

MASTER OF BUJUTSU



I first met Masatake Sekiya-sensei in 1988. He was born Oct. 8, 1917 in Ehime Japan to a family with a small farm. Before the war, he had received the rank of 2nd dan in judo. During the war he was flying in cargo planes (without guns) all over Asia. After the war ended, he worked for Northeast and then for Japan Airlines. He began studying aikido under Osawa-sensei, and he later started the Japan Airlines Aikido club. He met Ueshiba O-sensei, who founded Aikido, when he was 42 via the founder of Macrobiotics (Osawa). Sekiya-sensei was a direct student of O-sensei from 1959 to 1969. The 1st branch dojo of the Aikido Hombu was Sugino-sensei's dojo in Kawasaki. Sugino-sensei was a Hanshi (10th Dan) in Katori Shinto Ryu. Sekiya-sensei studied that style there. His main Aikido connection after O-sensei passed away was with Yamaguchi-sensei, who also taught at the Meiji University Aikido club. Through that connection he started studying Kashima Shin Ryu under Noguchi-sensei, who had studied under the head of the style, Kunii-sensei. Later he trained with Inaba-sensei at the Meiji Shrine for Kashima Shin Ryu and Aikido. Sekiya-sensei received his 7th dan from Inaba-sensei. Sekiya-sensei passed away Sept. 3, 1996 of liver cancer.

Master is a term that is drastically over used when it comes to the martial arts. Every student wants to think that their teacher is a master. In fact, if you look in your local phone book you will find several people that claim to be masters of one art or another. Some are only in their twenties. In Japan they prefer to use the term sensei which means a person who is held in high esteem.

Bujutsu means martial arts in Japanese, but more precisely it means to stop conflict, even if it means killing to do so. Bujutsu has a very long history in Japan. The 'Bu' kanji symbol is made from the cross of a spear and a naginata. These weapons were developed along with the sword by the samurai a thousand years ago. Over the centuries kata (systematic patterns of exercises) have been handed down from teacher to student and become schools of Bujutsu.

In the spring of 1989 my Japanese language teacher, Yukiko Iselin, informed me that Seikiya-sensei and Diane Zingale would be giving a private demonstration for our class at the

Chelmsford Aikido dojo. I had observed a demonstration by them the year before at her house. I asked permission to tape the demo and then went out and bought a VCR camera.



On the morning of the demo, a couple of our classmates seemed to be running late. Sekiya-sensei suggested that Diane show a few of us the fundamentals of the naginata. I had purchased a video in 1982 of Sugino-sensei and was familiar with the first form of Katori Shinto Ryu's naginata kata. When my friend Andy Puchrik asked if I wanted to participate and said he would work the camera for me, I jumped at the chance. We spent the following twenty minutes going over the rudimentary movements and I even got a lesson in the proper way to perform the naginata kata I had been working on from Sekiya-sensei.

After a while we realized that the missing students were not going to show up. Sekiya-sensei and Diane went through the four naginata kata of Katori Shinto Ryu and the four omote or beginners forms using the bokken (wooden swords). In the last year I have begun a study group to become more proficient in these kata.

The demonstration lasted over an hour and included a wide range of techniques with the bokken and naginata. Sekiya-sensei then asked Diane to give a demo of the iaijutsu (sword-drawing art) forms of Katori Shinto Ryu with a sharp blade as done in Sugino's dojo. He then performed the iaijutsu of Kashima Shin Ryu and noted the differences in the two. He also asked Diane to act as an attacker to demonstrate how some of the techniques would work in a real situation.

Also in the demonstration he showed how to disarm a swordsman and using aikido and how to defend against a knife. The aikido demonstration was very impressive. He used it to teach Diane variations on moves she already knew. This made it more fun for her and us as well. We got to see her throwing him around to try out the techniques he showed her. This made us even more impressed with him because he was in his early seventies at the time. I've had students ask me how I can move so fluidly at my age of 58 and it makes me laugh. They should see my tape of Sekiya-sensei.

Andy's wife Debbie is a photographer and got some great shots of the demo that I have tried to incorporate into this newsletter. I will add some more at the end of it, so be sure to scroll on down.

After the demonstration we went out to dinner. Sekiya-sensei noticed the tattoos on my arms and asked about them. I explained that I had been in a motorcycle club when I was in my twenties and had them done then. I said I was a Yakuza and we had a big laugh about that. The yakuza is something like a Japanese Mafia. The term yakuza is the losing roll of dice, like our term 'snake eyes.' The Yakuza are famous for intricate full body tattoos, and there is an

American movie with Robert Mitchum called 'Yakuza' on my recommended book and movie list. A few years ago I had a back piece done. A back piece is a tattoo that covers your whole back. It is taken from a famous woodblock print called 'Yadome' (arrow stopping). Chad Cook has used it as the cover of the title page he made up for me on the Doshikai website.





It has been through my studies at the Doshikai in Acton, MA that I have come to a better understanding of Bujutsu. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Barry Poitras, Tom Hooper, and Pam Parker for the years of instruction that has enriched my life.

Gordon Fisher