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AJJF's 55th Annual Convention

By Lisa Hirsch

Organizing the annual American Judo and Jujitsu Federation Convention is always a big job. The convention committee, consisting of co-directors JoAnn Strang and John Pfund, members of Laurel Jujitsu and Tri-Valley Martial Arts, along with mats manager Steve Dick, started meeting nearly a year before the convention. From March 27 to March 30 we got to see the results of our hard work, at the San Ramon Marriott in San Ramon, Calif.

Continuing the trend toward large conventions, we had eight mats running simultaneously, including a black belt mat and a kids mat; there were about 65 classes taught by 70 instructors. There were two contests, which many attendees entered, watched, or judged, plus a lecture

room and a massage room. About 450 registered for the workshops, and about 500 attended the banquet.

As always, the AJJF professors, godans, and yodans taught most of the classes. They were joined by associate and allied professors and godans. We were saddened by the absence of Senior Professor Lamar Fisher, who missed his first convention since the AJJF began having the annual meetings 55 years ago.

Prof. Fisher was recuperating from an illness. We sent him the mounted convention schedules, signed by many of you, as a get-well card from the convention. Our special guests included Prof. Jack Wheat, Prof. Imi Okazaki-Mullins, and Keiko Fukuda Sensei, 9th dan.

We got to live the ju (flexibility) in jujitsu, as a power outage darkened the hotel and surrounding area at about 3 p.m.

Saturday. The hotel staff installed emergency lights and cooked our dinners outdoors on barbecues, delaying the dinner for more than an hour. The lights came on just as everybody entered the banquet hall. Even so, we managed to get through the festivities nearly on schedule, thanks to emcee Evan King.

On Sunday, our adaptability was further challenged by problems with the air conditioning system. There were many jokes made about "Bikram jujitsu," and some classes moved outside to get out of the heat.

We're grateful that you, the convention attendees, responded to these challenges with your customary patience and good humor!

Lisa Hirsch is a nidan with Laurel Jujitsu and served on the 2003 AJJF Convention Committee.