

## Passing of Yamaguchi Takeshi Sensei

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On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Norwalk Kendo Dojo lost our most senior advisor, Yamaguchi Takeshi sensei.

Yamaguchi sensei was born in Los Angeles in 1938. Interned with his family in Manzanar in the months following Pearl Harbor and subsequently moving through various relocation camps ending in Texas, he moved to Japan with his family following the War, eventually returning to Los Angeles. In 1963, he and his younger brother Makoto began training in both kendo and iaido under the great Mori Torao sensei, known by many as the founder of kendo in the United States. With Mori sensei's foundation, and the tutelage of other such greats as Akio Hara sensei and Torataro Nakabara sensei, Yamaguchi sensei evolved into a major teacher of regional, national, and worldwide importance.

Yamaguchi Sensei often traveled throughout the country and even internationally to help develop both kendo and iaido, especially to places in need of kodansha level instructors, helping to spread his love and knowledge of both arts. Even after a region was able to establish its own strong kendo and iaido community, he would be asked back for his continuing guidance, recently returning from such a trip to Texas just a few weeks before his passing.

When Hara sensei founded Norwalk Kendo Dojo in 1964, Yamaguchi sensei was one of the first assistant instructors at the dojo, going on to help found Covina Dojo in 1969 and founding Costa Mesa Dojo in 1975. He also served as President of the Southern California Kendo Federation, continuing as its senior advisor as well as principle instructor for its kata and referee seminars. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the All United States Kendo Federation for many decades to the present day, mentoring many who have held office. He was the coach for Team USA in the 6<sup>th</sup> World Kendo Championships in France in 1985.

Yamaguchi Sensei founded the Southern California Iaido Association and served as its head instructor and advisor. He was the first iaido sensei for most of the founders of the Northern California Iaido Association and was a nurturing advisor and mentor to their group. We at Norwalk Dojo were so fortunate to have him as our head iaido instructor and advisor.

Yamaguchi sensei's health had been in decline, and he was not actively participating in keiko for a long time. But fortunately he was able to teach our beginning students; they may not realize yet how lucky they have been to receive the teachings of such a great sensei.

On Friday night, after changing to keiko and hakama, he suddenly collapsed in the dressing room. Though efforts to revive him were not promising, he was quickly transported to a nearby hospital, where a large crowd of sensei, kenshi, and parents from Norwalk Dojo were soon joined by Costa Mesa Dojo members to await word of his condition. Sadly, he could not be revived.

Our deepest condolences to his brother Makoto, daughter Elaine, son Masashi, nephew Hiro, and other family members. We will all miss him.

*Photo by Dennis Ralutin. Thank you to Dennis Ralutin, TomBolling, and others for assistance with the material in this article.*

*Norwalk Kendo Dojo practices Mondays from 7:00 to 8:30 pm and Fridays from 7:30 to 10:00 pm. We practice iaido from 9 to 10 pm on Mondays. New members for both kendo and iaido are welcome; beginners are accepted on the first Friday practice of each odd month. For information about Norwalk Dojo, including upcoming and past events as well as how to join, please see the dojo website at <http://www.eanet.com/norwalk>, or send email to [norwalkkendo@gmail.com](mailto:norwalkkendo@gmail.com).*