



## 39th National Annual Gasshuku 2009

by Kerry Castell - Spence

It comes around once a year and we all look forward to the annual Gasshuku. This year we were lucky enough to have Hayato Osawa Shihan come to demonstrate and instruct us for the two days of training.

Gasshuku are a great opportunity for us to see the technical direction that Takase Shihan is taking us in developing Aikido in New Zealand.

It is also a great way for us to see how other Sensei throughout the country are training and how they are developing what Sensei shows us and what they have learned and developed through their years of experience.

Alan Wade Sensei gave us a class in Weapons and clearly demonstrated how the Ken relates to Shihonage and how through weapons training we can develop our empty handed technique.

Added to this and Osawa Shihan, who I will talk more of in a moment, we had Andrew Williamson Sensei who gave us an indication of how things are done in Christchurch.



Hayato Osawa Shihan 7th Dan  
World Aikido Headquarters Tokyo Japan



Osawa Shihan demonstrating Shiho Nage  
with Ray Moore as Uke.

But of course we had Osawa Shihan here to teach us. Osawa Shihan has a long experience in Aikido. He was initially "dragged" to class by his father, Osawa Kisaburo (9th Dan and previous Dojo-cho) another renowned Shihan at Aikikai Hombu Dojo, when he was 8 years old. Now some 50 years later he follows in his father's footsteps as an instructor at Hombu Dojo.

It was interesting to see Osawa Shihan's technique and to have some instruction in the art of ukemi. Over the last few years since Seki Shihan came I have noticed that there has been a shift in focus towards taking good ukemi and this was reiterated by Osawa Shihan who through his demonstration of the role of uke showed us the importance of working together.

At Hombu we frequently train with students that come from and have some considerable time training in Japan, it is interesting to feel their performance and see how it differs from the way we typically perform in New Zealand.



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There is always a need for a good performance of uke for any technique to be developed yet so often we get instructed how to be nage and how to be uke is left for us to work out by ourselves with little frame of reference.

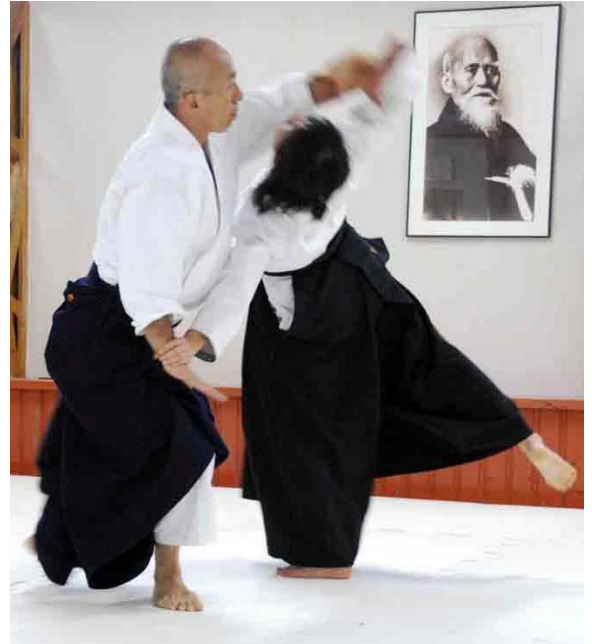
As we were told in some informal setting after training at Shinryukan Hombu Dojo following the Gasshuku we spend half of our time training as uke and so this time can be spent learning and developing as a uke and individual or it can be spent waiting for our turn to be nage.

I think that the main thing that I learnt from Osawa Shihan and Takase Shihan is that to be light and cooperative does not represent weakness but shows real strength of character. Through working together we both develop ourselves and both forge our technique; by stopping our partner from doing a technique we lose this opportunity to develop our character and we end up frustrating us both creating rather than diffusing conflict.

There was also talk of the intention of Osensei, who we all aspire to emulate, in creating Aikido to develop something that we could use as a way of purifying our mind and bodies and as a way for us to approach and commune with the ultimate and realize our place in the universe, this has had a deep effect on me personally and will surely give me something to work on as I continue to practice and develop within the world of Aikido.

When we consider the meaning of Shinryukan we realize that this intention of Osensei is the guiding principle that forms the foundation of our school and what Takase Shihan is trying to pass on to us as his students.

As I look back over the weekend, and Tuesday night following the Gasshuku, I have many good memories I take away from an interesting experience and I consider myself lucky to be afforded the opportunity once a year by Takase Shihan and the New Zealand Aikikai Federation to participate in such a wonderful event.



Osawa Shihan demonstrating Tenchi Nage with Evelyn Kiing as Uke.



Hayato Osawa Shihan from the Aikikai World Headquarters Tokyo Japan.

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## Gasshuku 2009

by Sarah Baker

Gasshuku are usually made up of two important aspects, the overseas instructor/s and the New Zealand instructors who bring a breadth of experience. On the social side of the Gasshuku the chance to catch up with people we haven't seen in a long time. This year we were

fortunate to have Hayato Osawa from Hombu dojo teaching at the 39th Annual Gasshuku. Gasshuku are a time to focus and concentrate on key areas emphasized by the overseas Shihan and New Zealand instructors. The event operates as an immersion in aikido with the chance for participants to focus on key learning points. Just as each instructor has different areas of focus each participant will pick up different areas of relevance for their training. Osawa Shihan in the first few classes focused on some of the finer aspects that we may not normally focus on.

For example he emphasised finer details of hand placement and entry as equally important as other aspects of aikido though we may not normally focus on these. Many of the classes begun with practicing different hand grabs, the correct angle to grab and attack from and the correct use of footwork and hand movement.

The focus on clear fluid movement with precise timing and application was a timely reminder of how important this is and certainly something to rebuild into training. Osawa Shihan also emphasized the importance

of self practice mirroring the techniques without a partner which demonstrated how much it consolidated technique. He emphasised ukemi but overall I was left with the impression that slow considered application of body, feet and hand movements were an essential part of training.

Apart from the experience of concentrated training with a focus on different aspects of aikido application and technique; the gasshuku was also a time to catch up with people. This time it was a chance to catch up with Karl Dahm Sensei who had lived in Britain for a long time and who had returned to New Zealand and is now located in Wellington. Talking to him over dinner was a reminder of how time passes in aikido and how the training bonds are forged.

We sounded like war horses reliving the days of past hard training and yet this is often what aikido is about, the shared experience of the teaching received and a chance to reflect on how training has changed. As a 39th annual Gasshuku it was highly enjoyable and I am sure that the 40th will be a very special event.



39th National Annual Gasshuku NZAF  
Guest Instructor Hayato Osawa Shihan  
AIKIKAI WORLD HEADQUARTERS JAPAN