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Norwalk Kendo Dojo: the Next 40 Years

In October 2005, Norwalk Kendo Dojo celebrated its 40th anniversary. Founded by the late Hara Akio Sensei, the dojo has a long history of achievements, and, with many new students joining, it is looking forward to another great year.

Key to the dojo's success is its teaching staff. Yamaguchi Takeshi Sensei (7 Dan Kyoshi) has been an instructor with the dojo since its inception. Huang Yung-Chun Sensei (8 Dan Hanshi), Henmi Morihei Sensei (7 Dan Kyoshi), and Fukawa Koji Sensei (6 Dan Renshi) complete the senior advisory board. Kodama Jean Sensei (6 Dan Renshi), Yoshimura Mike Sensei (6 Dan), and Yoshimura Steve Sensei (5 Dan) comprise the primary instructional staff; among them they have won many medals at the national and international level. A host of talented yudansha and kyu kenshi further contribute to the success of the dojo. Most importantly, the dojo has a strong parents organization, without which such success could not be achieved.

The dojo has had several members go on to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces.



Katsuaki Tanaka

Recently Tanaka Katsuaki returned for a visit after four years in the Army, including over a year in Kosovo. He will serve another six months in Kosovo as a civilian contractor, and the dojo eagerly awaits his safe return.

The 13th World Kendo Championships (13WKC) will be held in Taipei, Taiwan, in December 2006. Held every three years, the WKC are the Olympics of the kendo world. In January, Domen Sumi, Omura Yuli, and Kodama Jean competed in the final elimination tournament for the U.S. national women's team, having survived two previous rounds of eliminations in October 2004 and April 2005. All three competed well in the final eliminations, and Domen Sumi was picked as alternate to the U.S. Women's Team. Norwalk Dojo is very proud of Sumi and is 100% behind her as she begins the grueling training for Team USA.



Members of the Norwalk Kendo Dojo. The Kendo senseis, located in the second row, from left to right are: Steve Yoshimura, Koji Fukawa, Morihei Henmi, Takeshi Yamaguchi, Yung Chun Huang, Jean Kodama, and Mike Yoshimura.

Kendo, literally "the way of the sword," is an art requiring years of training and perseverance. Yuli and Sumi both started kendo in 1991 at the ages of 6 and 7, respectively, and have been good friends and competitors ever since. They have compiled many successes over the years. Yuli won spots on the Southern California Kendo Federation (SCKF) Junior Youth Team at the All U.S. Kendo Championships (AUSKC) in 2002 and the SCKF Women's Team in AUSKC 2005; each time those teams won gold. Last fall, with teammate Endo Yumi, Sumi and Yuli brought home first place in the Women's Division at the SCKF Team Championships.

Kodama Sensei started kendo at the age of 9 when Norwalk Dojo was founded, and is the only original student still practicing kendo. She has participated in every AUSKC held, failing to medal just once in 1984. In AUSKC 2005, she was the lone woman competing in the Senior Division.



Team USA member Sumi Domen (center), and semi-finalists Yuli Omura (left) and Jean Kodama (right). Sumi Domen will be the youngest of eight women on the U.S. team at the World Kendo Championships in Taiwan in December 2006.

Kendo is unique in how much more important mental strength is than physical strength. Regardless of size, age, or gender, one can enjoy kendo and do well, so long as one's spirit and fundamentals are strong. Not only *can* one continue doing kendo throughout one's life, one *must* continue in order to learn all the lessons kendo has to teach.

Norwalk Kendo Dojo practices Monday and Friday evenings. New members are welcome. For information see the dojo website at <http://www.eanet.com/norwalk/>