

Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

March 2025



— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.

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Back to JMAC, Again

Once again braving the vagaries of winter weather, a smaller than usual contingent of Itten Dojo members made a February trek to the Japanese Martial Arts Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for an especially intense weekend of training. The agenda for our JMAC visits is always planned in advance. I provide Suino Sensei a list of requested topics by email and then Sensei determines the optimal balance and schedule, tweaking the requests as appropriate. JMAC visits are always full, but this time we were drinking from the proverbial firehose.

Most readers of this journal are aware that we undertook a reinvention of Itten Dojo commencing in 2020, a reinvention that has expanded to include every aspect of our focus and the arts in which we train. Initially, we formed an iaido study group under the direction of Suino Sensei. Later, we decided to morph our legacy practice of aikijujutsu into Nihon Jujutsu—this began as the incorporation to our normal training of a single kata comprised of eight *waza* (techniques) so that Suino Sensei could work with us on his “real-time” self defense applications. But upon our recognition of the superiority of Nihon Jujutsu, a second study group was formed to replace the aikijujutsu training. And now we’re doing it again, with the initiation in February of a judo study group.

Consequently, there was a substantial emphasis this visit on judo, although iaido and jujutsu were not neglected. For iaido, we reviewed the *Tatehiza no Bu waza* and started into the *Iwaza no Bu* set (also executed from *tatehiza*), receiving five of the eight *waza* in that set. Jujutsu training focused on review of the Kihon Kata II *waza* received to date and a first-pass through the remaining seven *waza* in the kata (there are a total of 12, and some of the throws are *very* dynamic). The judo topics were intended to provide us sufficient material to launch our study group on a solid foundation.

Nihon Jujutsu includes a significant portion of pre-WWII judo, so our study group is not starting from scratch, but we needed a lot of help in order to be able to conduct practices according to the JMAC format. Over the course of the weekend, Suino Sensei schooled us on the warmup routine, ukemi, stepping drills and mat drills, six fundamental throwing techniques and



eight fundamental *newaza* (ground fighting pins), paired movement exercises, trading entries to throws, and trading throws. In addition to copious written notes, we were (as always) permitted to video everything to ensure we have highly detailed references from which to train, back home.

In a special treat for JMAC members, Bailey Sensei taught an introduction to *shodo* (calligraphy). 15 JMAC members participated. By popular demand, the planned session expanded to a full two-hours and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Participants are eagerly anticipating another class at the earliest opportunity, and a children's class is being discussed as well.

These marathon training weekends would not be successful, or even possible, without the support of the

JMAC *yudansha* (black-belts) in all three arts. Our JMAC *sempai* (seniors) give of themselves unselfishly—and at some personal risk in jujutsu and judo—to maximize the benefit we receive. We are deeply indebted and grateful for their consideration and assistance.

We'll be returning to JMAC in June for the IMAF Americas Conference and in July for the JMAC Crucible, and we'll be getting together with Suino Sensei and our *sempai* later this month for the iaido camp and tournament in Kitchener, Ontario, in April for an iaido workshop in at the Ohio Budokan in Dayton, and in May for an iaido workshop at Richmond Hill branch of Northern Karate Schools in Toronto, Ontario. Sensei will next visit our dojo in September. 🌀



How it started / How it's going: For our April 2022 visit to JMAC, Suino Sensei suggested that we try to arrive early enough on Friday to observe the "Friday Night Fights" judo practice. This time, we trained in that Friday session.



While the "Friday Night Fights" session included a lot of *randori* (free sparring) for both throwing and ground fighting, there was also a considerable amount of instruction from Suino Sensei.



Mancini Sensei led a session on mat drills that covered a range of exercises including "shrinking." I am keenly aware that I, for one, looked exceptionally comical attempting this...



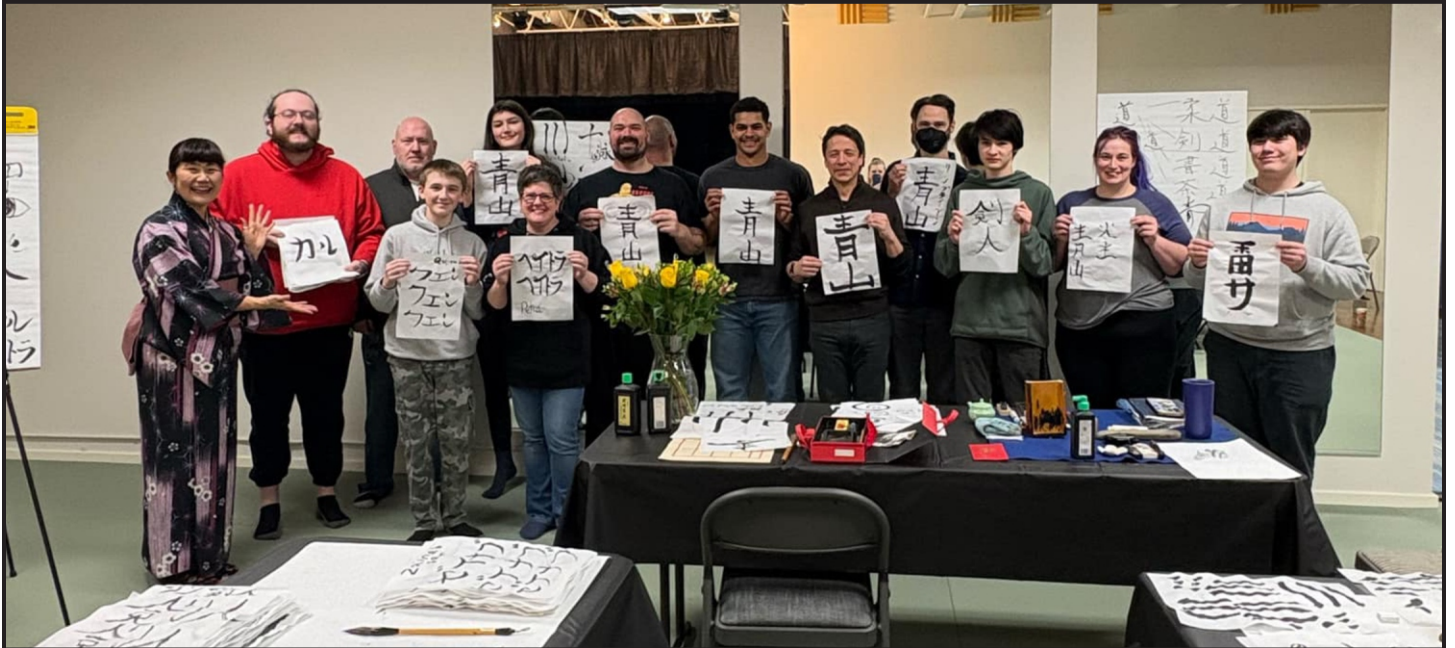


Nihon Jujutsu is a dynamic martial art that combines *aikibujutsu* derived via Tomiki Aikido and non-sport judo, as well as striking and weapons to produce a comprehensive defensive art addressing all four ranges of personal combat: striking, arms-length grappling, close-range grappling, and ground fighting.



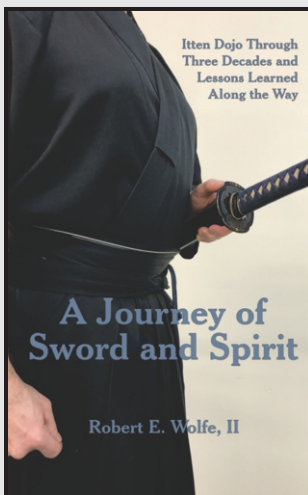
Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu iaido is a *koru* (old school) art, in existence for more than 400 years. Many of the older forms start from *tatehiza* (standing knee), a position in which samurai sat when wearing *yorii* (armor). The portion of the armor covering the torso was essentially a box, and limited the options for sitting in a way that would facilitate moving against an opponent. When Itten Dojo members visit Japan in October we'll have the chance to try wearing armor, and we do aim to test getting into and out of *tatehiza*!





Bailey Sensei's calligraphy class was a particular success, with future sessions already being planned for our next visit to JMAC. Shodo is closely related to budo, and is every bit as challenging, if not more so.

Robert Wolfe, chief instructor of Itten Dojo, began martial arts training in 1975 while attending Bucknell University, where he earned a degree in Japanese Studies. Mr. Wolfe has taught since 1985, and founded Itten Dojo in 1992. His articles on martial arts have been featured in publications such as *The Bujin*, *Budo Shinbun*, the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, *Bugeisha*, *Aikido Today Magazine*, *Inside Karate*, *Martial Arts Training*, and *Martial Arts Professional*.



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