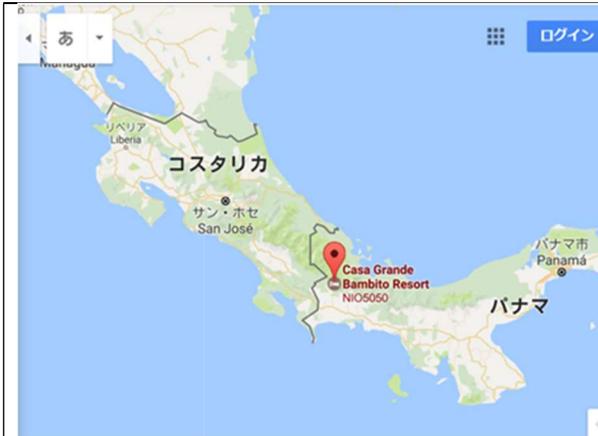


Hello everyone.

From February 9-13, I went to Panama to participate the Aikido Panama Buikukai Seminar. I would like to tell you all about my experience. Please enjoy this article, although my English is not excellent.



The seminar was held at the Casa Grande Bambito Resort hotel on the weekend of 10, 11, and 12 of February. Almost 50 people came from Panama, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. I was the only one from Nicaragua. The hotel is located near the border of Costa Rica and mountain plateau. The daytime weather was so comfortable, and a refreshing breeze was blowing. I never got sweaty during the seminar. However, the fierce wind like storm sometimes woke me up in the night. It took almost 5 hours from Nicaragua to the hotel by airplane and taxi. I flew to Panama City and transferred there, and arrived at David airport. Then I went to the hotel, anxiously by taxi, because I could not understand the detailed address of the hotel.



Instructors of the seminar were Yabuuchi Shihan (7dan), and Yamashita Sensei (5Dan) from Japan. In 1995, Yamashita Sensei came to Panama as a JICA volunteer just like me. Thereafter, he has come to Panama every year and has continued for over 20 years. The host of this seminar is Aikido Yamato Buikukai Panama dojo, and Dojocho is Gabriel Vega. One day when I had the lunch with Vega Sensei, he told me, “Since Yamashita Sensei came to Panama, almost 300 students enrolled his class. But I am only one student who continues with Yamashita Sensei”. Then I asked him “What makes you keep good relationship with Yamashita Sensei? He answered “ that is Yamashita senei’s Patience ”. I understood the hardship and difficulty of Yamashita Sensei’s 20 years!!



Whenever the class was over, the junior students went to the senior students, and offered to fold the hakama. It seems to me that they yearn for hakama. Then the senior students teach how to fold hakama precisely. All students have respect for each other. While Shihan is demonstrating the techniques, all students are sitting up straight in seiza, and watching carefully. In the class Shihan asked who would be Uke for him. One senior student came up to Shihan, and said “Onegaishimasu”. I thought that the Uke was already promised student at first. But it was not true. Shihan allows uke to take the initiative. Shihan does not point to some one for his uke. To tell the truth, it is not so easy to be the uke for Shihan. Shihan throws uke very hard and severely. After uke is thrown, he bows and turns toward to all the students. Then he said “Onegai shimasu”. I was impressed by the uke’s behavior.



Also, what I was impressed by was many students swab the tatami with a wet rag, getting down on their knees, before the seminar starts. This behavior is uncommon even in Japan these days. They have been conscious of keeping the dojo clean all the time. After the seminar was finished, they picked up the tatami and piled them in one place. Then they wrapped the tatami with a large saran wrap type material which was installed on the broom shat. I have never seen such a method in Japan. I thought that all students in the seminar really took care with the tatamis. All students are cooperative. .



The last night of the Aikido seminar, all students showed up at a large hall after 8:00 pm. There was a karaoke system, in the large hall, consisting of a computer, projector and microphone. The karaoke songs were downloaded through Youtube. After the dinner, they started singing. One of the students sang the Japanese song “Kawano nagare no youni” He sang so well. Since I heard his song, I got slightly teary. It reminds me of the past memory in Japan, and hard time in Nicaragua. After the karaoke, all students started dancing. Finally I was led to the large hall to dance with them. The dancing lasted until midnight. I thought this is the life style in Latin America. I am so happy to see many Aikidoka in the other countries.

