyone in front of the wood fire again. Truly magnificent!!

Throughout the seminar we were always studying many important principles from Sawada Shihan and Takase Shihan not only during Taijutsu and weapons practice. We also covered techniques on how to prepare the mind and keep the body and brain vitalized for long periods of time! Never easy, but very interesting to try and do.

After returning the tatami to the truck and the last lunch on Sunday we all enjoyed the wonderful hot baths at Manganui! Such a beautiful beach it reminds me of March 2007 when my wife Colette and I visited this part of the North Island after the 37th National Gasshuku.



Takase Shihan emphasising precision and control.

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A would like to say a big thank you to all Tauranga practitioners and the members from the surrounding areas that have organized a wonderful Winter Gasshuku... congratulations very well done!

Thanks also to Andrew and Irene, Kevin and Debbie, Shane and Maria and the students from the South. I would never forget Takase Shihan's assistance to New Caledonia in helping Aikido to grow in NC while developing friendship on and off the tatami between New Zealand and NC. Thank you Billy and Colin too, you have traveled many kilometers for our rendezvous in Japanese restaurants, some very good hours between friends.

Many thanks also to Sawada Sensei and his students, I would like to visit Kimori Dojo someday soon. To Takase Shihan once again...

"Thank you for your constant support and inspiration to NC members and myself".

I hope you all can come to New Caledonia this year or the next, as you are all welcome anytime. I also hope that our practitioners in NC will increasingly come in numbers to your Gasshuku's summer or winter.

"Never stop studying to try to move forward ... There is no other possibility".

See you all again very soon and remember NZ is only 2 hours away from beautiful Noumea.



Chie Naru - Kimiko Sawada - Yuuichirou Kouketsu
Lydia Coulon - Nobuo Takase Shihan - Toshiharu Sawada Shihan - Marc Cessio Sensei

by Marc Cessio 28/06/2008