

## **BRAZIL'S CELEBRATION FOR SOKE DEL SAITO'S 50 YEARS OF HIS LIFE DEDICATED TO KARATE-DO**

**By Shihan Ubiratan – Instructor Chief TKFI of Brazil**

The year 2012 shall be marked as a golden year in the memories of the Brazilians for two reasons.

For the opportunity to participate in the Hawaiian Gasshuku and the 50 year celebration for Soke Del Saito's dedication to karate-do. We know the importance that karate-do represents in our lives and for Soke Del Saito, especially on such a special date.

For that reason, when we returned from Hawaii, I, along with the TKFI members of Brazil, (*Manabu Ide, Haysllan Possebon, Crislaine Alves, Rodrigo Fernandes, Naiane Martinez, the Sempais, Luana Cardoso, Rafaela Saes, Luis Gouvêa e Amanda Bueno, members of the administrative directory of UBKS, Kaicho Ide, Alessandra Galbiati, Márcia Xavier, Valdeni e Sonia Gouvêa, Junior e Carla Fozati, Donizete Reis, Paula Merireles, Elton Marongoni, the parents of students, Matos, and Afonso e Valdeci*) were inspired by the divine light with the idea of also presenting the prestigious award to Soke Saito here in Brazil, celebrating once more his 50 years of dedication to karate-do as well as his 64 years of life that took place on the 14th of October. Filled with strong emotions, our objectives for Soke Saito was to communicate to him our wishes for much happiness, and our love, respect and gratitude that we, Brazilians, have for him always. Most of all, for his position as Soke, for his individual integrity and for being the wise person that he is. It is these qualities that he possess that has made the true difference in all of our lives.

So, considering Soke's arrival in Brazil, on the 17th of July 2012, we set the date for a reunion to plan the activities for a mega event. We all knew that the realization of this event would not be easy but because our determination and inspiration to bring happiness for Soke Saito was greater than the work involved, we launched the challenge with the courage of warriors enlightened by God. At the reunion I informed everyone that this event would be composed of 4 commemorative phases for Soke's 50 years of dedication to karate-do and that in each phase we would sing to Soke, to the tune of happy birthday, "Congratulations to you" with the objective that Soke would feel honored at every moment of his stay in Brazil. I also reminded all of the members of the Sensei Kai, Shido Kai and Sempais that throughout the commemorative events, we should prepare mentally to not be overwhelmed by the physical fatigue that an event of this magnitude could bring and that during Soke's trainings at the Hombu Dojo, to be aware of not allowing our physical limits to keep us from being fully present so that we could completely participate and bring merit to Soke Del Saito's teachings.



On November 2 we had the joy of receiving Sensei Irene Salazar at the Airport of São Jose do Rio Preto and then the arrival of Sensei Sofia on the 8th together with her team of 12 members further magnifying the tribute for Soke. We were saddened by Soke's news in regards to Renzo not being able to come to Brazil because of his school obligations, although, he would be missed.

On the morning of the 9th, I was able to eat a delicious breakfast at the Assi Palace Hotel with Sensei Sofia and the members of Chile consisting of the parents, Osvaldo, Soledad, Silvia, Diego, Alberto and the children, Martina, Rebecca, Angel, Maximiliano, Antonella and Rodrigo. After breakfast we went to the Hombu Dojo where I was able to train them on the fundamentals of Saito-ha Shito-ryu to better prepare them and clear any doubts they may have had for their kyu test in which they would be subjected to the fine-tuned eyes of Soke Saito.



Everything appeared to be going wonderfully smooth and on Schedule. We were all prepared to receive Soke that evening at the airport of São Jose Do Rio Preto at 5:30 p.m. and to eat dinner with him at the hotel and to have him relax and rest so he could teach the referee course at the SESC Club in Rio Preto the following

morning. Unfortunately, that afternoon when I arrived at the Hombu Dojo to teach a class that evening Soke Saito called my cell phone to inform me that his airplane he was scheduled to board, had been cancelled because of mechanical problems and that he would not be arriving as scheduled and had, unfortunately, not been given a new departure time out of Medford to Brazil.

The bad news gave all of us uneasy feelings and thereafter, every moment was an experience of great distress and tension for all of us involved in the organization of the event in Brazil because we were bound by the terms of the contract made with SESC for Soke to arrive on time to be able to teach the technical course on the 11th at 10:00 a.m. and the Soke Del Saito International Cup at 1:30 p.m.

So on the morning of the 10th of November, at the SESC Club in the City of Rio Preto, because Soke would not arriving to teach, I taught the Referee Course in his place to the 18 Referees that would be working in the competition. In the afternoon, we organized and prepared the gymnasium where the technical course and Soke Del Saito Cup would take place the following day. Then that evening at 8:30 p.m., thank God, we got word that



Soke had resolved the flight problems and had been able to acquire a flight scheduled to arrive on the 11th at 8:35 a.m. at the Rio Preto Airport. We were all relieved! Soke would make it on time!

So, on November 11, we were ready to deliver the first phase. This was the realization of the international cup in Soke Del Saito's name with the presence of the Chilean team and Sensei Irene Salazar of the United States. We were honored to receive support from SESC CLUB from the city

of Rio Preto that provided the complete structure of a 1st World gymnasium, room for a course in judging, lunch for all the people, and a staff ready for the organization and support of the event. Moreover, SESC provided a banner commemorating Del Saito Soke Cup containing a photo of Soke measuring 4.5 meters x 5.0 meters and also displaying the logos of SESC, and TKFI UBKS.



At 10:30 a.m., under a light and gentle drizzle, we arrived at the SESC Club with Soke Saito, Sensei Irene and Sensei Sofia. When we walked in through the upstairs door of the gymnasium, 140 students eagerly awaited to receive the teachings of Soke. The parents and families that filled the seats of the gymnasium's grandstand, stood to their feet and began to applause ceaselessly throughout the time that Soke walked, approximately 60 meters, until he reached the front of the students. A strong energy vibrated in our bodies and hearts as a result of the happiness we felt with the presence of Soke in Brazil.

Soke taught the standardized kihon course of Saito-ha Shito-ryu until 12:40 p.m. During the course, Irene Salazar

translated the different the course, we had the student Alessandra Galbiati portuguese for all the translated into Spanish for everyone present could felt words Soke wanted to



translated the different kihons and at the end of impeccable translation of from english into Brazilians present and Sofia the Chileans present so understand all the heart-share with everyone. At

the end of Soke's presentation, all the students and the public began singing the song "Congratulations to You" at the tune of happy birthday, honoring his 50 years of life dedicated to karate-do.

After the course, I, along with Soke, Sensei Irene, Kaicho Ide and his sister-in-law, headed out to eat lunch at a Chinese restaurant called, "Oriente Brasil Food", where they serve delicious food. It was a beautiful and warm, 98

degree day on Alberto Andaló Avenue in the city of Rio Preto. This was a memorable and happy time spent with Soke comically sharing his flight cancellations and flight changes, from Medford to Brasil.



At 1:30 p.m., we returned to SESC Rio Preto Club for the opening ceremonies to mark the start of Soke Del Saito International Cup commemorating his 50 years of life dedicate to karate-do. The competition was a success with 180 athletes from 23 dojos of TKFI Brazil from the cities of Mirassol, Jaci, Neves Paulista, Bálsamo, Monte Aprazível, Nipõa, Pirangi, Taiaçú, Taiúva and Rio Preto.

At the official opening ceremony Soke was invited to join the table of authorities along with Kaicho Ide, Shihan Ubiratan and Mr. Clovis, who represented the SESC Club Rio Preto. As Soke began to speak to the audience, they remained silent and attentive as he expressed his words of joy and satisfaction for the organizaton of the event. At the end of his speech, Alessandra Galbiati translated his words into Portuguese which was followed with much applause and reverence. Mr. Clovis, representative of SESC, also took the floor and with much emotion, expressed his gratitude for the excellent organization of the event by the TKFI Brazil family. He also personally approached meto congratulate me for the example and discipline of the athletes and then publicly expressed that he had never experienced anything like this.



The Cup had 6 Kotos and the UBKS Referee Panel was composed of 6 referees and 12 judges who acted under the guidance of Del Saito Soke who walked around, at all times, during the competition under the watchful eyes of the public in participatory and respectful applause. The event ended at 6:30 p.m. as planned. It was a success with an audience of about 500 people who packed the grandstands throughout the day.

On Nov. 12, Soke taught kobudo training at the Hombu dojo. For the more advanced students, he taught Kata Sakugugawa no Kon. Upon completion of the training, Soke conveyed messages about the importance of good human relationships and that smiling is the key that opens the gates of happiness. As an example, he said that the smile of a sensei can be compared to the sun that radiates its rays illuminating everyone ...



At 12 p.m. we took Soke for a barbeque lunch at the AABB Club – Athletic Association of the Bank of Brazil in Mirassol. My wife, Marcia was responsible for purchasing the food and the responsibility of organizing the event fell on the Sensei Kai of UBKS. The Club was reserved exclusively for lunch with Soke so we had the whole area for our group. We ate lunch at the picnic tables surrounded by trees where a gentle, soothing breeze could be felt. All of the Chilean children along with my daughters, Laura and Luisa played endlessly in the pool and after lunch the 15 adults enjoyed Soke's incredible magic.

At 7:00 p.m., Soke administered the 25<sup>th</sup> Graduation Examination which was held at the Hombu dojo. There were 65 students testing for kyu, one for Dan/ho, Amanda Bueno and one for Godan, Sensei Manabu Ide. The evaluators consisted of black belts, Haysllan Possebon, Rodrigo Fernandes, Crislaine Alves, Naiane Martinez, Rafaela Saes, Irene Salazar, Sofia Parada and Luana Cardoso. Only one student, 11 years of age, failed the 9<sup>th</sup> kyu test.



On November 13<sup>th</sup>, at 9 a.m., Soke taught Kata Chatanyiara Kushankku at the Hombu Dojo for the Senseis of UBKS. Even with the fatigue that affected everyone, we were strong-minded and attentive to learn all the techniques taught by Soke. After the training ended at 12p.m., we went to lunch with Soke and the Chilian Team at the Paladar restaurant that serves Buffett style, salads, a variety of meat such as chicken, beef and pork. Soke drank a delicious pineapple juice made from fresh fruits. At 2:00 p.m., we returned to the Hombu dojo and Soke taught me and Sensei Manabu the bo kata, Rohai no Kon and everyone else continued practicing Kata Chatanyiara.



At 7 p.m., we were ready for the second phase of awarding the, "8 September Medal", to Soke which is an honorable title bestowed by Mirassol's Governmental Legislative Branch and given to various personalities who have rendered outstanding service in communication, engineering, or that, the city of Mirassol in a national or that Del Saito projected the name of the name of Del Saito Soke to Dr. Emilio Legislative Branch of Mirassol along karate as a vehicle of education helping life abroad and internationally. I



consideration to the City Council of Arbitrators composed of 10 members of the legislature, asking them if it would be fitting to honor Saito Soke in the category of education. The board examined all the documents that I presented and the name of Soke was approved to receive the, "8th September Medal" in education along side 35 other recipients from various sectors.

After the tribute, we organized a get-together with delicious finger food for Soke which was held at the Hombu dojo with the presence of Mr. Emilio Brandimarti Neto, Dr. Maria-Paula, Lawyer of the legislative power of Mirassol, Kaicho Hajime Ide, technical and administrative members of UBKS, as well as students, parents and families all totaling 60 people. We surprised Soke with a cake displaying the 50 year anniversary image as we sang, "O Ka Leo" for his 50 years of service in karate-do. Soke received everything with much gratitude and joy in his heart. It was a heart-warming event.

On Nov. 14 we undertook the third phase of the celebration, the Kansha Sai Ceremony which in Japanese means The Ceremony Gratitude. This event had its birth in 2004 when we founded the ONG União Brasil Karate-Do and today it has become traditional for us at União Brasil Saito-ha Shito-ryu Karate-Do because we understand that the character of a man is measured by the level of demonstration of gratitude that he shows. Today, the Kansha Sai celebration is very well known by the population of Mirassol and all the cities that have our satellite dojos. This year of 2012 marks the 9th year of celebrating this ceremony. The main objective of this event is to celebrate by being grateful for the previous year's services rendered by individuals by thanking all those involved such as: parents that gave support, students who excelled in providing services to UBKS/TKFI and the sponsors that help keep the socioeducational Project, Educando Com Karate-do growing. Moreover, Kansha Sai is also to recognize and reflect on mistakes made as a way to correct them quickly before the beginning of the new year.

This year's main objective for Kansha Sai was aimed to show gratitude for Del Saito Soke for his teachings and friendship, recognize all of our sponsors, family, students and friends who would be honored with a certificate of Kansha, "Gratitude," and to also incorporate the spirit of gratitude for Soke Del Saito for his 50 years of life in karate-do and 64 years of age. We all recognized the importance of Soke in our lives and understood that Saito-ha Shito-ryu is a path that can be followed, if so desired, by all of us. To make this event possible and to be able to receive Soke for the Kansha Ceremony, we had the important support of the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Carmel through Father Gerson Cavalin, who provided space in the fellowship hall of the church, free of charge.



At 7p.m., Soke arrived at the church's fellowship hall and upon entering the site he was greeted by 350 people, motivated to demonstrate for him applauded for about 3 minutes. could be felt and seen in the Mr. Valdeni, Chief of Ceremonies, Ceremony asking all 110 students, up in the hall of honor in the Seiza followed by silence as the students order of highest to lowest rank.



the spirit of Kansha, stood and The joy that permeated the air people's bright smiles. At 8p.m., announced the start of the Kansha dressed in clean, white gis, to line position. The next moments were were paraded in, in single file in

The corridor was also organized in the order that the honored would walk down the aisle to receive martial reverences. Next the portal steel was formed at the entrance of the hall of honor by two Samurai swords that were raised and crossed at their tips for the honored to pass underneath while walking down the hallway, after all the students were commanded to, "Rei". As they bowed their bodies from a seiza position, their firm voice, as one voice, responded: Arigatô Gozaimassu! After all the karatekas had been in the seiza position on a tile floor for about 50 minutes, one could clearly hear expressions of pain from them because of the absence of any tatamis. All of the karatekas could no longer feel their legs. The sacrifice to overcome the pain along with a desire to be truly thankful expressed the spirit of Kansha.

As those honored reached the end of the hall, they alternatively received hand shakes from Soke Del Saito, Kaicho Ide and Shihan Ubiratan along with their certificate of Kansha issued by UBKS. Also issued by TKFI were the certificates of Shihan Sha issued by TKFI USA to the deserving members of Brazil as well as Sensei Sofia of Chile and Sensei Irene from the USA.



At 9:00 o'clock, the moment that everyone has been waiting for, Soke, unaware that he would be honored, is called to receive his tribute. As his name is announced, he enters through the steel portal and walks down the hall of honor receiving martial reverences from the karatekas until the end of the corridor where he receives, from the hands of Shihan Ubiratan and Kaicho Ide, a scroll of Kansha that has his photo imprinted in silk screen with the following message, read by Alessandra Galbiati in english and portuguese, and followed by a grand applause by everyone present!

*MERITORIOUS HONOR*

*OUR RECOGNITION TO DEL SAITO SOKE FOR HIS RELEVANT SERVICES OFFERED THROUGH THE TEACHING OF SAITO-HA-SHITO RYU KARATE-DO WHICH HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN SAVING THE LIVES OF BRAZILIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS, THROUGH THE SOCIOEDUCATIONAL PROJECT, EDUCANDO COM KARATE-DO. WITH THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE, OSS!*

*NOVEMBER 14TH, 2012 - MIRASSOL, SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL*

*This scroll was signed by Shihan Ubiratan, Kaicho Ide, the Sensei Kai of UBKS which includes Manabu Ide, Haysllan Possebon, Rodrigo Fernandes, Crislaine Alves, and Naiane Martinez.*





The grand finale of the 9th celebration of Kansha Sai ended with the meritorious scroll being given to Soke, inspired by the honor he received, decided to do a kobudo demonstration of Kata Rohai no Kon. Soke's impeccable demonstration was followed once more by a grand applause.

Next, the Chief of Ceremonies announced that Buffet Onofra had prepared the food and that it was now ready for everyone to begin serving themselves. Soke was invited to join the table of Honorees. Amanda Bueno had for the privilege of serving his plate while everyone else lined up to serve themselves from four tables of food prepared for the celebration. The choice of beverages were, water, guaraná and orange soda.



During dinner, Soke once again, without him expecting, received another surprise honoring his 50 years dedicated to karate-do and his 64 years of life. Everyone began to sing to the tune of Happy Birthday, "Congratulations to You", with a cake displaying his picture with the TKFI and UBKS Saito-ha symbols and flags of USA and



Brazil united together side by side. Soke's happiness radiated through his wonderful smile mixed with a slight timidity when he heard the voices of 350 people, simultaneously, singing to him. This was a very special moment for everyone involved in Kansha Sai. While cake was being served for everyone, Soke was being greeted and hugged by the members of TKFI of Brazil, and by the fathers and mothers of the students that asked to take pictures with him.

At this point, the Musical Show began with singer, Geraldo Brito on guitar and his son, Geraldinho, with the Brazilian instrument called, carron, which brightened up the environment with popular Brazilian music. I was able to pay tribute to some of the great singers of Brazil by singing some of their songs. The event ended at 11:30 p.m. with everyone in high spirits, taking home with them, the potted plants that decorated the tables.

As I drove Soke to the hotel, the Sensei Kai members and students were detailed to clear and clean the hall, ready to be used by the church the next day. I admire these students that left the hall at 5 a.m. and were ready to train at the Hombu dojo at 9a.m. the same day. Ossu to everyone!!



On the morning of November 15, we trained with Soke at the Hombu Dojo learning Kata Matsumura no Bassai and Kata Paiku in the afternoon.

At 8 p.m. I had the honor and joy of receiving Soke, the delegation of Chile, and Sensei Irene in my house for a barbecue dinner. I along with my wife Marcia and

my mother-in-law, Gessy, my daughters Laura and Luisa, prepared our house gracing the whole environment to provide the 4<sup>th</sup>, and final tribute to Soke. With the presence of Senseis, Manabu, Haysllan, Rodrigo, Crislaine, Naiane, the Sempais Luana, Amanda, Rafaela, Alessandra, Luis and his parents, Mr. Gouvea, Mrs. Sonia, the team from Chile with Sensei Sofia and her daughters Martina and Rebecca, student, Rodrigo and his parents, Antonella and Diego Silvia, the student Angel with his parents, Osvaldo and Soledad and his sister,



faces, and with the harmony among everyone, an atmosphere of complete happiness was created. Soke was relaxed and simply enjoying everything that he had experienced to that point and was pleasantly talking with Sensei Manabu with Alessandra translating. At that point, without Soke noticing, we secretly got the cake that had been presented to him the night before at the Kansha Sai Celebration and surprised him by presenting it to him with everyone singing the Hawaiian song, O Ka Léo.

He broke into a big smile, sang and clapped along with everyone. After the song, we all hugged him and then asked Soke to cut the cake with a movement from the bottom up while he made a request to God that he desired fulfilled. After he cut the cake, I explained to Soke that Brazil's custom is to choose to whom he would like to give the first piece of cake. So Soke chose my wife, Márcia, who was honored by Soke's choice. After the cake-cutting ritual, Soke, with his kind ways, gave gifts to all the Brazilian instructors consisting of delicious chocolates, pens, page markers, bracelets and earrings. At the end of the dinner celebration, we announced the names of the members that had passed the examination for kyu and Dan as a way of recognizing and bringing value to the belts they had earned until they were able to be presented with the actual belt. Soke expressed his thankfulness to everyone and for all the honors he had received. The evening celebration ended at 1a.m. when we drove Soke to the Hotel along with Sensei Irene and the members of Chile.



On November 16 the time had arrived for Sofia Sensei and his students to return to Chile. At 8a.m., I arrived at Hotel Assi Palace, and along with Soke and Sensei Irene, we ate breakfast with the Chilean delegation that would be leaving at 9 a.m. for the 6 hour trip in a van to Cumbica International Airport in São Paulo. Once the van arrived for the Chilean Team, I took Soke, and Sensei Irene shopping at the Center of the city of São José do Rio Preto. We took some pictures in the central square on a bridge ornamented with a beautiful water fountain as a backdrop. We went to the Shopping Square Plaza for a delicious coffee with whipped cream and Soke bought a few gifts. After we left the Shopping Plaza, we enjoyed Soke's humorous reactions through the streets of Rio Preto Town. Even though it was a hot and sunny day, the three of us were happy for everything we had experienced thus far.



After shopping, we visited a large lake that had been formed by the Black River in the city São Jose do Rio Preto which is surrounded by walkways and beautiful trees that bear red flowers. Here Soke had the opportunity to see, for the first time, "Brazilian wild pigs" called capybaras who live along the Black River. We strolled across the bridge that lead to the middle of the river. As we continued our stroll we came to a stand that served drinks. Because of the thirst that we were experiencing from the intense heat, we went to a stand that served delicious cold coconut



water. Soke expressed that he was very thirsty so he drank three coconuts and only left, Irene and me, the coconut meat to eat!!

At 1:00 p.m. we returned to Mirassol to have lunch at the Gouvêa home where we were welcomed by the black belts of UBKS, Mrs. Sonia and Mr. Valdeni. Here, we enjoy salads, white rice, yakisoba and different styles of sushi followed by ice cream made the Brazilian way; creamy, fresh and delicious. At 4:00 p.m. we drove Soke to the hotel.

At 6:00 p.m. we took Soke to visit Alessandra's home before going bowling with all of the UBKS black belts, Sensei Irene, and my daughter Luisa. When we left the bowling alley, we ate a sandwich, Brazilian style, and everyone enjoyed the pleasant moments in the presence of Del Saito Soke.



On Nov. 17 I had breakfast at the Assi Hotel in company with Soke and Sensei Irene. At 9a.m. we went to the Hombu Dojo where Soke gave a course in the TKFI rules of arbitration in order to better prepare us to host the 2015 Tai Kai in Brazil. Soke's explanations were very important for me and the Referee Panel of TKFI Brazil. Today we can better understand the rules of TKFI and Soke's desires. I committed myself to Soke to having the Tai Kai in Brazil with TKFI rules and with only members affiliated with our organization.



I also guaranteed Soke to have 300 athletes from União Brasil Saito-ha Shito-ryu Tai Kai participating in 2015 and also a panel of 20 qualified referees and 8 competition kotos and everything that would be required to host the TKFI event .

At 1:30 p.m., we had lunch at the Ipe Ranch Restaurant, located on a farm in a rural area. Ipês are large trees native to Brazil that give red, yellow, purple and white flowers. The restaurant's name is a tribute to the Ipês surrounding the site. In this restaurant the food is made by hand with natural spices, and wood is used to cook the food just like the cowboys used to eat.

After we got done eating we took a walk around the ranch where we could all observed, in the horizon, the beauty and the abundance of native trees with beautiful flowers, horses and mules we could ride, and cows that roamed freely.



These were very pleasant moments but then came the time to head back to prepare to take Soke to the airport of São José do Rio Preto. We left the restaurant and went to my house for a short coffee break before going to the airport.



At 5 p.m., as Soke was preparing to embark back to the USA, with all of us in the airport, we began singing for the last time the songs, "Congratulations to You" and "O Ka Leo." As we watched Soke embark his plane, it was impossible to control the tears of farewell because we did not want to see him leave, but we understood that Soke is part of everyone's life in TKFI and that he had already scheduled a visit to Shihan Tony Mendonca who is starting his new dojo and will need Soke's support in this new phase of life.





When the plane took off the satisfying feeling of accomplishment washed over all of us that we were able to move on happily and stop at the first ice cream parlor for everyone to enjoy a delicious ice cream.



On behalf of all the TKFI Brazil, I want to say to Soke Del Saito:

**Thank you for existing in our lives!!!**

Until the next opportunity, if God permits.

Ossu!



Ubiratan S. Lima - Shihan  
Your Disciple Always