



Paul Martin

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Hi Everyone,

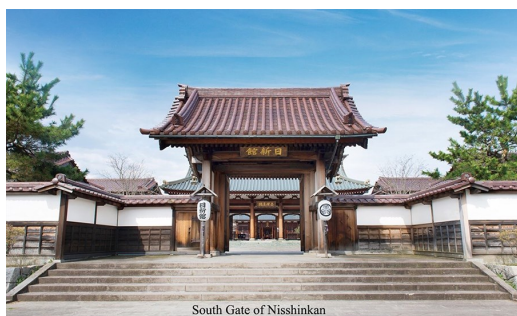
Welcome to the July Newsletter. Even though it is the July newsletter it also contains retrospect news from June. June in Japan is when the 'Rainy Season' begins. It is also sword competition season in Japan. Both the NBTHK and the NBSK have sword craftsmen competitions around this time. The NBTHK competition is actually split into two with the entries for the sword making, fittings and blade carvings being submitted in early May, while the Polishing, Shirasaya, Koshirae. Tsuka Wrapping, and Habaki section are submitted in early June. You can see the results of both the NBTHK and NBSK competitions below. The results of the second half of the NBTHK comp will be in next month's newsletter.

Aizu-Wakamatsu Nisshinkan Samurai Academy



I am very honored to have my prototype Demon Slayer, Kamado Tanjiro tsuba displayed at the fantastic former samurai academy for Aizu clan samurai, Nisshinkan, in Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima prefecture.

<https://www.facebook.com/aiduhankounisshinkan/photos/a.1375176912792504/2790468594596655/>



South Gate of Nisshinkan

Nisshinkan was an academy, established in 1803, for the children of high-ranking samurai in the Aizu clan. Children would enter at the age of ten years old, and graduate at fifteen. It was said to usually have an average of 1000 to 1300

students, and was widely known throughout Japan for its excellent educational standards.

Classes would begin at 8 am, and the children would not only perform academic studies, but also learn about samurai etiquette, and be trained in martial arts. Several members of the Byakkotai also graduated from here.

Unfortunately, the original building was burned down during the Boshin war but was meticulously reconstructed in 1987.

See the rest of this article here:

https://samurai-spirit.com/story_03.html

Visit Nisshinkan here:

<https://www.ana.co.jp/en/jp/japan-travel-planner/fukushima/0000017.html>

During the Boshin war, the allied imperial forces laid siege to Tsuruga Castle (also known as Aizu-Wakamatsu Castle) in one of the fiercest battles of late samurai history: the Battle of Aizu, in which most of the city was destroyed, and amazing acts of bravery took place that illustrated why Aizu had such a strong warrior spirit.

Many people know of the Byakkotai (White Tiger Brigade) Youth Corps of which a group of twenty members aged between 15 and 16 took their own lives in ritual suicide after mistakenly thinking that their lord's castle had fallen. However, there is also a memorial called the *Nayotake* (bamboo reed) dedicated to the 233 women who lost their lives in the Battle of Aizu. The monument is engraved with the death poem of Saigo Tanomo's wife, Chieko (34 years old), that was written by her before killing her three youngest children (2, 4, and 9 years old) and committing ritual suicide together with 20 other members of the Saigo family, including her mother-in-law (58), her two sisters (23 and 26), and her two eldest daughters (13 and 16) in the Saigo residence during the final hours of the Battle of Aizu. The poem reads:

The body of a woman is like a bamboo reed swaying in the wind, but I hear that bamboo has unbending strength.

The poem is a testament to the strength and warrior spirit of the women of Aizu. They can suffer the slings and arrows of life, but there comes a point where they will not bend.

You can see the whole article here

<https://japan-forward.com/in-search-of-the-samurai-spirit-of-fukushima-the-heroes-of-aizu/>



The Passing of a Legend

Last month, Katori Shinto-Ryu legend, Otake Risuke Shihan, passed away. He was 95 years old. In 2009, I was lucky enough to meet and discuss swords and martial arts with him and his translator, Daniel Lee, when we were filming, *Art of the Japanese Sword* (Empty Mind Films, 2010). I was told not to discuss with him too much before actual filming, but once he discovered I was a sword specialist, it was too late! We launched into an epic conversation about swords, and I got to hold the famous Kanemoto blade from the Nippon Budokan Koryu series of videos in my hands. He also

showed me another tachi blade that he used by Yoshihara Yoshindo and some Katori Shinto Ryu bo-shuriken also made by Yoshihara sensei. After first seeing him on the BBC's, *Way of the Warrior*, series and then in the Budokan's Koryu video series and actually having a sit down over a cup of (Japanese) tea with him made one of my dreams come true. They are treasured memories that I will never forget.

Otake sensei's last book is on sale here (Faithfully translated by his student, Daniel) and is available for purchase here:

https://www.nipponbudokan.or.jp/english/tankoubon_30/strategyandtheheartofpeace?fbclid=IwAR2oHGLZt6J39rEQa0AAcdxdVFObQL1aeHh9P3Q3xxzeRJ_gL7zr_vUfc40

or his Wikipedia page here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Risuke_Otake



Why I Live in Japan

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, I appeared on Japanese TV this month on a program called, 'Why I live in Japan'. It is presented by a rather famous Japanese actor and singer, Takahashi Katsunori, and his co-host, broadcaster Handa Miki. It is an hour long and traces my initial steps when I arrived in Japan, my interest in Japan before moving to Japan. We visit the forge of Yoshindo Yoshihara, the polishing studio of Tatsuya Fujishiro, and various places related to swords and some of the 'sword tourism' work that I do. It is a rather light-hearted look at my work

aimed at general Japanese audiences in Japan.



Here is a link to the trailer for the program.

Youtube trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-75-ii6vgWg>

(May not be viewable in your country)

(Hopefully someone will upload one with English subtitles later).



The NBSK 11th Sword Craftsmen's Competition and Sword Oshigata Art competition Results

Sword Making Division

Both the Monbu Kagaku Minister's Award and the Keizai Sangyo Minister's Award:

Katana, Nezu Hidahira (Kei)

The NBSK Chairman's Award: Katana ,Kawachi Ippei

Gold Award 1st Place: Katana, Kamiyama Teruhira (Yozo)

Gold Award 2nd Place: Tanto, Myochin Munehiro (Yusuke)

Gold Award 3rd Place: Tachi, Gassan Sadanobu (Ichiro)

Silver Award 1st Place: Tachi, Yoshida Yasutaka

Silver Award 2nd Place: Katana, Adachi Sadashige (Shigefumi)

Bronze Award 1st Place: Katana, Yoshimoto Sadaoki (Takashi) **(plus Rookies Award)**
Nyusen (accepted for entry); Tachi, Yoshida Masaya; Tachi, Mori Sukemitsu (Mitsuhide),

Horimono (Blade Carving Division)

Nagano Prefecture Mayor's Award: Kurikara Dragon, Kinoshita Sofu (Munenori)

Polishing Division

NBSK Chairman's Award: Kurashima Hitoshi

Shinano Mainichi Newspaper Award: Abe Soichiro

Gold Award 1st Place: Mizuta Yoshimasa

Gold Award 2nd Place: Fujikawa Jiro

Gold Award 3rd Place: Morii Tetsutaro

Silver Award 1st Place: Sekiyama Kazumichi

Bronze Award 1st Place: Kunikami Ryo

Nyusen: Akasaka Fumitaka

Fittings Division

Sakaki Mayor's Award: Iron Tsuba with inlay, Kinoshita Sofu

Gold Award 2nd Place: Amida Yasuri Tsuba, Kawakami Noboru

Gold Award 3rd Place: Fukuyo Yuki

Silver Award 1st Place: Osanai Katsuyoshi

Silver Award 2nd Place: Sato Nanami

Silver Award 3rd Place: Sakai Kiyomasa

Silver Award 4th Place: Ijuin Takako

Bronze Award 1st Place: Jeff Broderick

Bronze Award 2nd Place: Christoph Kopp

Nyusen: Urakami Haruko, Onda Hidehito, Yamazaki Mirai

Shirogane (Habaki) Division

Gold Award 1st Place: Sugiyama Hideaki

Gold Award 2nd Place: Matsumoto Yutaka

Gold Award 3rd Place: Hirata Minoru

Nyusen: Noguchi Yasuhiro, Matsukawa Yasunori

Shirasaya Division

Gold Award 1st Place: Morii Atsuhiko

Gold Award 2nd Place: Furukawa Kazuyuki

Silver Award 1st Place: Tazawa Atsushi

Handle Wrapping Division**Gold Award 1st Place:** Tensho Tsuka-mae, Toyama Kazuyasu**Gold Award 2nd Place:** Moro-tsumami, Matsukawa Yasunori**Silver Award 1st Place:** Moro-tsumami, Inoue Yutaka**Bronze Award 1st Place:** Moro-tsumami, Kuroda Tsutomu**Nyusen:** Moro-hineri, Hirai Shigeharu**Scabbard Lacquering Division.****NBSK Chairman's Award:** Black lacquered Tensho koshirae, Koyama Mitsuhide**Koshirae (Completed Mountings) Division****Sakakimachi Board of Education Chairman's Award:** Black lacquered Aikuchi-koshirae, Kuwano Toshiro**Koshirae (Mountings Foundation) Division****Gold Award 1st Place:** Aikuchi-tanto koshirae, Morii Atsuhiko**Sword Oshigata Art Division****Award for Excellence 1st Place:** Sekiyama Kazumichi**Award for Excellence 2nd Place:** Miura Hiroataka**Award for Excellence 3rd Place:** Nagatsu Yusuke**Award for Excellence 4th Place:** Abe Soichiro**Award for Effort 1st Place:** Kutsuma Shunpei

The Results to the 2021 NBTHK Modern Sword Craftsmen's competition
(Swords, Horimono and Fittings Section)

(In some cases the readings of the names may be slightly incorrect)

Prince Takamatsu Award: Kitakawa Tesshi**Kunzan Award:** Kimura Mitsuhiro**Kanzan Award:** Fujita Munehisa**NBTHK Chairman's Award:** Morikuni Toshifumi**Award for Excellence First Place:** Ando Yusuke**Award for Excellence Second Place:** Miyagi Tomoyuki**Award for Excellence Third Place:** Kudo Yoshihiro**Award for Excellence Fourth Place:** Komiya Kokuten**Award for Excellence Fifth Place:** Kanada Tatsuyoshi**Award for Effort First Place:** Miyashita Hikaru/Teru**Award for Effort Second Place:** Kato Masaya

Award for Effort Third Place: Haoka Shinji

Award for Effort Fourth Place: Takahashi Yuya

Award for Effort Fifth Place: Tomioka Keiichiro

Nyusen: Tanaka Satoshi, Manzoku Hirotsugu, Matsukawa Takashi, Yoshida Masaya, Sasaki Naohiko, Koyama Naoki,

Tanto and Ken Section

Kunzan Award: Yamanoshita Hiro

Kanzan Award: Kato Masaya

Award for Excellence First Place: Ando Yusuke

Award for Excellence Second Place: Kimura Mitsuhiro

Award for Effort First Place: Kudo Yoshihiro

Award for Effort Second Place: Shinbo Motoharu

Award for Effort Third Place: Takaba Hiromune

Award for Effort Fourth Place: Mori Mitsuhide

Award for Effort Fifth Place (and Rookie Award): Yamano Tatsuhito

Nyusen: Ono Kiyoshi, Ito Shigemitsu, Watanabe Tetsu, Komiya Kunimitsu II, Miyagi Masatoshi, Yukawa Yasha, Okamoto Katsuhiko

Horimono Section

Award for Excellence First Place: Kashiwagi Koji

Award for Excellence Second Place: Katayama Shigetsune

Fittings Section

Award for Excellence First Place: Fukuyo Yuki

Award for Excellence Second Place: Kawashima Yoshiyuki

Award for Effort First Place: Yanagawa Seiji

Award for Effort Second Place: Sakai Kiyomasa

Award for Effort Third Place: Ogawa Senko/Chimitsu

Award for Effort Fourth Place: Takahashi Masaki

Award for Effort Fifth Place: Ueno Hiroki

Award for Effort Sixth Place: Takeda Morio

Nyusen: Yamada Sekine, Onda Hidehito, Ogawa Keiko, Maeda Kota, Yokoyama Shinya, Jeff Broderick, Sasaki Kosuke, Inoue Iku, Okamura Asuka, Taisa Seiji

Next month, the results of the NBTHK's Polishing, Shirasaya, Koshirae, Tsuka Wrapping, and Habaki sections.

Thank you very much for reading this month's newsletter. Please don't forget to subscribe to our Youtube channel, and make sure that you click the notifications bell in order to be notified of all our new video releases including the competition giveaway ones. We regularly have competitions where we give away sword books, and other samurai/sword related prizes and martial arts equipment. We look forward to hearing from you in our comments sections on all our media, and we appreciate your likes and shares!

Take care out there, and we will see you next time!

Best regards

Paul Martin

The Japanese Sword
