

# BUSHIDO - THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

SEIYO no SHORIN-RYU KARATE KOBUDO KAI



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Newsletter of

SEIYO SHORIN-RYU CENTRAL HOMBU



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*"You cannot help people permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves." Abraham Lincoln*

## Training Calendar

**PUNJAB KARATE TEAM** – July 17<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. A group of martial artists from India scheduled to train at the Arizona Hombu.

**Utah Gassuku** – August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011. East Canyon Resort, Park City, Utah (August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

**Anniversary Clinic University of Wyoming**, Laramie, Sept 30<sup>th</sup> to Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## JULY DOJO KUN

*Karate ni sente nashi* - There is no first attack in karate

## NAGINATA

Naginata is one of many weapons taught at the [Arizona School of Traditional Karate](#) (Seiyo Hombu). Many of our members have already been introduced to this weapon. The *naginata* is rarely seen in most martial arts schools, although it was relatively common on the Japanese battlefields during the reign of the samurai.

Certifications (*menkyo*) in *naginata* are typically given in *Koryu dojo*, although there are modern *Gendai dojo* that offer *dan* ranks in *naginata-jutsu*.

*Rich Mendolia prepares to attack Ryan Harden during naginata training.*



My introduction to *naginata* (なぎなた, 薙刀) occurred a few decades ago at the JKI Hombu. When I trained at the JKI *Hombu* in this art, most wore a white or black *uwagi* (jacket) or *keikogi hakama* as *naginata* is a very traditional Japanese art. For those of you who have not trained in *hakama*, it is a clumsy piece of clothing particularly for men, as it is bloused, pleated pants that is very easy to trip over until one gets use to it. It seems women never have a problem with *hakama*.

The *naginata* is considered a Japanese *samurai* weapon. It was just one of several bladed weapons in the arsenal of the *samurai* class of Japan. A halberd, or pole arm, the *naginata* had a long wooden pole for a handle that was attached to a curved blade with *tsuba* (guard between the blade and pole similar to that on a *katana*). The length of the blade and pole for *naginata* varied.



*Naginata* means ‘mowing down sword’ or ‘reaping sword’. The dictionary defines ‘reaping’ as ‘harvesting with a sickle’. This definition provides a very good visual of what the weapon is designed to do. When you train with *naginata* and in particular *Naginata-Dai kata*, this will give you the impression of mowing down aggressors – particularly when you perform a series of 360° propeller-like cuts.

*Photo – One of samurai class defending her dojo. Actually, this is Paula Borea training with her practice naginata. Paula is a descendant of the samurai.*

In old Japan, *naginata* varied in size. The shaft was reported to range from 5 to 9 *shaku* and blade 1 to 3 *shaku* (a [shaku equals 0.994 feet](#)). The blade of some *naginata* were thought to have been recycled from *katana* (see William Deal, 2007, *Handbook to Life in Medieval and Early Modern Japan*. Oxford University Press. pp. 432) while other blades were likely forged for *naginata*.

The shape of the blade sort of reminds me of a banana: curved to a point. The portion of the blade (*tang*) that enters the handle should be almost as long as the blade itself. This will assure that the *naginata* is sound and hold together under most any kind of abuse.

The shaft of *naginata* was equipped with a pommel known as an [ishizuki](#). The *ishizuki* was designed as a counterweight and as a striking surface to attack between armor plates of an enemy. Similar pommel are found on *yari* (spear). Unlike most pole arms, the shaft of the *naginata* was oval shaped to allow *samurai* to ‘feel’ the orientation of the blade while swinging the weapon during combat.

*Naginata-ka* of today often wear *bogu* similar to those worn by *kendo* practitioners to allow them to engage in combat using wooden training weapons. The [bogu](#) is gear that provides protection from powerful blows.

*Kyoshi Rob Watson wearing bogu and hakama at Utah Gassuku.*

Like many weapons in martial arts, the origin of *naginata* is uncertain. Even so, many have suggested it descended from the Chinese [Guan Dao](#). Others have pointed out that the *naginata* had been used by Japanese for many centuries all the way back to the *Heian Period* (794 to 1185 AD). Other researchers claim the *naginata* was used even earlier by [sohei](#) (warrior monks) during the *Nara Period* (710 to 794 AD).



During one of many wars in Japan (1180–1185 AD), *naginata* rose to a position of prominence as an effective weapon. Cavalry battles had become important by this time and the *naginata* proved effective in disabling riders. During the [Edo Period](#) (1603 to 1868 AD) the *naginata* became less common on the battlefield, and instead was adopted as a symbol of social status for women of the *samurai* class and the *naginata* was often given as a part of a *samurai* daughter's dowry. Although women did not typically fight on the battlefield, those of the *samurai* class were expected to defend their homes (and dojo) when necessary. An excellent example was a famous female *samurai* by the name of Itagaki who led a garrison of 3,000 warriors from Toeisakayama Castle against ten thousand warriors dispatched to take the castle. Itagaki led her troops out of the castle killing a significant number of the attackers before being overpowered.

*Koryu Naginata* training became part of the public school curriculum in Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868). After world war II, martial arts training was banned in Japan for five years and then in 1950, a modern system of *naginata* training known as *atarashii naginata* (new *naginata*) was developed. This system is primarily practiced as a *gendai* sport with emphasis on etiquette.

Although considerably smaller numbers of practitioners still train in a number of *koryu bujutsu* systems (old school martial arts) of combative *naginatajutsu* that including *Araki-Ryu*, *Tendo-Ryu*, *Jikishinkage Ryu*, *Higo Koryu*, *Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-Ryu*, *Toda-ha Buko-Ryu*, *Yoshin-Ryu* and *Dai-Yoshin Ryu*.

## MEET OUR MEMBERS

I was sure I had a photo of Kim Polk with her hair stuck in a weight machine or Kim sitting on her husband's head (Shihan Dai Glenn) during jujutsu training, but I could not find one. Years ago, I use to photograph everything with a 35 mm camera and I suspect that's where I have photos of her.



Anyway, to be a martial artist, one must train in the martial arts and follow the path that leads to the good of mankind. We are honored to have Kim Polk as one of our *Karate Ka*. She is now located in Cheyenne, but use to be an active practitioner at the University of Wyoming Campus Shorin-Ryu Karate and Kobudo Club and also took part in some clinics at the Saratoga Wyoming *dojo*. Kim and Glenn joined our organization in 1998.

*Kim relaxes in the Medicine Bow Mountains of Wyoming.*

Her husband Glenn Polk writes about Kim,

*“Kim was recently the speaker at this year’s HERA Women’s Cancer Foundation. She would not be one to bring it up in casual conversation, but I’m always proud to brag on her when I can. The foundation focuses on ovarian cancer primarily but there is usually discussion of other types as well.*

*Kim talked on symptoms, or more correctly the lack of recognizable symptoms associated with ovarian cancer. She walked people through the various emotions felt after diagnosis and how they affected her. Most importantly she talked about the dependence she had on her strong Christian beliefs and the need for a very positive attitude.*

*The audience was very receptive to her and most of the time you could hear a pin drop. After the talk she had numerous people approach her and thank her for the information she presented, much of which they were previously unaware. Some just simply wanted to hug her. It left us both feeling very fulfilled.*

*All this was accomplished complete with West Texas accent in Kim’s customary fashion of throwing in digs at some of the people present. Her oncologist in particular caught his share, (What the heck IS a buckeye anyway?).*

*I’m sharing this with those that are our good friends. I wish you all could have been there, I think you*

have really enjoyed the whole thing. Oh, by the way, it was held in Boulder, Co., but we managed to live through it. Ha!”

Thank you for sharing this with us – we have the greatest respect for Kim and Glenn – *Soke*

## NEWS FROM ARIZONA

Congratulations Ethan with the Shorin-Ryu Karate and Kobudo Kids Class! Ethan was recently promoted to Rokukyu and has technique that is as good if not better than many adults. You should see this kid punch!

**Right Photo** - Ethan promoted to rokukyu poses with brother (on the right) as the two prepare for a career in Hollywood.  
**Below** – Ethan receives certificate of rank in the Shorin-Ryu Kids class.



In other news from the Hombu, members training on kobudo night took an evening to learn the basics of the art of [hojojutsu](#).

This really ‘*tied up*’ the class for the evening.



**Left** – Rich Mendolia is hog-tied by Shihan-Dai Neal Adam while Senpai Bill Borea (Right) takes his turn.





Left- Ryan Harden works on knots to restrain Patrick Scofield.

## T-SHIRTS & SWEATSHIRTS

We have a couple of 'Seiyo No Shorin-Ryu Karate Kobudo Kai' (XL) sweatshirts left. These sell for \$20/each (plus \$5 shipping if we have to ship them).



We also have a couple of 'Arizona Hombu' t-shirts that include XXL and small sizes. These are \$15/each (plus shipping if they need to be shipped).



## FUNAKOSHI LET NEKO OUT OF THE BAG



Anku Itosu and Gichin Funakoshi from Okinawa let the [cat out of the bag](#). They already told everyone about Okinawan Karate. So it's no longer a secret: please don't keep us a secret either. **We are a martial arts family (ryu) so bring your friends, family and co-workers to visit our Shorin-Ryu family.** Make a copy and share our newsletter with your office or a friend – or forward it by email.

Left – [Cat out of a bag](#).

*Recognize the office to the right? We'll hear more about this office and the person who owns it in our next newsletter. The owner is one of our yudansha who trained at the UW Campus Shorin-Ryu Karate and Kobudo Club back in the late 1990s.*

## UTAH GASSUKU

Interested in attending the East Canyon Utah outside training for families? Contact either [Kyoshi Rob Watson](#) or Renshi [Todd Stoneking](#) for information. This year's clinic will include training in katana, hanbo and hojo taught by Soke.



## LINKS

[Shorin-Ryu History Blog](#)

[Man of Year Nomination](#)

[Japanese archery](#)

[Self-Defense](#)

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