



38th National Annual Gasshuku - March'08

by Sibon Li

I had little expectation walking into my first ever Gasshuku. Though I was an observer the last time Masuda-Shihan was teaching in Auckland, I was merely months into my Aikido training and knew that I would not have fully appreciated his lessons.

As training began, I soon realised that my thoughts weren't unfounded. Masuda-Shihan displayed great knowledge of Aikido which was evident in the precision of his techniques.

Every movement he made seemed to be carefully calculated towards perfection.

It was remarkable to see a man of his age and size move larger and stronger opponents with great ease, not to mention take break falls better than many of us. His energy and sense of humour kept liveliness amongst the crowds, maintaining interest towards his teachings.



Masuda Shihan & Kevin Allen Sensei

In addition to Masuda-Shihan, we were treated to a wide range of styles and techniques from local instructors. Enthusiastic participants contributed to a great training atmosphere and made the event enjoyable.



Masuda Shihan totally relaxed while performing Rippo

This Gasshuku was a great learning experience and has made me understand and appreciate previously unfamiliar concepts in Aikido.

We look forward to seeing Masuda-Shihan and everyone together again next year.

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38th National Annual Gasshuku - continued

by Sarah Baker

The 38th Annual Gasshuku recently took place in Auckland March 8 - 11 2008. Aikidoists from all over New Zealand came to learn from Masuda Shihan.

In addition to the many New Zealanders training we also had a large contingent of Aikidoists from Noumea, New Caledonia who came with their instructor – Marc Cessio. As well as Masuda Shihan's teaching senior instructors from around New Zealand also instructed.

The gasshuku took place over four days. Masuda Shihan has a light hearted teaching style and the gasshuku was relaxed and informative. He emphasised precision in technique and application to all levels which was useful for junior and senior members alike.

Of course gasshuku's do not simply happen and much planning goes into the event. This year it is thanks to the members of the Aikikai Committee and the other people who helped make this event work so well.

A national gasshuku would not be complete without the social events that bring together keen practitioners from around the country.

For many of us it was an opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new ones. The Saturday night dinner and training and other festivities were well worth the year long wait.



Masuda Shihan explaining a variation of Rippo



38th National Annual Gasshuku - continued

by James McNeill

I still enjoy my normal weekly classes, but, the more classes the better, and there aren't many chances to do more classes that at the national gasshuku... four days with nothing but aikido and aikido related socialising... four days away from the family in a different city... four days of being lost and confused... four days without sleeping or eating properly... four days of drinking too much and still making all the classes!

That sets the scene for what I was expecting, heading up from Christchurch, for my second national gasshuku in Auckland. Even as a relative newbie, it's great to see so many familiar and friendly faces.

The guest sensei was Masuda Shihan from Honbu dojo in Japan - a great technician and teacher with over 50 years Aikido experience, and a direct student of O'Sensei. I always enjoy the chance to train with him, even if his classes seem more subtle and more confusing than some!

We're a lucky bunch in Christchurch, and Masuda Shihan had just spent a very relaxed month with us, teaching a few classes each week – when the golf course was closed! He had warned us that he would have on a sterner face in Auckland, but this didn't happen, he was happy to keep a mellow pace, suitable for all levels. Even when we were being gentle he would constantly remind us "MORE GENTLE!" emphasising position and lines of movement over strength. This, of course, seems a lot harder and more confusing that it should be, but the few times things worked were awesome!

The other instructors, Takase Shihan, Andrew Williamson Sensei, and Alan Wade Sensei, all seemed to follow the mellow lead of Masuda Shihan – probably because he was often watching from the sidelines. This seemed to suit the number of people on the mat (there was a good turn out each day) and the hot Auckland weather (at least it was hot by Christchurch standards).



Masuda Shihan
demonstrating Tanto Tori Shomen Uchi Gokyo



AIKIDO SHINRYUKAN

OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AIKIKAI WORLD HEADQUARTERS, TOKYO JAPAN

For me, the benefits of the national seminar aren't related to the specific techniques that were taught by each instructor – so I won't give you a breakdown of the classes – instead the benefit comes from:



Masuda Shihan demonstrating Tanto Tori Yokomen Uchi Gokyo

- 1. training with people that I'm not used to*
- 2. looking at techniques from the point of view of different instructors*
- 3. and by focusing on aikido for four days*

It's this combination that can really shake up your aikido - unfortunately not magically making it better, but instead hinting at what's to come later on.

In addition to the training we had plenty of chances to socialise off the mat. Lunches at the nearby foodcourts provided familiar food and a chance to mingle between tables - while searching for a decent coffee. The malls are also a handy place to buy toy helicopters for the motel room and to find out where people would be drinking that night.

I would like to send thanks to following: Masuda Shihan and his wife for spending time in New Zealand with us also to;

Takase Shihan for hosting the gasshuku, along with the numerous Auckland contingent that worked hard to make it happen and to;

The Wellington crowd for socialising at the Howick Motor Lodge, and finally to;

Those that travelled from New Caledonia and made their gasshuku seem so appealing!

I'm already looking forward to next year, I hope to see plenty of you there!



Masuda Shihan
Is always at his best during a seminar.

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