

Black Belt photo

A Glimpse into Goltz

by Carrie Chandler for *Growing Judo*, November 2015 (updated November 2022)

Former USJA President Gary Goltz might just in fact be the most interesting man in the world. Goltz's outgoing and unabashed personality has led him among other things to see himself on national television and in national publications such as The Huffington Post and Black Belt Magazine. You might also find Gary backstage at various high profile events rubbing elbows and taking pictures with the likes of Brad Pitt, Crosby Stills Nash and Young and Jack Black just to name a few. Goltz also notably promoted UFC Super star Ronda Rousey to her 4th degree black belt and was instrumental in helping to raise large amounts of money in support of both Ronda and later Kayla Harrison in the Olympics. He also was responsible for bringing in some of the biggest donors in the USJA's history.

Gary is also known for his [Broderick Crawford 1955 Highway Patrol Buick](#) which has been featured in national media including [CNN](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), on television the documentary, [The Star and The Car](#), and in an episode of [Cruisin'](#), to name a few. You can also go to [GaryGoltz.com](#) to learn more.

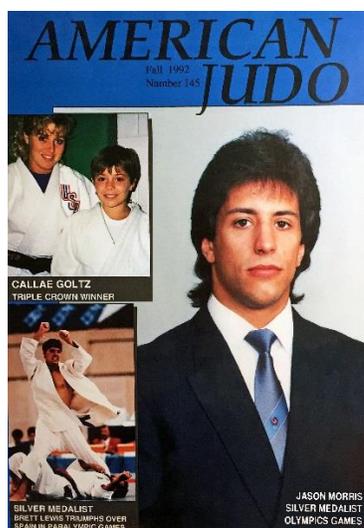
Gary who is now an 8th degree black belt is founder and head Sensei of [Goltz Judo](#) in Claremont, California where he has operated for almost 3 decades. Goltz Judo is one of the largest programs in the City of Claremont's Human Services Division and he has received commendations from the City of Claremont as well as the City of Los Angeles for his dedication and service to the community. It has also been one of the USJA's Top 5 Clubs.

Gary is quick to mention OJ Soler as his "right hand man" whom he wouldn't have been able to do without. The two have been side by side since Gary first opened his Dojo in 1988. They even visited OJ's homeland of Cuba together a few years ago which included a getting to know Ronaldo Veitía, Cuba's highly successful Women's Olympic Judo Coach.



Among the other key members of the Goltz Judo Team are Nick Niakan, Dave Guerrero, Renato Ferrara and most notably Tony Farah who pioneered their Tiny Tot's Judo Program which has 60 participants from ages 3 to 6. Gary kids have also made their name in judo.

His daughter [Callae](#), was a triple-crown junior champion. His youngest son Gabriel also and oldest son [Nathan](#), won several junior nationals championships. Nathan later spent almost a year Japan studying judo at the International Budo University as well as the Kodokan, and was then recruited to be a member of the Cumberland College Judo Team.



Gary hails from Pittsburgh, PA where he began his study of judo under the late [Kyu Ha Kim](#) in 1965. While giving this interview Gary was moved to tears when speaking about Mr. Kim and just how much he means to him.

Little did the 2x All Korean Heavyweight Champion Mr. Kim know his fate would intertwined with his young protégé later on in life. Gary explains that his father didn't think he would stick to it as he had just given up the guitar after his Dad had recently purchasing one for him. Mr. Kim had a vision in Gary and promised his Dad that he would personally buy back Gary's first judo gi if he quit.

Gary recalls a fond memory of Mr. Kim driving himself and several other students' back from an outing when he was pulled over for making an illegal U-turn. Mr. Kim who was still wearing his judo pants and when the officers asked him for his driver's license and registration, had to get out to retrieve them from the trunk as they were inside his judo bag. After about 10 minutes when he finally got back in the car, Gary asked him if he had gotten a ticket? Mr. Kim smiled and said no he was not given a ticket because the officers had become intrigued with the judo gis he had stored in his trunk and ended up discussing judo with him. Much to everyone's amazement, that night those the same police officers walked into Mr. Kim's school and enrolled along with their kids!



In addition to Mr. Kim, Gary was also quite fortunate to have had 1967 World Silver Medalist, Dr. Kiel Soon Park as a Sensei and mentor for several years when Mr. Kim sponsored his transition to the United States. As a result of Gary being a quick study and with his outgoing personality Mr. Kim decided to deploy Gary who showed a knack for teaching and helping others in judo from a young age. Gary began teaching satellite classes for Mr. Kim at age 16. He started off teaching at a local YMCA and within 2 years he had classes a 4 different YMCAs.

In 1972 he started the [judo program at the University of Pittsburgh](#) where he got his BA, and it is still going to this day. In 1977 he was elected the Chairman to the AAU for the Allegheny Mountain Region. Gary had a knack for teaching and found that all of his classes were so full he contemplated doing judo for a living. After much consideration and following his Dad's advice, he took a break from the judo world to pursue a career in the healthcare industry. He received his MBA from Pepperdine University in 1988. He became a senior officer of the leading home medical equipment then started his own home I.V. therapy which he sold for a record amount to help to form the largest company of its kind in the country which is now part of CVS. Gary then formed his own consulting firm; [Goltz Business Development Group](#), which he still operates.



While he was at Pepperdine a professor asked him to write a paper what he thought was missing from his life. Gary wrote that judo was missing and the professor told him that his assignment was to fix it. That resulted in his joining a local dojo and getting back into judo after a 7-year hiatus. Soon he felt the need to start his own dojo closer to home and a place to teach his daughter, Callae, thus Goltz Judo was born.

A few years later he had to write a thesis as part of the graduation requirement at Pepperdine. In order to graduate with honor, he needed 4 separate professors to give him the mark of "excellence" on his thesis. He was given that mark by 3 professors and when he went to the 4th to asked him what he needed to do to get that mark, the professor asked him what difference would that make 100 years from now? Gary's immediate response was, not much. Before Gary had time to think about it further the professor quickly asked a follow-up question; what would make a difference? It was at that moment that Gary had an epiphany and realized just how important his newly formed judo club was to him and the local community.

Around 2007 Gary learned that his first Sensei and mentor Kyu Ha Kim had developed a heart flutter and needed to have a pacemaker put in. In a terrible turn of events the routine procedure led Mr. Kim to contracting MRSA which seriously damaged his heart to the point where the only potential solution would be a total heart transplant. Mr. Kim did not want to undergo such a risky procedure having become skeptical about the healthcare system preferring to live out his days surrounded by his family and loved ones.

Upon hearing this, Gary on a trip to Pittsburgh reminded his beloved Sensei how he was the one who taught him so many valuable life lessons which Mr. Kim's grandchildren would be deprived of. Gary wasn't sure if he got through to his Sensei, however after he left Mr. Kim had a change of mind and decided to undergo the surgery.

Shortly thereafter a compatible donor heart was found and today more than 10 years have passed since the [successful transplant](#). Mr. Kim was still actively teaching well into his 80's on a daily basis and was often seen on the tatamis at his dojo doing uchi komis regularly!



Gary at Mr. Kim's Dojo upon his recovery from his heart transplant

Gary famously appeared on national television just after the Olympics in 2012 in a segment on [Conan O'Brien's nightly talk show called *Fan Corrections*](#). Here Conan dares his viewers to find errors on his show which he then humorously picks apart. As you can imagine thousands of fans submit video's in the hope of being selected but only the best of the best are chosen.

Gary noticed one night that Comedian Jack Black did a judo forward ukemi roll improperly and hatched the idea to submit a fan correction the next day at his own dojo. Gary knew in order to be picked he would have to set himself apart from the thousands of other submissions.

So Gary opted to play the role of a typical Hollywood bad guy Sensei like in the "Karate Kid". On the very first take using an iPhone he hammed it up telling Conan and Jack Black that his so called "tiger roll" was wrong.

Gary didn't think another thing about it and came home one night after judo a few weeks later to find himself on national television. His persona was in fact such a hit that Conan and movie star Jack Black made a 5-minute parody video retort to Gary's original submission.

The video was so popular that it went viral on YouTube making Gary the most viewed judoka from the United States on the internet!



Gary's Original Submissions [Video 1](#) & [Video 2](#)

Gary had a chance to meet Jack Black last year when they were both at an "Autism Speaks" benefit. Jack remembered Gary who had pulled him aside on the red carpet to chat for a few minutes and take some "selfies".



Gary with his pal Jack Black in 2012

Gary served the [USJA](#) for over a decade as the COO from 2005-2010 and as President from 2010-2015. He also served as President of [Nanka Judo Yudanshakai](#), (the Southern California Black Belt Association).

A few of his other accolades include being a [USA Judo International Coach](#), Master Rank Examiner, Kata Instructor, and National Referee. He also served as a Defensive Tactics Consultant for the Los Angeles Police Department for 8 years.

In 2006, Gary started the [Judo Winter Nationals™](#). It has become one of the largest tournaments in the country attracting 1,000 competitors including both Ronda and Kayla in their younger days.



Gary donated this event to Nanka in 2019.