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World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter

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Clinic -- Clinic -- Jetlag



By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

St. Petersburg, Russia. Historical City!

FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE - 009

March 22nd

Every March, I go to Japan for the annual Branch Chief Clinic and Black Belt Promotion Test. I left Birmingham on the 21st, and arrived in Tokyo on March 22nd. Four months earlier, at the All-Japan Tournament, Sensei Naoi said he was getting engaged to be married. By March, he was officially engaged, and so was going to bring his fiancé along with him and Shihan Goda to pick me up from the airport so he could officially introduce us.

I got off the plane in Tokyo and passed through immigration and customs. Physically, I was tired from the long flight, but I was excited to see Shihan Goda, Naoi and his fiancé. I imagined that they would be standing, ready to greet me. As I entered the lobby, there was all the usual scenes of people waiting anxiously for their friends or family members to walk through the door, people embracing and smiling and excited to see each other... but no one called me--people turned their backs to me as I scanned the crowd. As I slowly wandered further and further into the lobby, I began to think perhaps I had made a mistake in the flight number or arrival information I had given them; after all, they were usually easy to find.

At last, I saw the back of Naoi's head. He and his fiancé were standing under the large monitors with flight and gate information. They were deep in conversation, smiling and cooing to each other. Nearby, Shihan Goda was talking on his cell phone. They were completely oblivious to the fact that I had landed and exited the terminal. Naoi and his fiancé carried on like they were alone on a green field somewhere, amidst the flowers and chirping birds--not like they were at an airport awaiting the arrival of Saiko Shihan.

My blood began to boil as I walked closer and closer to Naoi. I saw that my flight number was displayed directly over their heads with information indicating that the

flight had landed and all of the passengers exited. I looked up at the monitor, then back to Naoi, to the monitor, to Naoi... Finally I couldn't stand it any longer. I got right behind Naoi and heard the tail end of their conversation. I chimed in with, "Oh, really? Wow..." Naoi slowly turned around. His eyes popped open when he saw me. I punched him in the stomach and he just shouted, "Osu! Osu, Osu!" his fiancé had no idea what to make of this.

"Naoi," I said, "You failed again. This is your fiancé?"

"Osu!"

"Well, I'm taking her away from you."

"OSU!?!?!"

But even though, they had missed me coming in, it was good to see Shihan Goda, Naoi and his fiancé healthy and happy. We rode the train into Tokyo together. Shihan Goda and I sat in a seat directly across from Naoi and his fiancé. Naoi made a good effort to appear attentive to what Shihan Goda and I said, but every now and then, his face would become completely lovestruck as he turned his attention to his fiancé. Shihan Goda and I just rolled our eyes and shook our heads. At last, we arrived at the hotel and I showered, ate dinner and went to bed.

March 23rd

At 5:00 a.m., Shihan Suzuki knocked on my door to take me to the train station. Because of jetlag, I had already been up since 2:30, so I was ready. We took the bullet train to Himeji. It was good to see the Branch Chiefs and students looking so healthy and full of life. My theme for this year's clinic was "*Kamae*". This clinic was open to adults and children. Whenever you teach children, it's very easy to gauge their energy level and attention by their body posture. If they are bending their knees, have a good stance, and focused eyes, they are full present mentally and physically. But, if an instructor gives them

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Karateka? Musician? Tourist?

a little space, their hips begin to raise up, their eyes starting darting around and they lose focus. A student's *Kamae* is a clear indicator of what is going on with them internally at any given moment. Children are beautiful, but for a Karate instructor, they can also be monsters. They often don't listen and their attention is constantly coming and going.

At Honbu Dojo, during promotion tests, children sometimes have trouble understanding my Japanese-Southern English pronunciation. I might tell them to do "right foot front Sanchin Dachi" but they just stand there with their mouths open. Then one of my Black Belts

might say to them again, "right foot front Sanchin Dachi," and these kids still don't move. I then tell my Black Belts that most kids are in their own world. If you tell them "right foot front" and they move their right foot, that's a miracle! You need to take children and move their leg--use action, not talk, to teach them.

It's easy to tell by a kids' *Kamae* what type of instructor they are learning from. If an instructor is too lax and doesn't really get into teaching, it will be reflected in the lack of sharpness in his students' overall *Kamae*. On the other hand, the students of an instructor who is very attentive and enthusiastic in complete control of classes

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he/she teaches will have a *Kamae* that reflects focus and energy.

Whenever I teach, it's important to capture everyone's chi, so I need a powerful voice. I don't give an inch, and whenever one of the kids made a mistake, I would immediately call them out and warn them that I had a "special pair of eyes--better than Superman, so they'd better watch out." If I keep this up the entire time, though, everyone would be too nervous and on edge, so I alternate between using humor and being strict to give everyone room to breathe. Once I establish a tempo in this way, the whole class can find the rhythm.

I taught about *Kamae*. During the clinic, I illustrated how good *Kamae* enables you to move well and have good timing for attacking and blocking during Kihon, Kata and Kumite. Over time, when students become tired, their *Kamae* begins to weaken, which weakens their spirit and focus. But if they concentrate on keeping a good *Kamae*, then can also keep good focus and energy. They need to feel how the *body* controls the *mind*, not the other way around. The clinic was really excited and I think everyone learned a lot.

March 24th

Whenever I go to Japan, it usually takes about 24 hours



Ice. Ice. Ice..

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of travelling to get from my house to my hotel (including flight time, driving, and trains). So on the first day in Tokyo, I can usually sleep pretty well--about 4.5 hours straight. But the next day is always a problem. Whenever I finish teaching a clinic, my body is still pretty hyped up and it takes a while for me to come down. When I was young, it wasn't a problem, but now, it's a little harder to calm my body down, so I took a bath, drank a couple beers, watched late night variety shows on TV and read a book before finally falling asleep.

I'm reading a history book now, so as I read it, my eyes got heavier and heavier. When I woke up, I assumed it was already morning and I had slept the whole night. I went to open the curtains, and was surprised to see the neon signs still shining in the black sky. I looked at the clock at said "1:30 a.m.!" I tried to get to sleep again. I tried to read my book again, but my mind kept racing with the clinic I had just done, and the one I was going to do the next day, about *Take a Chance*, my April visit to Russia.

Finally, I gave up on the book and turned on the TV. After awhile, I gave up on the TV and went back to the book, then went to the bathroom, tried to close my eyes, turned the TV back on, then again opened the book... All night I went through this cycle of insomnia. Finally, dawn began to break. I looked down to the traditional noodle shop across the street. They opened at 5:00 a.m., so I decided to get something to eat. (Sensei Paul really loves these noodles. Usually, people eat one bowl, but when he was here, he would eat two big bowls).

After eating, I felt warm and relaxed. I got back to my room, read the newspaper and watch TV. I finally fell asleep at 8:30 a.m. Soon after that, I heard a loud knocking at the door, accompanied by a powerful, "Osu! Osu! Osu!"

I got up, still hazy. Was I dreaming? I heard the knock-

ing again. I opened the door and Sensei Ishikawa and Sensei Masa were standing at attention. They greeted me with a loud, "Good morning, Saiko Shihan! Osu!"

"Quiet!" I snapped. "Don't raise your voice, or my head will explode and I will kill you."

"Osu!" they whispered. "Osu, we need to go now," Ishikawa said.

"Go where? Home?"

"No, osu... the clinic. All the students are waiting."

"Saiko Shihan," Masa added, "this clinic is *KAMAE!* *Kamae*, Saiko Shihan!"

"Shut up," I told him. We drove in Ishikawa's car about 45 minutes to an elementary school gym. All parents, instructors, and students were packed in. Whenever I see students in dogis, my chi suddenly comes back, like the conditioned response of one of Pavlov's dogs.

We had a great clinic and everyone was dripping with sweat. Next, we began the Black Belt promotion. Naoi was retesting for Yon-Dan. I had asked him if he was really ready.

"Aahh, osu..." he said hesitantly.

"What!?" This was his second attempt at promotion. He should be completely prepared. If he wasn't, I suggested he wait until next time.

"Osu... I think I got it." he said.

"You sure?"

"Osu..."

"Well, it's your promotion. You decision." At the start of promotion, he had a lot of power. His body isn't muscular and defined like a body builder's but his movements and his techniques contain lots of power. For the first half hour, 45 minutes, he did well. But, after about an hour, his hips began rising and his stance got higher and

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The 4 Samurai. I got a headache! Need Advil!

his tempo slowed down. He made some mistakes on his basic Kata, had memory lapses.

I looked over at Shihan Suzuki, and he just looked at the ground. I looked at Naoi's assistant instructor, and she was so nervous for him as he continued making mistakes. Well, Naoi failed. He would have to wait another year before retesting... but at least he is in love!

From Russia With Love - 009

In April, I went to Russia with Shihan Dai Takahashi. He and I were on the same flights from Atlanta to Paris to Saint Petersburg. The past November, he and I were supposed to be on the same flight to Tokyo from At-

lanta, but my flight from Birmingham didn't arrive on time. Takahashi is a really good cook. He told me before our Japan trip that he had some great *nori* (seaweed), rice and salmon and he would make some great *onigiri* (rice balls) for our meals from Atlanta to Tokyo. He said he would bring 3 for himself and asked if I wanted 2.

"Two!?" I shot back, "Why do I only get two?"

"Ah, ummm..."

"I want three," I said.

"Osu! OK, I will have four," he said.

"What?"

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"Ah, um..."

"Why do you get more? Because you think I'm old?"

"Um," he hesitated, "Kind of..."

"Just make sure to be there with my *onigiri* and make sure I have the same as you!"

The day I left for Tokyo, Sensei Karl drove me to the airport. As I was leaving, I told him, "Don't banzai!" I searched his face. He tried to look like he would be missing me, but I knew that inside he was thinking, "Yes, I'm free!" But I understood that feeling. When I was chief instructor under Mas Oyama, I would often celebrate when he left town (although one time he caught me).

I got to the airport and saw my flight was on schedule. A half hour later, though, the monitor said it would be delayed 10 minutes. I called Takahashi in Atlanta and told him I'd be 10 minutes late. That was still OK, because the layover was an hour-and-a half. "You got my *onigiri*?"

"Osu! Yes," he answered.

"Good." I waited and waited and soon my flight was displayed as 30 minutes late. I began to worry, then finally the monitor said 45 minutes late. I called Shihan Dai again and told him, "My flight is going to be 45 minutes late, so you need to get to the gate in Atlanta and tell them not to leave for Tokyo without me because I need my *onigiri*!"

Later, I heard my name over the loudspeaker being badly mispronounced, calling me to the counter. They told me that I couldn't get to Tokyo through Atlanta now and would have to be re-routed through Detroit. When I finally got to Tokyo, I was tired and hungry. Takahashi had already arrived and was standing with Shihan Goda, Masa and Naoi. "Where's my *onigiri*?" I asked Takahashi.

"In my stomach. It was delicious," he answered sheepishly. I don't get any respect. So, before our trip to Russia, I told Takahashi not to touch my *onigiri* under any *circumstances*!

"Osu! I won't even look at it," he answered.

When I returned to Birmingham after the Japan Clinics in March, all of the cherry blossoms, and other blooms had already come and gone. There are many beautiful plants that appear in Spring--azalea, dogwood, wisteria--but Spring is so short that they tend to disappear just as quickly as they come. After Spring comes a hot and humid Summer that lasts up until October, so we have to train with extra Kiai during those months.

In November, I was in Japan for the All-Japan tournament. The night before, we had a Branch Chief meeting. I mentioned how Shihan Karius had been asking for me to visit Russia for quite some time and how he had come to Summer Camp in Alabama, so now I was planning to travel to St. Petersburg in April. Takahashi from Atlanta was seated next to me. He raised his hand and said, "Osu! Saiko Shihan I'd like to go with you." Next, Masa from Tokyo held up his hand said he wanted to go too. Next to him, Sensei Saito from San Francisco also held up his hand and said he wanted to go. Finally, Naoi asked, "Saiko Shihan, may I go too?" Naoi has a very dynamic, triangular face. His body and face are very powerful, but his eyes are very gentle and tend to blink a lot when he talks, especially if he's nervous.

I asked Naoi if he really wanted to go. He said, "Osu, I want to experience Russian Oyama Karate and be your teaching assistant."

Everyone just looked at him, asking, "Really?? You??"

Naoi puffed up his chest and answered very certainly, "Yes, I want to train in Russia and assist Saiko Shihan as an instructor." So the five of us planned to travel to Russia. On April 9th, the night before my flight, Takahashi called

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me up and told me he couldn't find any of the type of salmon needed to make a good *onigiri*. I told him to just use whatever he decided. "Saiko Shihan, how many do you want? Two or three?"

"Don't ask me!" I said, "Of course three. Always three or even four!"

"Osu! I understand," he said.

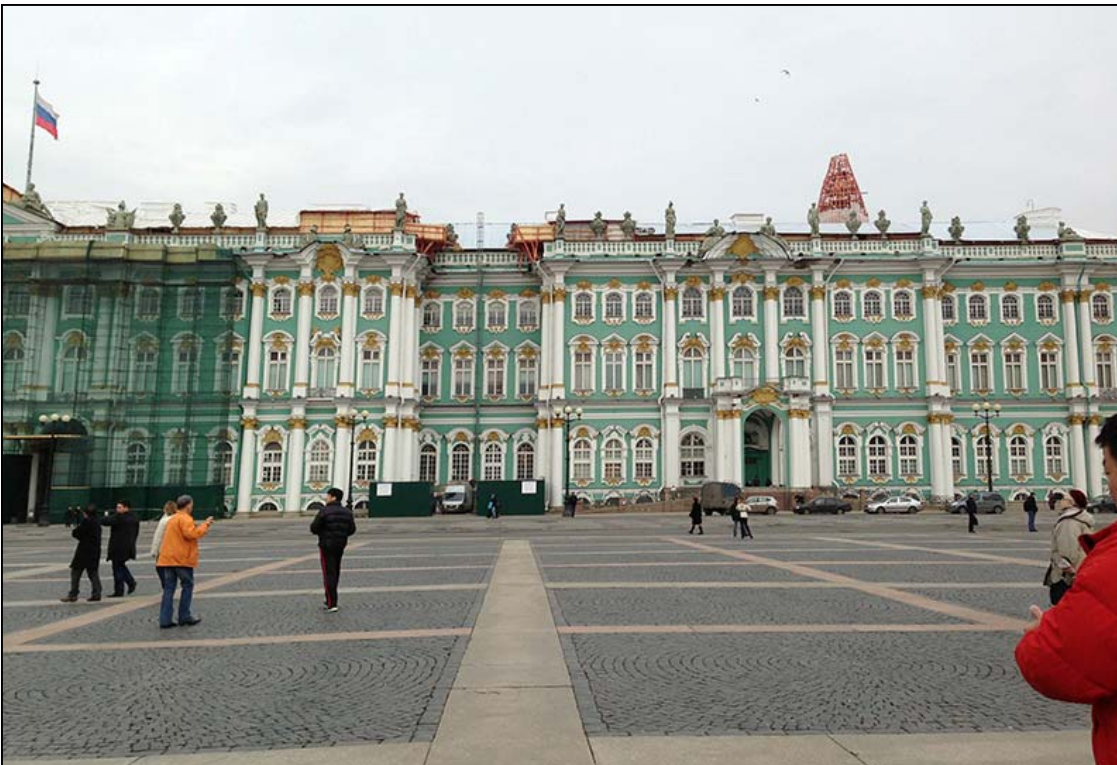
The next morning, I took a short flight from Birmingham to Atlanta. Shihan Dai Takashi and I met each other at the departure gate. We were first travelling to Paris, then from Paris to St. Petersburg. Takahashi had made the travel arrangements for everyone and the two of us, along with Sesnei Saito from San Francisco, would meet with Naoi and Masa from Tokyo (although Takahashi said he wanted to keep this a surprise for Naoi and Masa). Shihan Dai and I were supposed to sit together on the 8-hour flight to Paris, but for some reason, we were assigned seats in separate parts of the plane. The

flight was full, so there was nothing we could do.

Inside the plane, I found my seat and Shihan Dai and his *onigiri* went on to his seat. Once we were in the air and allowed to get up and walk around, I expected Shihan Dai Takashi would come and check on me at any moment--and bring my *onigiri*. But I just waited and waited and waited and waited... still no sign of him. He was travelling as my assistant, so I expected he would check on me and bring my *onigiri*. I thought back to a trip Shihan Goda and I took one time on a plane with Mas Oyama. Mas Oyama, of course, sat in the first class section at the front of the plane and Shihan Goda and I were in the back. As soon as the "fasten seatbelt" sign was turned off, I immediately went to Mas Oyama's seat and asked him if he needed anything. He said he was OK, and I returned to my seat. As I sat down, Shihan Goda got up and did the same thing. That's how we were brought up. But now times had changed in the 21st century. The more I thought about my *onigiri*, the

more I reflected food in general and how it was an essential part of human life and was so interwoven into society and cultural trends all through human history.

Takahashi never appeared with my *onigiri*, but at least the food on Air France was much better than Delta. However, the English that flight attendants used to make the announcements was impossible to understand. Since it was Air France, the first



King Romanov's Winter Palace

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part of an announcement would be in French. Afterwards, they would start out in English, "Ladies and gentleman..." but soon their English would morph into some strange pronunciation that neither I nor the American couple sitting next to me could understand. "*Ladies and gentleman, the captain hoshhur sho shooweeru rusdhowadl rrrroooosshuu dd eurh am nqwe kduoue rmn; & * ... Thank you.*"

When we landed in Paris, Shihan Dai and I were very impressed with the modernity and sophisticated layout of De Gaulle airport. He told me that Naoi and Masa had an eight-hour layover on top of the thirteen-hour plane ride from Tokyo. As we approached our gate, we first saw Masa 40 feet away. He was sprawled out on a chair with his mouth open and staring up at the ceiling. Shihan Dai and I marveled at his ability to sleep with his eyes open... Masa has a truly remarkable gift!

Nearby, Naoi sat reading a book. He wore a very casual blazer, with an official World Oyama Karate emblem patch pinned to the front. The patch looked completely out of place on that jacket. I remembered how Naoi was so adamant about going to Russia to gain experience teaching the true essence of Karate. I wondered what he was reading with such intensity... *Perfect Karate? Kyoten* books? Past newsletters? I asked Takahashi if he could tell.

"Saiko Shihan, it's a guide book," Shihan Dai said.

"Guide book? This isn't some high school field trip--we're going to Russia to train Karate!"

"Osu, sometimes Naoi's in a dif-

ferent world."

"By the way," I turned to Takahashi, "Where's my *onigiri*?"

"Osu! I have it safe in my bag."

"In your bag? Why didn't you bring it to me on the plane!?"

"Osu, I'm sorry, I ate mine and had something to drink then fell asleep."

"You don't have any respect..." We approached Masa and Naoi. Shihan Dai bellowed out, "OSU!"

Masa and Naoi scrambled to their feet in a moment of panic.

"What are you reading?" I asked Naoi.

"Osu, a guide book."

"What are you wearing?! You look like a rock musician, not a Karate man."



Courtyard at King Romanov's Winter Palace

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"Osu. But, this is a good jacket..."

"You guys give me a headache," I told him and Masa, "I need Advil." I asked them if they had brought toilet paper along. (Before leaving, my wife and one of my students who works as a travel agent, told me I should bring my own toilet paper because European toilet paper was rough and coarse). Masa, Sensei Saito and Takahashi had no idea about this, but Naoi chimed in excitedly, "Osu! Saiko Shihan, this guide book suggests bringing your own toilet paper too. But, I forgot to pack mine, so can I share yours?" I definitely needed some Advil...

We all sat together on the flight to St. Petersburg, which took about 3 hours. As soon as we got in the air, Takahashi, Sensei Saito, Masa and Naoi--the 4 *Imo Samurai* (Potato Samurai)--were snoring and drooling. I felt like I was taking a bunch of kids on a school trip, not 4 of my top Black Belt instructors to a Karate Clinic. I thought over the schedule in the coming days--Friday evening

was a clinic with Black Belts and other senior students, then the following day, a Children's Clinic for about 100 kids, and an Open Kumite Clinic, and finally a Brown/Black Belt Promotion testing.

As we approached St. Petersburg, we could see that the ground was still covered with ice and snow. Shihan Karius, his wife and some Black Belts met us at the airport. We split into three cars to go to the hotel. In the lobby, ten children from Shihan Karius's kids class did a demonstration of Kata and Kihon and

took a picture with us. We then went to our rooms to unpack and rest before dinner. I had a great suite with 2 TV's and a nice shower. I checked the toilet paper, and it was as soft as could be--I tried to hide mine away so Shihan Karius and his students wouldn't see it in my bag.

I told the 4 *Imo Samurai* to meet at my room a little before dinner so we could discuss the next days' clinics. My room had a see-through refrigerator filled with juice, water and beer. There was a lot of cheese, fruit and bread on my table as well. When the four other guys came to my room later, their eyes popped open when they saw it all--none of their rooms had any of that.

We sat down, and I told them that the theme for the clinics was "*Kamae*". I had done clinics on *Kamae* in Japan the month before, so Sensei Noai and Masa had some experience with it already. I turned to Sensei Saito and asked, testing him, "What do students need to know

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about *Kamae*?"

"Osu... hmm... *Kamae*... *Kamae* is... very important. Need to tell them *Kamae* is very important..."

"That's it?"

"Yes, that's enough.."

"Naoi!" I said, "You took my clinic already, what do you think?"

Naoi started blinking rapidly. "Osu, ah... *Kamae*... hmmm... *Kamae*. *Kamae*. *Kamae*... um, osu, I agree with Sensei Saito."

"What?? That's it!??" Takahashi and Masa tried to avoid eye contact with me. Obviously, they didn't have any answer either. I needed more Advil.

Before I could question him, Takahashi said, "Osu, Saiko Shihan, it's close to dinner time."

"What?" And just as if on-cue, Shihan Karius knocked on the door.

We had dinner at a nice restaurant with Shihan Karius, his son Vitold and another Black Belt. Our waitress spoke much better English than the Air France flight attendants. She asked what I and the 4 Samurai wanted to drink, "Water! All water!" I could tell the 4 Samurai wanted more than water. They looked around them at other people in the restaurant laughing and talking with big glasses of beer. Their faces became pained and monstrous, tortured by my relegating them to just water.

"Osu, Saiko Shihan," Shihan

Karius interjected sweetly, "Russian beer is very good..."

"Oh yeah?" I thought for a moment. "OK, we'll have beer." Suddenly the 4 Samurai's faces transformed from monstrous to angelic. Dinner was great, with lots of potatoes, mushroom soups, and meats and bread. Back at the hotel, I told the 4 Samurai to meet with me again in my room to discuss the upcoming clinics. Someday, I want for them to be able to go out in the world on their own to show people the essence of World Oyama Karate. I don't want them to just repeat what I've said, but to think for themselves and make their own discoveries, so it's important that I educate them.

For the first 5 - 10 minutes of our discussion, they were very alert and attentive. But, they had been travelling for a long, long, long time--especially Naoi and Masa. Masa did his best to hide it, but I could see his eyes beginning to glaze over. But I just kept talking and quizzing them to keep them engaged. After half an hour, I started getting tired. Masa, Sensei Saito and Takahashi



Old city, but very modern!

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all kept their eyes on me, but Naoi's kept wandering to the corner of the room where the food was on the table and drinks in the fridge. "Naoi!" I barked at him.

"Osu!"

"What are you thinking about?"

"Karate! Just sweat!"

"What?"

"Osu, punch and kick.... and I'm still hungry."

"You just ate!"

"Osu, sorry, I'm young..."

As the 4 Samurai got up to leave, Naoi lingered by the door, looking like he wanted something. He mumbled softly, trying to find the words, "Osu... um... ah..."

"What do you want?" I asked, getting impatient.

"Um, osu, I have... a... a request..."

"What?"

We will have jet lag and maybe wake up in the night. This is not Tokyo, so I can't just go across the street to the store and I don't speak Russian... so... may I take some bread? And maybe a banana?"

"What? So while we were talking, all you thought about was bananas, cheese--just sweat--fruit, bread--just sweat, karate--bananas, meat, juice--just sweat."

"Osu, yes!"

I was getting tired, so I didn't want to stand up. I told Naoi to come to me and bend down so I could smack his head. "OK, take it." I told him. The other 3 quickly chimed in and asked for food too. I gave it to them and shut the door, needing more Advil for the headache they

gave me.



Are they assisting me, or just on vacation???

In April in northern parts of the world like St. Petersburg, it never quite gets dark at night. At 10:00 p.m., it was still light outside. I took a long shower and read a book to try and relax. I slept a little bit, and when I woke back up, it was still light outside, so I shut the curtain and tried to watch TV. There were all sorts of shows on, in various languages--Russian, French, German, English, even Chinese, but not Japa-

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nese. Eventually I drifted off and got a couple hours' sleep.

April 12th

We ate breakfast at the buffet in the hotel restaurant. There was plenty of strong coffee, sausages, eggs, fruits, breads, cheeses. The 4 Samurai each had two heaping plates of food. Just looking at their plates made me feel full. I just had some toast and fruit with my coffee. Their eyes were all bright and shining. I asked them how they'd slept. "Wonderfully!" they answered. I could have killed them.

Shihan Karius met us at 10:00 a.m. and took us to the museum--King Romanov's winter palace. I've been to many museums in the U.S. and Japan and other countries, but this museum was on a larger scale than anything I had ever visited. There was no way to see it all in one day, let alone one week. As soon as I stepped inside, I was overwhelmed with the dizzying arrays of gold and marble and ornate historical treasures. Each room had marble columns, walls and floors, each with a different color. I had never seen marble in these colors--green, blue, pink, floral print--it was amazing. I was also impressed with how knowledgeable Shihan Karius was. He led us through like a seasoned tour guide; I could tell he was very proud of his culture and heritage.

The museum was packed with visitors from all over the



Enjoy Russian beer! Kiai! Oisha!

world. Video and photograph-taking was prohibited, but all the visitors took pictures anyway. At first we didn't, but then Shihan Karius took a few of us. My head began spinning with all of the ancient and historical treasures packed into the museum. For a little while, I forgot all about Karate. In the afternoon, we ate lunch and rested a little before the evening clinic.

The clinic was from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. and was for senior Russia Oyama Karate students. I was impressed with how hungry and eager they were to learn. We went over the importance of *Kamae* before and after technique and how basic techniques, kata and kumite are connected. We also went over Bo, and Tonfa. I was so immersed in teaching that I lost track of time. Eventually, Shihan Karius stepped in and said it was past 9:00 and we needed to stop now.

The restaurant where we ate dinner had a dance floor in

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the middle of the dining area. During the meal, 5 Russian dancers in traditional costumes came out and performed solo numbers. They were unbelievable in their speed, power and energy as they spun and squatted and jumped. I don't know anything about Russian dancing, but I could appreciate the years of dedication they had put into their training.

Back at the hotel, I asked the 4 Samurai a simple question. The two who gave the worst answer had to massage me before going on to bed. I slept well that night.

April 13th

This was to be a tough day. The morning schedule was a 1-hour clinic for about 100 children. I had assumed that they would be older children or teenagers. The 4 Samurai and I got to the gymnasium and were taken to the instructors' room to change. The clinic was scheduled to go from 11:00 -- 12:00. We left the instructors' room and went to the gym. Naoi entered first, but as soon as he looked inside, he was taken aback and turned a little pale. Next, Takahashi, Masa and Sensei Saito looked in and exclaimed, "Wow!" and turned to me with faces of horror that seemed to say, "Houston, we have a problem..."

"What?" I asked, looking in for myself. I wasn't prepared for what I saw. There were 5 rows of about 20 children each. They were all between the ages of 5 - 7 and 99% were WHITE BELTS! In the bleachers behind them, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, friends were all packed in with cameras. If I showed hesitation, the 4 Samurai would be shaken up, so I just shouted, "Oisha! This is what I've been waiting for!"

We were at war now with these little monsters. I told the Samurai that if they gave an inch, the child army would take us over. We needed strong Kiai! If not, we didn't have a chance! "If you don't Kiai," I told them before sending them out to the 4 corners of the kids, "I'll

kill you! One for all and all for one!"

These kids didn't speak English or Japanese. I knew that if I tried to conduct the clinic by explaining through my interpreter, it would be a disaster. I needed to communicate with *action* in order to hold their attention. We started the clinic, and we practiced Shi Ho Kata for *Kamae*. I learned that the Russian word for "Good" was "*Harrasho!*". So, I just kept yelling, "*Harrasho!*" with as much enthusiasm and excitement as possible. The hour seemed to pass by in a single second. I've done so many clinics in my lifetime, but this was one of the most challenging ones I've done.

When we finished, we were supposed to have a 30 minute break before the Kumite Clinic started. But, all the kids and their parents approached us to take pictures with them. At last, Shihan Karius had to usher us away so we could have a little break before the next clinic.

Back in the instructors' room, the 4 Samurai were still pumped up with adrenaline. "Thank you, Saiko Shihan, that was a great experience," they said. But I reminded them how they almost started crying when they first saw all those kids.

The next clinic was an adult Kumite Clinic, open to other Karate styles in the area. Most of them had years of experience and I could tell mostly from their *Kamae* what type of fighters they were--right-handed or left-handed, wide stance for powerful punching or high stance for quick and sharp kick techniques. At the beginning, I told them not to expect that I would be teaching them some special, secret technique. If you want to build up your fighting ability, you need to focus on practicing each basic technique with correct form.

If you really get into Kihon training, the techniques will talk to you. You'll discover your strengths and weaknesses and begin to know intuitively how each technique requires specific set-up, power, timing, distance, angle,

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speed. That is the beauty of training with basic techniques. After the clinic, I took questions from the participants. A Black Belt from Kyokushin asked what is the correct knee position for the kicking leg for setting up *Mawashi Geri*. This was a good question. Recently, I've seen footage of many fighters bringing their knee forward before *Mawashi Geri*, instead of up to the side. Doing this makes the angle of attack much narrower. The power of the roundhouse kick comes from attacking from the outside-in. If you have correct form, you can arrange the angle of attack, but if you only practice by bringing the kicking leg forward, you limit the possibilities for using this kick.

St. Petersburg was a much different city than I had imagined before I first came. Even though the canals were still iced over and the streets were lined with snow, it was beautiful. Shihan Karius, his wife and students were wonderful hosts. (Every day, the 4 Samurai would comment on how beautiful Russian women were. Not about Karate, but about women. Naoi didn't say it out-loud because he is engaged, but I could tell he was thinking it.) I also enjoyed meeting with an instructor from the Ukraine who travelled 36 hours by rail to train with me for all three days. It was an exciting trip and a wonderful experience. OSU!



Shihan Karius playing guitar



SUMMER CAMP 2013

Orange Beach/Gulf Shore, Alabama

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Sweat! Sweat! Sweat!

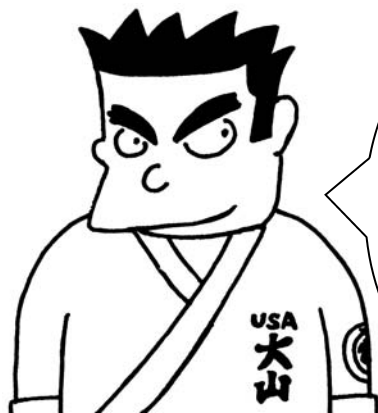


Sunrise Training

- *Special Take Down Technique*
- *Basic, Kata, Fight*

Sunset Gym Training

- *Tonfa, Nunchaku, Shinai*
- *Weapons Fighting Technique*



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