

SEUSKF News

South Eastern US Kendo Federation Newsletter • Volume 10, Issue 1 • Summer 2009

2008 US National Taikai Managers Report *by Ken Strawn*

As 2008 National Championship Team Manager for SEUSKF, I wish to report on our results at the recent championships in Las Vegas and make some observations and suggestions for the next time.

First of all, let us congratulate our first two National Champions ever. Peter Park of Georgia Kendo Alliance won our first National title on Thursday morning, July 3, when he took first place in the Men's Mudansha division. Later that day, Dong Jin Kim of Shudokan Kendo Dojo (Washington DC area) won the Seniors Divisor after suffering a severe ankle sprain during the championship match. He heroically continued the match after having his ankle wrapped. On Friday (July 4), my leg was sore and I could not get around the courts like I had the first day so I do not have as clear of a picture of how everyone did.



SEUSKF Team lineup

photo: D. Ralutin

It was the Youth, Men and Women's Individuals divisions. I know that Tomoya Tanaka, Sakae Imai, Pavel Litterbach, and Jay Lane all won their opening three-men groups. Tanaka Sensei advanced to the final 8. I did not see many of the women's groups and perhaps Team Coach Arai Sensei or

the participants can fill in what I have missed or forgotten.

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Heroes of Kendo *by Ken Strawn*

“I very fortunate.” These words were spoken to me by Jiro Sakano Sensei on the last time I saw him.

He was discussing the fact that he was still able to practice Kendo at the age of eighty two. He lived another ten years and while I do not know if he continued to practice for those ten years, I will not be surprised to learn he did. Sakano Sensei was a humble man from whom I learned a great deal during my nine years of Kendo training in Northern California Kendo Federation. I was a member of San Jose State University Kendo Club but whenever I visited at Mountain View Dojo, he always welcomed me. I too am very fortunate.

The Charlotte Kendo Club was warming up for our Sunday afternoon practice when a pain developed in my right calf. I sat out practice and it seemed to go away. Arriving at the school where I taught the next morning, I had to walk from my car to the Principal's office to sign in. I barely got there, my leg was hurting so bad. A call to

my doctor describing my symptoms produced the following comment: "Don't bother coming in here. Go straight to the emergency room." At the emergency room, they found the culprit. I had a large blood clot in the artery that runs through the calf muscle and several enlarged vessels in the ankle that combined with the clot to cut off the flow of blood to my right foot. My foot was dying due to lack of oxygen. I won't tie you up with long descriptions of the things my doctors tried to save my foot. Suffice it to say they failed. I was not that surprised when they came in and told me that the foot must come off. I was surprised when I woke up and most of my right leg below the knee was gone. They discovered the deadening of the tissue had progressed farther than thought when they opened up my leg. I was left with about three inches below the knee. I can remember long ago getting into *(continued on page 8)*

Missing an issue? We are currently scanning and formatting old issues of the SEUSKF news to be posted on the SEUSKF web site. We hope to have this completed soon.

2008 SEUSKF Taikai

The 2008 SEUSKF taikai was hosted by the Memphis Kendo club on Oct. , Final tournament results are as follows:

Youth A

1. Riku Imamura, 6.kyu (Little Rock)
2. Sayaka Givens, 5.kyu (Little Rock)
3. Kai Imamura, 5.kyu (Little Rock)
3. Chris Corleone, 4.kyu (Memphis)

Youth B

1. Yuki Kasuya, 2.dan (Memphis)
2. Masumi Kamimura, 2.dan (Memphis)
3. Hayato Desouza, 1.dan (GKA)
3. Conrad Delancey, 2.kyu (Memphis)

Mudansha

1. Kevin Kim, 1.kyu (GKA)
2. Jamie Tillman, 1.kyu (Nashville)
3. Jiff Kim, 1.kyu (GKA)
3. Paul Kutz, 3.kyu (Charlotte)

1dan/2dan

1. Shingo Watanabe, 2.dan (Nashville)
2. Craig Philbeck, 2.dan (Charlotte)
3. Pavel Litterbach, 2.dan (GKA)
3. Yuki Kasuya, 2.dan (Memphis)

Women

1. Masumi Kamimura, 2.dan (Memphis)
2. Ryoko Barr, 5.dan (GKA)
3. Sonoko Mori, 3.dan (Gulf Coast)
3. Reiko Desouza, 4.dan (GKA)

3 dan+

1. Tomoya Tanaka, 4.dan (GKA)
2. Katsuyuki Tamura, 4.dan (GKA)
3. Masahiro Ishizaka, 3.dan (Little Rock)
3. Yukihiisa Tokunaga, 3.dan (Triangle)

Senior

1. Susumu Yazaki, 7.dan (Nashville)
2. Sakae Imai, 4.dan (Nashville)
3. Michio Kajitani, 6.dan (Little Rock)
3. Kunitoshi Arai, 6.dan (GKA)

Team

1. GKA (A) - Akira Hara (3.dan), Pavel Litterbach (2.dan), Ryoko Barr (5.dan), Tomoya Tanaka (4.dan), Katsuyuki Tamura (4.dan)
2. Memphis (A) - Yuki Kasuya (2.dan), Don Crittenden (2.dan), Rogers Gossett (3.dan), Kazuto Yasuda (4.dan), Patrick Register (4.dan)
3. GKA (B) - Yuki Desouza (3.dan), Daniel Kim (3.dan), Stephen Kang (3.dan), Hyon-ki Yi (3.dan), Kentaro Hara (4.dan)
3. Nashville (A) - Dale Kirby (1.dan), Jamie Tillman (1.kyu), Susumu Watanabe (2.dan), Sakae Imai (4.dan), Susumu Yazaki (7.dan)

Takaaki Nakahama Memorial Kanto Sho

Award - Patrick Register, 4.dan (Memphis)

Chris Aday Memorial Kanto Sho Award

Pavel Litterbach, 2.dan (GKA)



Opening ceremony at Memphis

photo: V. Vulfson

2009-2010 SEUSKF BOD Election

The results are in from the BOD elections. Board elections occur every 2 years. There are 9 positions available on the Board and they are chosen by SEUSKF member dojo voting. Each member dojo gets to cast ballot votes with the 9 nominees receiving the highest number of votes elected to the Board. The results tallied by Mike Watson on Dec. 30, 2008 are as follows:

K. Strawn
S. Maeda
P. Hyun
R. Barr
T. Liu-Canada
M. Watson
K. Arai
R. Eitel
R. Souder

At the first meeting of the new BOD officers were chosen as reflected below:

President: K. Strawn
VP Promotions: S. Maeda
VP Education: P. Hyun
VP Competition: R. Barr
Treasurer: T. Liu-Canada
Secretary: M. Watson
Members-at-Large: K. Arai,
R. Eitel, R. Souder

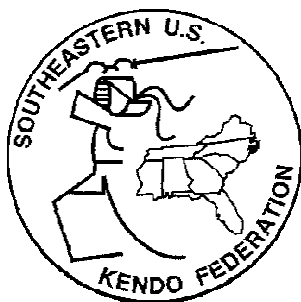
Meet your Board of Directors:

Phillip Hyun

Hyun sensei is currently the V.P. of Education for the SEUSKF. He is a multiple time BOD member. In addition he has been part of the SEUSKF team at the US National kendo taikai and is head instructor for the Knoxville kendo club. Hyun sensei recently passed his rokudan shinsa and is very active in promoting kendo throughout the Southeast. Shown below with his daughter at the 2008 SEUSKF taikai in Memphis.



Photo by: V. Vufson



2008 US National Taikai

(continued from page 1)

The Individuals were double-elimination events and several men and women advanced because of winning one of their matches in the initial round. Saturday (July 5) was the main event, the Team Championships. Our Junior Youth team gave it a good fight but lost both their first round matches. Special notice should be made of Masumi Kamimura, who won both of her team matches against tough competition. We had no Senior Youth competitors only three years after placing third in the 2005 national championships at Detroit. Arai Sensei and I split up being with the Mens and Womens teams. I was with the Men's team so I did not see the Women's team matches. But I know they had a tough draw because I got to draw the numbers at the managers meeting where the matches were set up. The tough grouping they were in (Northern California and Pacific Northwest, I believe) prevented them from finishing as high as they did last



Dong Jin Kim sensei

Photo: Myung Hyun Sung

time (third place in 2005). The Men's team lost to eventual third place finisher All-Eastern US Kendo federation and defeated the new Western Kendo Federation (an association of Korean Kumdo clubs in the LA area). In the second round they fought Central California Kendo Federation to a tie



Opening Ceremonies

photo: D. Ralutin

but when points were totaled up, CCKF advanced due to scoring one more point than we had. Special mention should go to Frank Nieves, who lost no matches during his three team matches and Tomoya Tanaka Sensei's leadership as captain.

Now for some observations. I think this was the best prepared team we have ever sent. We had three team practices before the taikai. This is the most we have ever had. We need to look at how to get in even more team practices. The groups that do well (California, PNWKF, GNEUSKF, & AEUSKF) practice once a week for six months or more to get ready. To get ready for the Chicago Nationals in 1981, Northern California practiced 5 times a week for two months under a professional Kendo sensei from Kokushikan University (I know because I was part of it). This is something the Competition Committee of the SEUSKF Board of Directors will look into but we are open to suggestions. We only had a coach and a manager while some other federations had 3 or 4 coaches. I recommend we do this next time. Have a manager, a youth coach, a Women's coach, and a Men's coach. It is too much for one or two people to keep track of, especially with the increased number of divisions. Everyone would still practice together (I asked the other federations that had 4 coaches how they did this) but the coaches would set up the team orders and see that everyone gets to the right court. SEUSKF needs to show more support for each other during the matches. Some people did this but I noticed the major groups sat together around the courts and

cheered their competitors. The cheering supporters were easy to identify because they were wearing jackets with their federation names and logos on them. I will come back to federation identifying jackets in a moment.

Let me discuss cheering first. Proper Kendo behavior does not approve of cheering or booing decisions you don't

I noticed we were the only federation that did not have our Federation emblem on our zekken. While it made spotting our players on faraway courts easier, I think we should add our emblem to our zekken. Perhaps we can have them made up as patches and just get them sewed onto our existing zekken. Or we may have to have completely new zekken made up for everyone, which can be



SEUSKF Team photo: Craig Philbeck

approve of. Kendo is not football or basketball. Soccer does have some gentlemanly attitudes built in to it (despite the boorish behavior of some European fans) but we boisterous Americans love getting loud at games. All coaches (and I used to be one) know how fans yelling for you can inspire you to play better. Before we say not to cheer, let me tell you a story. In 1948, my sensei (then Lieutenant) Benjamin Hazard was introduced to Kendo and Masami Tanaya Sensei by another US Army lieutenant, Maki Miyahara. At that time Tanaya Sensei was the Kendo instructor for the police department at one of the outlying districts of Tokyo (Tsukiji, I think). He told his kenshi to sit behind their team at taikai and cheer them on. He told them I will come over and tell you to stop yelling. But when I leave, go back to cheering. His team won three consecutive Tokyo Police Championships and Tanaya Sensei found himself transferred to the Tokyo police headquarters and made chief Kendo instructor. I am not saying to cheer or not to cheer. I am just telling a story.

fairly expensive. Barr Sensei suggested getting warm-up jackets with our emblem on it and perhaps "TEAM SEUSKF" embroidered on the back. Many other federations had jackets and I think it helped solidify them as a group. Barr Sensei looked into this and came up with a cost of approximately \$50 a jacket. We will be looking further into this by the next nationals. I noticed that a number of other Federations all wore the same colored tenugui.

One group even had bright orange tenugui. I am suggesting that we have tenugui of some color that stands out with the SEUSKF emblem in white. All of our competitors in the nationals will be required to wear them. Along the same lines as the same colored tenugui, I might suggest SEUSKF buying a set of the same colored doh for the teams to wear. I was practicing at San Jose Dojo when Shoichi Araki Sensei retired and passed the position of shihan to Charley Tanaka Sensei. Under Tanaka Sensei's leadership San Jose Dojo went from being in the middle of the pack of Northern California to the dominant dojo at tournaments. One of the things he did was to raise the money and purchase a set of five *same* doh (sharkskin doh--like the one

Arai Sensei wears) for the team to wear. It certainly set them apart from the other dojos. I've seen the Northern Cal team at the National Championships wear those same doh from San Jose. Maybe they should have worn them again this year as this is the first time in US Kendo history that Northern Cal did not finish in the top four.

Another thing that Tanaka Sensei did was to have a banner made up saying San Jose Kendo Dojo. I saw Pacific Northwest Federation had a similar type banner which the lead person in their group carried as they entered the tournament site. I asked several Japanese people what the word for that banner was but no one seemed to know. I once asked Tanaka Sensei what it was and he had a specific Japanese term for it. It is an upright staff with two cords going from the top to the ends of a horizontal bar. The banner hangs from this bar. If anyone knows what this is called, please let me know. *(editors note: I believe this would be called a nobori)*

I know that most of the GKA people stayed in the same hotel. I think this would be a good idea for the entire SEUSKF team to stay at the same hotel and either rent enough cars or hire a bus to get us to the tournament site each day. We don't have to stay at the official hotel, unless you are part of the tournament shinpan, officers, or staff. The managers and coaches should stay with the team.

Arriving at the tournament site together would make it easier to get space for a warm up practice. I noticed several federations that, when their practice was concluded, lined their men & kote up together at one end of the gym. It made me think that this was a federation that had its act together.

I think that all members of the SEUSKF team should be there each morning and afternoon to line up in giban & hakama for the opening ceremonies and the presentation of awards to show support for their team mates, even if they have no matches that day. I understand that some people do not arrive on the first day if they do not have matches but if you are there, you should be in giban & hakama.

After the first day's matches, I got trapped in the hallway from the parking garage to the elevator by the Southern California Kendo Federation Team. They

were being addressed by their coach, Chris Yang Sensei (2005 US National Champion) and it filled the complete hallway. I was amazed to hear that Southern California had BED CHECKS!! If we want to do well, we have to take this as serious as they did. There is a reason Southern Cal Federation has always finished first or second and this is part of it.

I have made a lot of suggestions and the competition committee is open to any ideas you have. I also made some mistakes. Here are some that need to be done differently next time.

The ad in the tournament program-I think the wording was okay but next time we need someone with more knowledge of computer graphics than I possess to do the layout. The one I did was kind of drab looking.

- Making sure that all nearby dojos can attend the team practices to give our participants a variety of competitors to practice against.
- Making sure that supplies are available at the practice site--like shimpan flags and floor marking tape to lay out a court with.
- Taking a team picture earlier so that it is available when AUSKF asks for it.

Or rather than having a single team picture, taking individual pictures of everyone on the team.

About a month after the tournament, have a celebratory banquet (or party) and pass out certificates to the team members. I picture something on parchment style paper that has our emblem and words to the effect that "SEUSKF wishes to acknowledge that _____ represented our federation in the 2008 Kendo National Championship tournament held at Las Vegas Nevada on July 3, 4, & 5." It would be signed by the SEUSKF President, team manager, and team coach.

All of the things I have suggested would require more money being available than we currently budget for the National Championships. SEUSKF has an annual income between \$5,000 & \$6,000. We had put aside about \$1400 a year from our annual budget to pay for the 2008 championships. We spent about \$5,000 in 2008 on National Championships expenses. To do everything I have suggested would probably take \$10,000 or more. I do not wish

to spend all the dues money collected on the nationals. We need to fund seminars and promotionals in our various sub-regions. Therefore we should look at some fund raising activities for the extra money needed. Southern California Federation puts together a program booklet with individual pictures of their team members, sells ads to local businesses, and each dojo puts in an ad. It is a very professional looking publication and they usually raise enough money to pay the airfare and hotel rooms of their entire team. This is something we might look into doing. They (SCKF) also collect a lot of contributions from local companies. One of my ideas is to copyright the SEUSKF emblem, put it on tenugui, tee shirts, and polo shirts, and sell them at SEUSKF tournaments. The dojo hosting the tournament could still make up their own shirts, etc but they could not use the SEUSKF emblem without the Board of Director's permission. We put all the money raised into a fund which would be used to do some of the things listed above or split the



Dong Jin Kim sensei (back facing camera) in the championship match vs. Mikio Koga sensei
photo: D. Ralutin

money up among the participants to reimburse them for their expenses. I am sure the rest of the members of our federation can come up with other ideas. Please send any of your ideas or suggestions to me at:
kenstrawn@earthlink.net.

I want to emphasize that these are all SUGGESTIONS. Nothing has been approved by the SEUSKF Board of Directors. Please check the minutes of the Board meetings at seuskf.org to see what has been decided and what is being discussed for the future.

Thank you for your attention.

Ken Strawn

Team manager 2008 SEUSKF National Team

2007-2010 SEUSKF President

“Yes, you can do it!!!”

By Kunitoshi Arai

2008 SEUSKF Team Coach

Dong Jin Kim Sensei (Shudokan) and Peter Park (Georgia Kendo Alliance) made it a historic day in the United States National Championships in Las Vegas. Not since the United States National Championships began in 1978 in Los Angeles has the South Eastern United States Kendo Federation ever had a first place finish. On July 3, 2008, SEUSKF had two. Kim Sensei and Mr. Park's fantastic performances in Las Vegas surprised many of the other regional federations.

In the past, James Tamashiro (GKA) got third place in the Junior Youth division in 1999 and Frank Nieves (South Florida) placed third in the 2002 Junior Youth division and way back before there was a SEUSKF, David Holt-Wasson of Atlanta (then in the Eastern United States Kendo Federation) took third place at the Second U.S. Nationals in Chicago in the Youth Individual division.

Not only these two gentleman but many others of our federation advanced to the medals round (the tournament ladder after the initial round robin groupings).

In the Men's division, Tomoyo Tanaka (GKA) advanced to the final eight before losing to Kevin Suh of Southern California Kendo Federation. Also advancing past the round robin were Pavel Litterbach (GKA), Chang Oh (GKA), and Jason Lane (Charlotte).

In the Women's division, Ryoko Barr (GKA) made it to the final sixteen. Also advancing were Satomi Lane (Charlotte), Yuka Kamimura (Memphis), and Yoshimi Desouza (GKA).

Unfortunately, we had no participants in the Senior Youth division but in the Junior Youth division Hayato Desouza (GKA) advanced to the medal rounds.

Among the members of the Men's division Mr. Pavel Litterbach impressed me very much. He started kendo 3 years ago at GKA. I taught him the fundamentals such as how to hold the shinai, footwork, and basic skills. He never missed a practice (currently 3 times a week). Furthermore, he attended other dojo's practices and participated in Detroit, Cleveland, and New York tournaments. His efforts paid off. Although he was selected to the Men's division, no one expected him to advance to the medal rounds. His performance against Keiichiro Narumoto of the Midwest Federation (who would finish second overall in the Men's division and is a famous kenshi in Japan) was impressive. Especially an ai-uchi men (both kenshi strike men at the same time) which one of the shinpan raised the flag for Litterbach.



Peter Park after winning mudansha division *photo: D. Ralutin*

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to brag on one of my students. His success should encourage all of our SEUSKF members. If people are really motivated and devoted to Kendo, and pursue it with great enthusiasm, you too can make it to a high-level tournament. Even if you start at an older age.

The next United States National Championship will probably be held in Atlanta, Georgia. I hope I will be able to see many more Pavel Litterbachs.

Yes, you can do it!! Good luck!



Team manager (Ken Strawn, L) and Team Coach (Kunitoshi Arai, R)

Heroes of Kendo.....continued from page 1

I figured I could lose an arm and still do Kendo by using Jodan. But lose a leg! No more hiking, climbing, dancing! Life would be over. By the time I actually lost a leg, I had gotten a little older and maybe a little wiser. I had heard of Doctor Gordon Warner, who along with my sensei, Doctor Benjamin Hazard had started a kendo club at the University of California in 1952. Warner Sensei had begun Kendo training with the late Torao Mori Sensei prior to World War 2 and lost a leg at the battle of Bougainville. It was an action for which he was nominated for the Medal of Honor. Following the war and at Mori Sensei's urging, he returned to training in Kendo. A nidan at the time of the founding of the University of California Kendo club, he eventually rose to shichi dan while using an artificial leg. His example was an inspiration to me.

At the suggestion of a Kendo friend, I exchanged several letters with Warner Sensei, currently living in Okinawa at a youthful 96. His letters were full of encouragement and advice. But my determination of how I would deal with my loss had already been made while I was sitting in that hospital room awaiting the diagnosis from my vascular surgeon. I could already see that there would be no good news. We are all familiar with the many surveys of young people that asked who their heroes are. We all know how young people list television and movie stars, rock and roll singers, rap artists, and the like. I suppose that in that younger and less wise time, I would have named Roy Rogers and

Steve Reeves. I was fortunate enough in my life to know my heroes personally. My main hero was my father, Harrell Strawn, who was shot down over German occupied France and spent eighteen months in a POW camp. He never talked much of his experiences while he was alive but research on the internet has revealed a history of forced "death marches" on starvation rations to escape the advancing Russians. The Germans wished to preserve the POW's as bargaining chips when the war ended.

My other heroes are men like Benjamin Hazard, Rod Omoto, Yoshinari Miyata, and Yoshinori Takao. They are Kendo sensei with whom I have spent large amounts of time. There are many others who have influenced me, too many to list in this short article. From these men I learned the determination not to allow the loss of a leg to stop me from living my life to the fullest.

None of these men preached to me how to face adversity. It was learned by osmosis, spending a lot of time in the presence of men of sterling character. Their characters were formed by a lifetime of overcoming adversity during times of devastation and scarcity. They taught me things that cannot be put into words.

Each generation must face their own adversities and in so doing, forge their own character. Each individual must face their own personal adversities. No person lives a life without some grief, loss, failure, or pain. My father and my sensei had the great depression and World War 2. My generation had Viet Nam and Watergate. The current generation has the problem of international terrorism, a genie I don't think will be going back into the bottle any time soon, and the consequences of my generation's "If it feels good, do it" counterculture. I am very fortunate. I can still do Kendo. Artificial legs do not last as long as a new car and when my first prosthetic leg wore out, my prosthetician rebuilt it into a special leg for doing kendo. I can still do something that I love to do.

How fortunate those of us who do Kendo are, to have our heroes available in person to spend time with and learn from. Wherever Kendo is being practiced, there is some hero opening the gym door and hoping enough people will show up for them to pass on what they know. And the people who come to practice each session will learn through osmosis what makes a person of character.

We are all so very fortunate.

SEUSKF Rules

This section will feature new rules or helpful reminders about SEUSKF and AUSKF rules involving taikai and shinsa.

Shinsa: a *shinsa* is a promotion event. A rule that some members may not be aware of is that you must have prior rank before testing for ikkyu. In addition ikkyu rank is pass/fail just like dan ranks. This means that if you are sankyu and test for ikkyu at a SEUSKF shinsa you will not be given nikyu if you do not pass your ikkyu exam and will instead remain sankyu.

Tidbits

This is the first attempt at getting the SEUSKF newsletter off the ground again. This time around we are not going to produce a print version to save the costs involved. The current newsletter will be posted on the SEUSKF web site (www.seuskf.org) as well as being emailed to each dojo. I hope everyone enjoys it.

I would like to ask for contributions to the newsletter from sensei and student alike. I would like to be able to post a small introduction to each SEUSKF dojo as well as the sensei in the SEUSKF to allow members to get to know each other. In order to accomplish this I will need dojo sensei/contact people give me a short history of the dojo as well as the sensei(s). I would also enjoy getting questions (can be about kendo, shiai, shinsa, bogu, suppliers etc etc... anything to do with kendo or the SEUSKF), as well as articles submitted by interested parties. I would also like to call for photos that can be placed in future newsletters of SEUSKF members, sensei, guests and events. If you send in photos please let me know who to give credit for the picture to as well as good caption information saying who is in the picture and when/what/where is going on.

As many of you may know in addition to this newsletter, being the SEUSKF secretary, program director for Triangle Kendo & Iaido, instructor at the UNC dojo of T.K.I., and web master for T.K.I., I am also the web master for the SEUSKF web site. To this end I have created a Google map of the dojo in the SEUSKF (you can view it by going to the 'Member Dojo' page of the SEUSKF web site and clicking on the dojo map link). Since I have not personally been to each and every dojo in the SEUSKF (I have been to many) I would like representatives from SEUSKF dojos to look at the map and the dojo information on the map (as well as the member dojo page) to make sure their information is correct. If there are any mistakes please let me know by email (kenshi@nc.rr.com). In addition I would like to hear from dojos to make sure their contact information is correct. We need to have a valid contact email for each dojo to send out information in a timely manner.

Lastly, I am unclear who the photographer was for a couple of the photos used in the newsletter. If you are sure you know who took either of these pictures please let me know so I can correct the online version of the newsletter.

With this little bit of help we can create a more informative and enjoyable newsletter for our members. Thanks!

~Mike Watson SEUSKF Secretary

And don't forget, the SEUSKF now has a Facebook page as well. Mainly used for posting kendo related pictures, making connections with members of the SEUSKF, and event announcements you can find us by using the Facebook search function and typing in 'South Eastern US Kendo Federation'