



I just returned from Japan where, on Nov. 8, I attended a dedication ceremony of a statue of the Founder at the Aiki Jinja in Iwama. It was an event attended by approximately 400 people who watched a Shinto ceremony inside the shrine. Then Doshu and his group walked over to the covered statue of O-Sensei. The Shinto priests, Doshu, Doshu's wife, Wakasensei, and others, on cue, pulled ropes and the cover fell to reveal a bronze statue of the Founder standing firmly as if he were protecting the shrine.

After the ceremony and a bit of networking, we boarded buses for a short trip to a large hall for an afternoon lunch. There were speeches from the dignitaries, a classic dance by a woman who had been a student of O-Sensei's about 56 years ago. Mr. Inagaki was the master of ceremonies for the event and recognized the three foreigners who

were in attendance: Ulf Evenas from Sweden, Paolo Corallini from Italy, and Bill Witt from the United States. We were all required to give a short speech to the 300 guests for which we were unprepared. Fortunately, one of the foreign Ibaraki Dojo regulars was fluent in Japanese and translated for us.

Since the TAA, representing all of you, had donated money for the statue, I attended the event as your representative. It was an honor to be there (and even to make the speech) and to meet once again with instructors of the Ibaraki Dojo.



Currently, there are ten foreign deshi living at the dojo. They have training several times a day and maintain the grounds of the dojo and shrine. I would like to add that anyone who wishes to train at the Ibaraki Dojo should contact their dojo-cho and together we can make arrangements. You probably don't have to know Japanese on the dojo grounds, but going into town to buy food, for instance, it would

help. I would also stress that a period of training at the Ibaraki Dojo is not like a vacation at a posh resort. There is work to be done on the grounds and the training is serious. The day begins at 5 am and concludes after evening keiko at 8 pm. There are separate accommodations for men and women. Training at the Ibaraki Dojo is a unique experience which will remain with you in your aikido career. The opportunity to train at the dojo where the Founder developed the aikido we do today and is considered to be the heart of aikido is not to be overlooked. I hope you will take advantage of the situation.

Best regards,

Bill Witt
President
Takemusu Aikido Association

