



# Ohana

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**EASTERNKI  
FEDERATION**

Special Issue

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National Conference 2007

## National Ki Conference 2007

“It Seems To Me I’ve Heard That Song Before”

By Bob Gardner

Another National Ki Conference has come and gone and, with it, another opportunity to get together with old friends again, make new acquaintances and, of course, get some really good training. If you were there, it was great to see you. If not, too bad—you missed out on a super weekend.

The overall theme of the Conference (as our Instructor, Shinichi Tohei Sensei, himself more or less put it) could be wrapped up in three words—**Keep...One...Point**. Now, unless you have just picked up this newsletter and are reading it before attending your first class, I can bet you have heard these simple words before. So even though the words were the same, the music was slightly different. The weekend was spent exploring the most basic fundamentals of our art but Shinichi Sensei has a definite knack for expanding on those basics (which most of us have been working at for so long) and, with fresh approaches, making them even simpler, more meaningful—and fun. While it is certainly not my place nor intent to evaluate his abilities, each time that I have had the opportunity to attend his classes in the past few years, I have been increasingly impressed with his highly interesting, effective, and confident manner of teaching. He clearly has learned well and, in footsteps surely difficult to follow, is teaching well. In my humble opinion, the Ki Society is and will continue to be in good hands.

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Attendees at the National Ki Conference with Shinichi Tohei Sensei, at the NOAA conference center in Silver Spring, MD

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# Shinichi Tohei Sensei

By David Shaner

It is a great pleasure to provide some brief information about our next President of Ki no Kenkyukai—Shinichi Tohei Sensei.

Shinichi Tohei Sensei was born August 18, 1973. After growing up living among the *uchi deshi*, the Enshinkan dojo, and all the HQ office activity at the old Ki Society headquarters near Shinjuku, he attended and later graduated from the Tokyo Institute of Technology, school of Bioscience and Biotechnology.

Shinichi Tohei Sensei has been learning Ki principles through Ki-Aikido (Shinshin Toitsu Aikido) from Master Koichi Tohei, Aikido 10<sup>th</sup> dan and Ki-Aikido Founder (Soshu) since childhood. I remember Soshu Tohei was always so kind with his young son allowing his freedom of expression, for example, running around the dojo during Friday Instructor's Classes. However, he was also strict with his son as he was with the *uchi deshi!* That is, he never made matters too easy for his son. For example, young Shinichi studied hard and regularly. There was a strong focus on school work. And, when father and son played fun games, there was real competition and Dad did not “let” his son win easily...winning must be “earned” having cultivated real knowledge and skill. The lesson was winning or achievement must never be “given away”, as I recall. The English phrase “tough love” comes to mind...a kind of loving and authenticity that helps prepare children and young adults for the “real world” which lay ahead.




Now, as successor to Master Koichi Tohei, he teaches Ki principles and Ki-Aikido in Japan and throughout the world. By using Ki principles in the development of human resources and communication skills, he also teaches business personnel, executives and educators at seminars and workshops. Shinichi Tohei is the master teacher of Keio University Ki-Aikido Club. Also, he teaches Ki-Aikido in general education at Keio University as a part-time instructor.

Today, Shinichi Tohei Sensei's responsibilities include:

- Chief Instructor and soon to be President of Ki Society HQ
- Head of the Ki-Aikido Institute (Gakuin)
- Part-time Instructor at Keio University

It has been wonderful for so many members to meet Shinichi Tohei Sensei and learn from him directly since he has been teaching in the United States over the last few years. I hope many students will be able to travel to Japan for the inauguration of Shinichi Tohei as President of Ki no Kenkyukai on Tuesday, October 23. This is sure to be a historic moment for all of us. Also, the occasion will be a celebration of Soshu Tohei's 88<sup>th</sup> birthday which will occur January 20, 2008. I encourage everyone to attend this magnificent combination of events before this year's World Camp in October. ㊦

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But anyway, if we keep hearing these words so often then and practicing them, how can a simple three-word directive be all that difficult to carry out? Another phrase I’ve heard before from a very wise man definitely applies...”Simple, but not easy.” You go through a whole class (or year? 30 years?) and, just when you think you may have it, the “*unagi* factor\*” creeps in. As slippery as an eel, it gets away from you—again. The harder you try to hold an eel, the easier and quicker it gets away (at least, so I’ve been told—I have no personal experience in that area). Do you suppose that it might help to follow the same thinking that is applied in the idea that you don’t have to “Extend Ki” but that “Ki is Extending” naturally? Maybe we shouldn’t *try* to “Keep One Point” but rather just “Let One Point Be Kept.” If we could just learn to trust that it is and get out of our own way, do you suppose...? Oh well, maybe I’ll get it at the next Conference. See you then? 

\*Unagi (うなぎ) is the Japanese word for freshwater eels, particularly the Japanese eel. They are quite a delicacy, especially when very fresh, and fancy restaurants will wait until after you order to take yours out of the tank.

### *The One Point in the Lower Abdomen*

*The Universe is a limitless circle with a limitless radius.  
This condensed becomes the one point in the lower  
abdomen which is the center of the Universe.*

*Let us calm our mind in this one point and become one  
with and send our Ki constantly to the Universe.*

*-Koichi Tohei Sensei*

#### From Mayumi Case’s Notebook National Ki Conference Instructor’s Class June 21, 2007

##### **Theme:**

“Keep one point” & “Lose one point”

##### Stand on the toes, and come down calmly.

What is the purpose? When you stand on your toes, your Ki is extended to the tips of the toes. Make sure you are naturally stable. Don’t try to be stable by grabbing the floor with your toes.

##### Good posture.

We think our back is straight, but we tend to lean back.

**Try:** spreading your chest (tension in the shoulders, chest, and back (upper body)) → you lose your one point.

**Try:** putting tension in your head, or day-dream → you lose one point.

**Try:** tension in your face → you lose one point.

##### Cross-hand grab.


When uke grabs your wrist very hard, we tend to lose one point by putting tension in the wrist.

Keeping one point before you offer your hand to your partner means you don’t put tension where you are being grabbed (this is especially difficult when your partner grabs hold of you very hard).

**Shinichi Sensei’s advice:** “The moment of the contact is very important—our mind tends to go where we are grabbed.” If you keep one point, your mind doesn’t get stuck where you are being grabbed.

**Kashiwaya Sensei and Curtis Sensei’s advice:** “Your Ki has to be already *moving* when you are grabbed.” – otherwise, we will be “late”.

Keep one point all the way through. You can keep one point at the beginning, but you could lose one point by putting tension in your face, wrist, the way you grab your *uke*, colliding with *uke*, etc.

**Try:** Nikyo: HELP uke’s ki direction and don’t collide. Hold uke’s hand lightly and lead forward (“bring him in”). 

## Reflections on Ki Testing

At this year's National Conference, ten *yudansha* took advanced Ki tests, including four members of the Eastern Ki Federation. Please extend your congratulations to:

**Mayumi Case, Chuden**

**Matt Doetsch-Kidder, Shoden**

**Bob Pavese, Shoden**

**Jon Poppele, Shoden**

Here the four reflect on their experiences leading up to and during their "Ki Experiences" with Shinichi Sensei. 氣



From left to right: Matt Doetsch-Kidder, Jon Poppele, Bob Pavese, Dennis Burr, Jill Neilsen, Shinichi Sensei, Mayumi Case, Mark Rubbert, Mort Melman, Thomas Correll, and Bart Ferchaud.

### Mayumi Case, Chuden

I took my Chuden test during the National Ki Conference. My experience this time was very different from the Shoden test I took during the World Camp in October 2002. We have been all taught that the *purpose* of the Ki test is not to pass or fail, but to help us experience for ourselves oneness of mind and body. As we move through the ranks, the challenge for us becomes more about how to allow our natural and original state of being to manifest itself by not clogging it up or "doing something." Trying to figure out things, and practicing and learning the tricks to pass the test do no good. We all know this, but the Ki test is still called a "test," and it is hard to not "prepare" for the test.

In 2002, during the pre-test practice, I was corrected on keeping one point. Instead of using the correction positively, I became terrified and fearful for failing to keep one point during the actual Shoden exam. As a result, my whole test experience was painful. The experience was so negative that the only thing I remember was that I was glad the test was over and that I didn't have to take another Ki test for a long time!

This time, when our Ki tests started, I knew right away that Shinichi Sensei really wanted to help us succeed and experience the power of oneness of mind and body. I was very aware that my fellow examinees were being tested one by one, and my turn was coming up, but I wasn't at all nervous or fearful because Shinichi Sensei was so plus. It was clear that he was going to help me experience the power I knew I already had. Even when I made mistakes, my Ki exchange with Shinichi Sensei was so positive that it didn't even occur to me that people are watching as I corrected myself.

Through my Chuden test experience this time, I realized how much influence we have on the experience of people we come in contact with. When we strongly extend positive Ki, others around us have a more positive experience of themselves. The more we are aware of extending Ki, the larger the influence we have on other people. They could take that positive (or, if we are not careful, negative) experience long into the future. The impact of those experiences on the lives of the people we encounter are greater than we expect. Likewise, we can accept what happens to us from either a positive or a negative mind. Tohei Sensei charges all of us to follow the "Setsudo" as written in our Shokushu. What we learned today, we can teach tomorrow, but it is important that people take the experience home in a positive way. 氣

## Matt Doetsch-Kidder, Shoden

There are three things that remain most clearly in my mind when reflecting on my recent Shoden Ki Experience. The first is the profound gentleness of the test. I have heard and read and seen and trained that Ki testing is not a test for physical strength or weakness, but Shinichi Sensei's presence and touch really brought it home to me. The second idea that remains with me is that there is so much further to go. I could clearly feel my mind move to some degree on every test and I could feel some measure of the depth of Shinichi Sensei's calmness. I have no other words to describe the feeling. The third thing that stays with me is the clear memory that the only specific person I saw during the test, other than Shinichi Sensei, was my partner Sharon. I remember seeing her watch me and allowing myself to smile, or at least to feel as though I was smiling, to release at least some of the nervousness and enjoy myself.

Reflecting on the test as a whole, I feel as though I have gone through a rite of passage—that I have walked through a gateway to a different place. I feel more deeply calm than before. I think that having gone through the ritual, I can let go of (some of) the doubt and let myself live more freely. I look forward to the journey ahead. 氣



Matt practices keeping one point at a Moroccan restaurant the night before his Shoden test.

## Bob Pavese, Shoden

I will try to put my experience in just a few sentences, if I was talking it would probably take a day. The more I mulled over the test I found I had mixed emotions, I was nervous before I took it and during the first few minutes I really wondered if I could calm down enough to pass it, when Shinichi Sensei corrected me on the right way to lift my arms over my head at first I failed and while he was giving me more advice I suddenly looked over the crowd and there were people trying to help me out by pointing to their fingers or just had pained expression on their faces as if they were experiencing the test themselves thru my eyes. When I tried again and did it right it felt like there was a collective sigh. It was at that point a change came over me, I realized that the experience was the Ki test not whether I passed or failed. Don't get me wrong I was still not as calm as I thought I should be but I felt alright with where I was at that time after that I did fine.

Although everyone did very well, I was most impressed by Mark Rubbert [*ed: who tested for Joden*]. He seemed like he was doing a taigi—every change from one Ki test to another seemed to be in sync with Shinichi Sensei.

One final note, the Ki test is suppose to show the state of your mind. If your body seems to be tense then your mind is too busy. After having been involved in the test what I found was even if I had been the calmest person there and everyone said what a great job I did, I think I would have missed the point of it all. The calmness I seek is a heck of a lot deeper then I ever imagined—the breathing and silent meditation (yes I did say silent not talking) that I practiced to take the Ki test turned out to *be* the Ki test.

I want to thank Shaner Sensei and everyone at the VA dojo even the ones that kept on hitting me every time I screwed up in practice (even though I think they enjoyed it too much). 氣

## Jon Poppele, Shoden

I first took an interest in taking my Shoden Ki test after the last International Taigi Competition in Japan. 2004 was a breakthrough year for me in my training and in my development and I was riding the high of Matt Kidder [*ed: now Doetsch-Kidder*] and I winning two gold medals in Japan. Taking Shoden is unusual for a Shodan, but not at all unheard of, and hardly seemed as surprising to me as Matt's and my results in the Taigi Competition!

My interest grew as the 2005 National Ki Conference in Las Vegas approached. I knew well that *wanting* to test was a clear expression of a selfish mind—exactly the opposite of what is being tested for—but that didn't stop me either from wanting to test, or from putting my attention on wanting it. I don't remember exactly when I said anything to Shaner Sensei, but I know I made the *faux pas* of asking least once, probably a few times. The Las Vegas seminar came, and I did not test. As I watched the testing in Las Vegas, I kept thinking to myself "I could do at *least* that well! Why can't I be testing?" Even as I was having these thoughts, I was aware of how much they were a product of my selfish mind. I was disappointed, but not surprised, when I did not hear anything about testing at World Camp in 2005. Again I wanted to test. Again I did not test. Again I noticed my selfish mind and continued to give it Ki.

In May of 2006, I tested for Nidan. The experience was tremendously positive—truly was a celebration. With my Nidan exhibition behind me and National Conference approaching, I thought to myself "*Now* I can test for *Shoden*." But I heard nothing about it from Shaner Sensei. The 2006 Ki Conference in Oregon came and went as well. It was a wonderful conference and I had many opportunities to work with Shinichi Sensei. I even got to be one of the primary "demonstrators" during the Ki Test practice session. But again I did not test. "Why isn't Shaner Sensei recommending me?" I thought to myself, "Why didn't he think I was ready?" I failed to notice that the answer was inherent in my question. My focus around the prospect of Ki testing remained selfish. "Perhaps at World Camp this year," I thought. Every thought I had about testing was about me. Every thought was a judgment about myself or about others. I compared myself to other Shoden. When I watched the Shoden tests and Chuden tests I silently judged and evaluated them. Over the following months, I began to notice the impact of my selfish mind. I began to understand that my test would reflect as much or more on my teacher as it would on me. Now I began to be self conscious. *Would* I be good enough? *Would* I embarrass my Sensei? I don't think so, but... Though this was a change, all of my concerns were still about me. *My* being good enough. *My* reflecting well on my teacher.



Jon Poppele taking a practice Ki test from Shinichi Sensei at the National Ki Conference in Oregon in 2006.

World Camp 2006 came and once again, no word about my testing. Again—I found myself caught up in my head about it. "Why doesn't Sensei think I'm ready?" Then, during one afternoon break I was sitting on my bed in the small dorm room I shared with Shaner Sensei, Pierce Sensei and Rich Fryling. Shaner Sensei was sitting on his bed working on paperwork for the lecturer and examiner certificates. He looked up with a puzzled expression on his face and said to me "Jon, remind me, when did you do your Shoden test?" I blinked. Inside I started to laugh.

The feeling I had of myself was a mixture of relief, foolishness, and amusement. For two years I had been completely in my head about my Shoden Ki test. Wanting it, hoping for it, feeling disappointed,

self critical and judgmental. And all of that was taking place entirely in the space between my ears. But the effect was that it was taking me away from my own experience, and from my connection with others and their experiences. I couldn't help but laugh at myself. Over the following months, I began to notice my selfish mind more and more without giving it so much of my Ki. I began to see myself acting with a selfish mind and simply letting it be, without indulging it. I began to laugh at myself and my own humanity more. Much later (with Sensei's help), I also realized that Shaner Sensei knew full well that I had not yet tested and was helping me to see the affect of my selfish mind. He was teaching me deeply from his heart. Only now am I beginning to understand the gift that he gave me that day.

When Shaner Sensei wrote to ask me if I wanted to have my Shoden "Ki Experience" at this year's National Conference, I immediately said yes. I laughed at how much care I gave to the wording of my one sentence e-mail response. Yes, I was still very attached to testing, but now I could notice that and then put my attention elsewhere.

At the second Ki no Kenko weekend, a month before National Conference, Shaner Sensei gave each of us who were Ki testing a "Pre-Test" experience. As he lined the four of us up, I began to notice how nervous I was. My heart was pounding hard and my mind was racing. "Well," I thought to myself, "this is what it looks like to take a Ki test when I am incredibly nervous." As Shaner Sensei approached for the first test I saw a look of surprise on his face. I'm sure he could see my heart pounding right through my *dogi*. I let it be. The test went well—even though I felt like my heart was going to leap out of my chest. In an odd way, this experience gave me tremendous confidence for taking my Ki test with Shinichi Sensei. I knew that I couldn't possibly be any more nervous than I was during that pre-test—and now I know I could take a Ki test just fine whatever was going on. I might react (strongly!), but I did not need to react to my reaction.

The Ki Conference arrived, and the entire seminar was a very positive experience. On Saturday, those of us who were Ki testing had an opportunity to practice for the test, supported by the Chief Instructors. During our practice I thought about many of things I had been taught over the years about Ki Testing. I noticed, for example, my tendency to block out the tester—pretending they were not there. I noticed how much that didn't work. I noticed my tendency to collapse and receive the testers Ki when I thought about "welcoming" them in. I began to notice the difference between "welcome" and "please run me over." I began to think about how to approach the test—how to have a welcoming heart while extending Ki. If I just held the thought of "welcome" in my mind, I tended to collapse. Then I tried on "Welcome to my dojo!" It felt wonderful. Connected, extended, warm, genuinely inviting and welcoming.

When we lined up for our Ki Experience, I settled into a mind of "welcome to my dojo." I watched Matt, then Bob as they moved through their experiences. Then it was my turn. I stood up and walked to the front of the dojo, bowed to the *shomen*, then turned to Shinichi Sensei. Immediately, I felt his Ki connect with mine. I bowed and held in my heart "Welcome to my dojo—thank you for teaching me."

I stood up as Shinichi Sensei walked around in front of me. I looked at him with soft focus and was deeply moved by the warmth and compassion I saw in his eyes. "Welcome to my dojo" I thought as he walked toward me and placed his hand softly on my chest. I could feel his test, but its softness and subtleness genuinely startled me. I knew that he could send his Ki through me at any moment and move me easily. I waited. He removed his hand. "Really?" I thought to myself, surprised at how *natural* it felt. He moved to my side as I raised my right arm. Though I was looking straight ahead, I could still clearly see his face. He touched my arm and I felt his Ki connect. Then he released. "Really!?" I thought. Then he touched under my hand. Again I felt his Ki connect and then release. "REALLY!?" I thought again.

**Jonathan Poppele's Notebook**  
**National Ki Conference**  
**Friday, June 22**

Ki Aikido techniques are an expression of something. They are an expression of your character. To improve your techniques, you must change your character. Our personality/character is the collection of our habits.

Many people try to break bad habits and find this very difficult. Imagine a drop of red ink in a class of clean water. The ink will could the water. It is impossible to remove the ink—however, you can **add** clean water to the glass drop to dilute the ink. In time, you will have a glass of clear water again.

It is easier to make a new good habit than it is to break a bad habit. New good habits must be practiced over and over again, so we must have patience (especially instructors!).

All of us have a bad habit in daily life—separation of mind and body. Practicing coordination of mind and body in our daily life is our most basic training.

**Exercise:** Shake hands with separation and with connection.

- How do you feel?
- Ki test your partner.
- Right way is with Ki connecting.
- Practice the same while bowing.

**Exercise:** Greeting someone. Stand with your partner behind you. Partner calls your name. Practice connecting Ki (turning fully around and connecting) vs. turning only your head (looking over your shoulder) or answering but not connecting (not turning at all).

**Exercise:** Practice handing something to your partner connected vs. not connected. Wait for your partners Ki to come before you let go. ㊦

Finally, I let the surprise be and settled into the experience. As I did, I began to experience my time with Shinichi Sensei not as a test, but as a Tsuzuki waza. It was like performing a minimalist taigi. Ki would come together then come apart, stretching like a rubber band before coming together again, never really separating. The more I let Shinichi Sensei in, the more relaxed I felt and the more the entire experience flowed effortlessly.

Then Maida Sensei announced “raising both arms.” My first thought was “oh-oh.” Both Matt and Bob had some difficulty on this one and I know it was a weak point for me. I thought about the corrections they had been given and did my very best to do the movement right. “Ichi, ni, san...” Sensei counted. I felt relaxed. My weight had not come up. I thought I did well. Sensei walked up to me and pushed me over like a feather. For a moment I was in my head. What did I do wrong? Sensei said to me “Be cheerful!” I relaxed and smiled as he raised his hands together with mine and tested again. Solid this time. But I was still in my head about it. It took me several tries to pass “walking forward while being held from behind.” I kept trying to move before I connected with Shinichi Sensei. As I fumbled on this test, I felt embarrassed, awkward, unprepared. Then I realized how silly I was being—I had simply stopped *being with* Shinichi Sensei. I had stopped enjoying the expertise, and had made it be about “passing the test!” I threw it all away and let myself just *be* with Sensei again. “Welcome to my dojo,” I thought. We moved together. The remainder of the Ki Experience moved by again as a beautiful, subtle Tsuzuki waza—all the way though the closing bow. I walked back to my spot in line feeling connected, fulfilled, deeply satisfied, and full of gratitude.

I am most grateful to Shinichi Sensei for the Shoden Ki Experience. He gave me an experience of connection, attention, and compassion that I will be reflecting on for many years to come. I am also grateful to Shaner Sensei for recommending me for this experience, for the exceptional training, and for the very engaging “pre-test” that built my confidence, got my nervousness out, and allowed me to relax and enjoy my time with Shinichi Sensei so much. I would also like to thank Shaner Sensei for waiting to recommend me for the test. Perhaps I could have passed the test a year ago, but I never would have had this Ki Experience. And I clearly see how much farther I have to go. I understand much more clearly now what a Ki Test really is, and I realize how much what I do in the dojo is test people's

bodies. Now that I understand, I will need to practice a lot to create a new habit! I'm sure that will keep me very busy for the next few years of my training. Perhaps I will even keep my attention there when my humanity kicks in and I start wanting to test for Sandan. If not, at least I can laugh at myself and remember the experience of complete connection and compassion that Shinichi Sensei gave to me. ㊦