

## AUSSIES TRAVEL TO KARATE SOURCE

Mike Williams Sensei, Australian representative for Seito Shito-ryu Karate, recently visited Japan to train at the organisation's headquarters in Osaka. The head instructor of Williams Family Karate dojo in Perth, WA, Williams has been training for his 5th Dan since his last trip to Japan in July 2005, when he attended the 5th International Taikai shortly after the death of Kenzo Mabuni Soke, head of the Seito Shito-ryu style.

"Since that visit I have been training for my 5th Dan and I was fortunate enough to have two visits at my dojo from a Japanese Shihan, the last visit being in February 2008. After that visit, I was invited to travel to Japan in October 2008," said Williams.

"On October 15, my wife and I made the trip to Osaka where we were met by my Shoji Shihan and his wife, who had kindly offered to put us up while we were in Japan. Our schedule had been planned out well before we arrived so we knew exactly when and where we would be training.

"After a quick refresher course on the train system and some basic directions to the dojos we were scheduled to visit for training, we prepared ourselves for what would be a great learning experience for both of us. My wife is a 1st Kyu Brown-belt and this was to be her first time training in Japan."

During their two-week stay in Japan, the husband-and-wife team spent their days sightseeing and exploring Japanese culture, leaving them the evenings, as well as Sunday mornings, to attend training sessions, which ran for around two hours each.

Their stay in Japan also coincided with the monthly Shihan training held at the honbu

[headquarters] dojo, which is the original dojo of Shito-ryu Founder Kenwa Mabuni. It was also the home of Kenzo Mabuni Soke and the Mabuni family still live in the house.

"I had been told that I would be taken to the honbu dojo by Sakai Shihan on Sunday afternoon after training at Sakai Shihan's dojo the same morning," says Williams. "I was looking forward to watching the training session as it is rare for Westerners to have such an opportunity.

"We arrived around 1.30pm and I was feeling tired after the two-hour training session we had just completed, but I was very keen to see the Shihans train. After entering the dojo, which required a formal kneeling bow at the entrance, I was invited to pray at the shrine of Kenzo Mabuni Soke. I had only ever been in the honbu dojo once before and on that occasion I was meeting with Kenzo Mabuni Soke; now I was being invited to pray at his shrine."

To William's surprise, Sakai Shihan then invited him to join the class. "I hadn't expected to be joining the class but I didn't hesitate to accept the invitation. I only had the *do-gi* that I used at the last training session an hour before, which was still soaking wet, but I was told it was okay and quickly got changed."

Williams spent the next two hours training with 15 Shihans – an experience he says he'll never forget. "I was able to follow most of the instructions with my limited knowledge of Japanese, with the technical aspects being explained to me in English by Sakai Shihan," he said. "I learnt some finer points of kata and *bunkai* [applications], which I can now pass to the Black-belts at my dojo."



Instructors from Nippon Karate-Do Shihan Kai dojos in Osaka, all 6th–8th Dan



Sakai Shihan with Williams