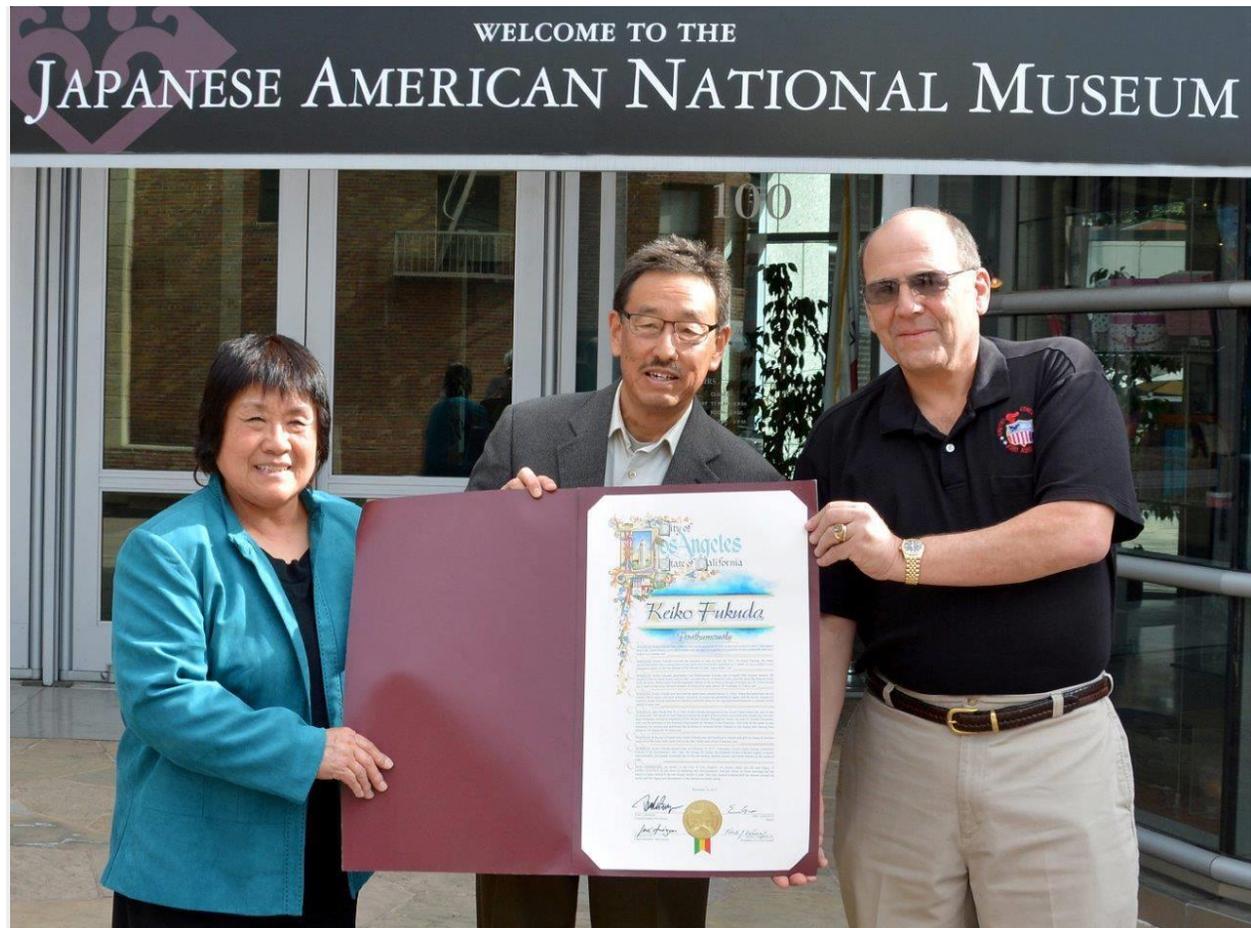


Wednesday January 22, 2014

CIVIC HONORS FOR A JUDO LEGEND



The City of Los Angeles issued a posthumous proclamation to honor the late Keiko Fukuda, the only woman to be promoted to 10th dan in judo, who died last February. Fukuda, the last surviving student of judo founder Jigoro Kano, established a dojo for women in San Francisco and is the subject of a documentary, "Mrs. Judo." The brief ceremony was held Jan. 19 at the Japanese American National Museum, with, from left: Fukuda Protégée, Eiko Shepherd, John Esaki, Director of the Media Arts Center at JANM, and Gary Goltz, President of the U.S. Judo Association and Representative for Councilmember, Tom LaBonge.

[ABC News Clip of Keiko Fukuda in Action](#)

Holiday Issue Monday December 2, 2013

LOCAL DOJOS PAY TRIBUTE TO 'MRS. JUDO'

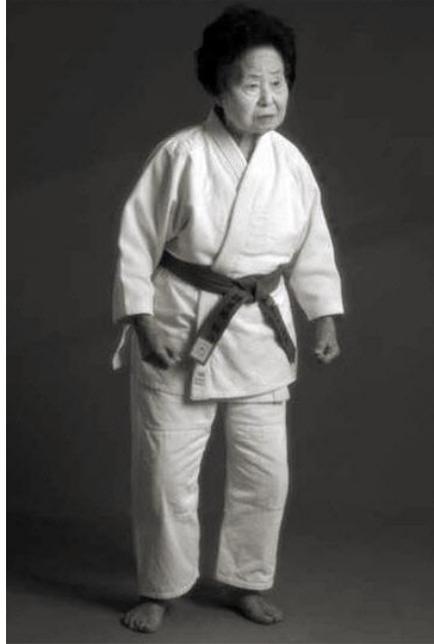
Documentary on Keiko Fukuda, 10th dan, has L.A. premiere at JANM.

By J.K. Yamamoto/Rafu Shimpō



From left: Low Dong, assistant head sensei, Gardena Judo Club; Hal Sharp, technical advisor, Gardena Judo Club; filmmaker Yuriko Gamo Romer; Robin Fernandez of Jundokai Judo and Jujitsu Club in La Mirada; Kenji Osugi, head instructor, Sawtelle Judo Dojo; Gary Goltz, founder, Goltz Judo.

[Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful – Trailer](#)



The Los Angeles premiere of “Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful” was also a memorial tribute to the film’s subject, [Keiko Fukuda](#), the highest-ranking woman in judo.



Charmaine Galvez (left) and Robin Fernandez demonstrate Keiko Fukuda’s “Ju no Kata” forms

Fukuda, the last surviving student of judo’s founder, Jigoro Kano, established a women’s dojo in San Francisco and held the rank of 9th dan from Kodokan and the U.S. Judo Federation and 10th dan from USA Judo. She passed away last February, just two months before her 100th birthday.

The screening on Nov. 16 at the Japanese American National Museum was attended by members of local dojos, some of whom knew Fukuda.

Filmmaker Yuriko Gamo Romer said that the idea for the documentary began in 2006 when she saw an article about Fukuda and her dojo in Oprah Winfrey's magazine. "I looked at the pictures and I thought, 'This place looks really familiar.' (It was) two blocks from my house. So I felt like I should go over there ...

"I introduced myself after her class. I speak enough Japanese that I could chat with her in Japanese ... She invited me up to her home, which is four blocks up the hill from my house, and I became intrigued with this story and felt like I need to make a film about her ... It was something to discover that I lived partway between the dojo and the home. I just felt like it was my destiny to make the film."

The title refers to the fact that because of gender roles at the time, Fukuda had to choose between getting married and devoting her life to teaching judo. Kano, who died in 1938, had asked her to help spread judo outside of Japan, and in 1966 she moved to the U.S. to carry out that mission.

Romer traveled to Japan with Fukuda, who was recognized by Kodokan and greeted by Japanese Olympic judoka. Fukuda, who was frozen at 5th dan for 30 years, and other interviewees discussed the "glass ceiling" that until recently prevented women from being promoted above a certain rank.

Fukuda lived to see the completion of the film, which had its world premiere last year at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival.

The L.A. screening was part of the Mrs. Judo Community Engagement Series, coordinated by Jill Shiraki. In addition to being shown around the U.S., "Mrs. Judo" has been recognized at a sports film festival in Moscow and a women's film festival in Mumbai, and is heading for Milan next month, Shiraki noted.



To mark the occasion, Gary Goltz (right) President of the U.S. Judo Association, [presented Romer \(left\) a City of Los Angeles Proclamation](#) from Councilmember Tom LaBonge.

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The judoka in the audience bowed in respect as they would before practice or competition, and a demonstration of Ju-no-Kata, Fukuda's signature forms used to teach the principles of judo, was given by Robin Fernandez, 4th-degree black belt, and Charmaine Galvez, 2nd-degree black belt, of Jundokai Judo and Jujitsu Club in La Mirada, with Gregory Fernandez, 7th-degree black belt and head instructor, narrating.

Scenes from Fukuda's memorial service — one of the extras on the "Mrs. Judo" DVD — were shown before the main feature. After the screening, Romer commented, "Fukuda Sensei served as an important bridge across many cultures — the Japanese culture and American culture but also the male culture and the female culture." She asked three panelists to discuss their recollections of Fukuda.

Kenji Osugi is head instructor of Sawtelle Judo Dojo, which was founded in 1927 and was visited by Kano Sensei in 1933. He is a board member of the U.S. Judo Federation and a judge and referee for USJF and USA Judo.



Shelley Fernandez, Keiko Fukuda's student and friend since the late 1960s.

"I met Fukuda Sensei at one of the clinics," Osugi remembered. "I was still fairly young, immature I guess, kind of goofing off all the time. One day as I was being taught certain blocking procedures, Fukuda Sensei came to me and said, 'Learn from your sister. She's really good' ... Every time I started to goof off, she would come back and scold me and say, 'Look at your sister.'"

Years later, after becoming a black belt, "I started to understand judo, how important that little lesson was for me ... I started to realize that there was more to judo than just getting on the mat and throwing people around ... Until then I didn't realize how important judo was not just for physical things but to really understand life in general."

Robin Fernandez won gold and bronze medals at the 2003 World Kata Championships in Tokyo. She has been practicing judo for 28 years, starting at age 33 after a career in ballet.

"We heard there was a kata clinic coming up in Southern California and I decided to go," Fernandez said. "Ms. Fukuda was there. I was aware that she was the highest-ranking woman in the world (and) that she was about 75 years of age at that time. I watched her and she was so active, she did all the throws, all the techniques. She was amazing. If she can do it, I can do it."

“I also noticed she wore a striped belt. I asked about it and I was told that’s a joshi (women’s) rank ... but I thought again, if it’s good enough for her, it’s good enough for me. So I went out and I bought a striped belt and I wore that. At that time, they used to tuck the ends into the belt ... I always wore my belt that way ...

“A few years later, I was at Ms. Fukuda’s dojo and she was kind enough to give us coaching in kata. My partner and I had our striped belts on ... Ms. Fukuda came up to us and she said, ‘Untuck your belt ends.’ So we untucked them and I noticed hers was untucked at that time.

“And then she added to me ... ‘You don’t need to wear those striped belts anymore. None of the shiai (competition) girls wear them.’ And she walked off chuckling. After that I didn’t wear a striped belt ...

“It had to have been some kind of change of mind for her, because I know for a long time she had worn a striped belt and worn it proudly. I’m not sure where her mind change came from, but I was happy to follow along.”

Hal Sharp, who is associated with Gardena Judo Club, learned the sport while serving with the U.S. Army in occupied Japan. He returned to Japan in 1952 to continue his studies, started judo clubs at U.S. Air Force bases, and participated in goodwill tournaments, competitive tournaments and exhibitions.

He was impressed by the training at Kodokan in Tokyo and jumped right in. “Someone came out and grabbed you and threw you all over the place. You woke up and you were trying to get even ... We didn’t really hurt each other. This is what made it great. I always liked scrapping, and this body contact and back and forth was a wonderful experience.



Keiko Fukuda in 2009 at Mills College in Oakland, where martial arts exhibition was held in her honor.

“The senseis were really something. At the time that Ms. Fukuda did her judo in Japan, you did judo every day ... All the senseis that I practiced with, these guys were on the mat all the time. The older ones were amazing. They could throw you effortlessly, and when they got you on the ground, all you could move were your eyeballs ...

“Coming back to the States, I kind of felt sort of an obligation to my senseis to share in America what I learned in Japan ... to build a bridge across the ocean.”

Sharp, who knew Fukuda ever since his days at Kodokan, called her “an absolutely wonderful person. She really embodied the spirit of Japan.”

Shelley Fernandez, former president of NOW (National Organization for Women) in San Francisco, was one of Fukuda’s students and lived with her for decades. She announced the establishment of the Keiko Fukuda Judo Foundation.

“When people die, there’s emptiness and loneliness, particularly if you love someone deeper than the ocean or higher than any mountain. It’s very difficult,” Fernandez said. “... Her legacy has to go on.

Fifty years from now, people have to know who she was. So through this foundation, we are starting dojos all over the world for women who can’t afford to go.

We’re starting nine in India this coming January ... We’ll also be doing it in the States. We need help, people who know where there should be dojos. We want to train women to be senseis. We want to give scholarships to women ...

“My own personal thing since she lived with me most of her life here — half her life, actually — is that I would like to have her picture in every dojo in the world next to Kano Sensei’s. We will supply the picture ... So far we have eight dojos ... one in Portugal, one in Brazil, one in France, five in America.”

Describing her friend as “a strong and gentle person,” Fernandez said, “She didn’t fight for women’s rights the way I did, but in her own way, she achieved everything that a woman should achieve when she has that spirit and that love.”

During Q&A with the audience, Nancy Oda of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center commented, “Judo means a lot to me and my family. My father was a judo sensei (at Sen Shin Dojo in Boyle Heights) with three daughters. He met Fukuda Sensei and it changed our lives ... I have a picture of her with my two babies at that time ... I treasure it.”

After the program, Romer chatted with members of Norwalk Judo Dojo and signed copies of the CD.



Filmmaker Yuriko Gamo Romer Signs a “Mrs. Judo “poster for members of the Norwalk Judo as Sensei Stanley Morishima looks on.

For inquiries on upcoming screenings and making donations, contact Romer through the film’s website, mrsjudomovie.com, or visit the “Mrs. Judo” page on Facebook.



Keiko Fukuda

Posthumously

WHEREAS, Keiko Fukuda was a giant in the martial arts world of judo as the first woman to earn a 10th degree black belt, judo's highest level and an honor that had only been granted to a handful of men worldwide, and never before to a woman; and

WHEREAS, Keiko Fukuda received the pinnacle of judo on July 28, 2011. To Keiko Fukuda, the honor represented more than a recognition of her skills and worldwide reputation as a sensei. It was a tribute to her prestigious legacy as the last disciple of the founder of judo, Jigoro Kano; and

WHEREAS, Keiko Fukuda's grandfather was Hachinosuke Fukuda, one of Japan's last eminent samurai. He taught jiu jitsu to Jigoro Kano, who in 1882, invented the art of Japanese judo, a holistic sport blending the mind, body and spirit. When Keiko Fukuda expressed interest in the art form at the age of twenty-one, Dr. Kano invited her to learn in the newly formed women's division of his judo school, the Kodokan, in Tokyo; and

WHEREAS, Keiko Fukuda was born into an upper-class samurai family in Tokyo where the traditional role for women was to marry and raise a family. However, to honor her grandfather's legacy and the family martial arts tradition, Keiko Fukuda declined her family's traditional plans for her and faced discrimination to commit herself wholly to judo; and

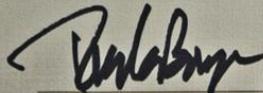
WHEREAS, after World War II, in 1966, Keiko Fukuda immigrated to the United States where she was invited to teach judo. She moved to San Francisco during the height of the women's movement and opened her own judo dojo, bringing a skill level unmatched in the Western world. Through her studio, she met Dr. Shelley Fernandez, who was the president of the National Organization for Women in San Francisco, who took on the cause of judo inequality for women and petitioned the Kodokan to promote Keiko Fukuda to 6th degree after having been frozen at 5th degree for 30 years; and

WHEREAS, at the age of ninety-nine, Keiko Fukuda was still teaching to women and girls as young as fourteen years old at the Soko Joshi Judo Club in the Noe Valley area of San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Keiko Fukuda passed away on February 9, 2013. Filmmaker, Yuriko Gamo Romer remembers Fukuda in her documentary, *Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful*. Keiko Fukuda's legacy is known internationally, and people remember her as the soft spoken, humble master who broke barriers in the world of judo.

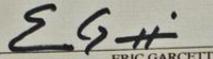
NOW THEREFORE, on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, we hereby salute the life and legacy of KEIKO FUKUDA on her story of enduring war, discrimination, and her choice to leave marriage and her family in Japan behind to devote herself wholly to judo. She truly created a radical shift for women around the world, and her legacy and devotion to the martial arts holds strong.

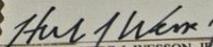
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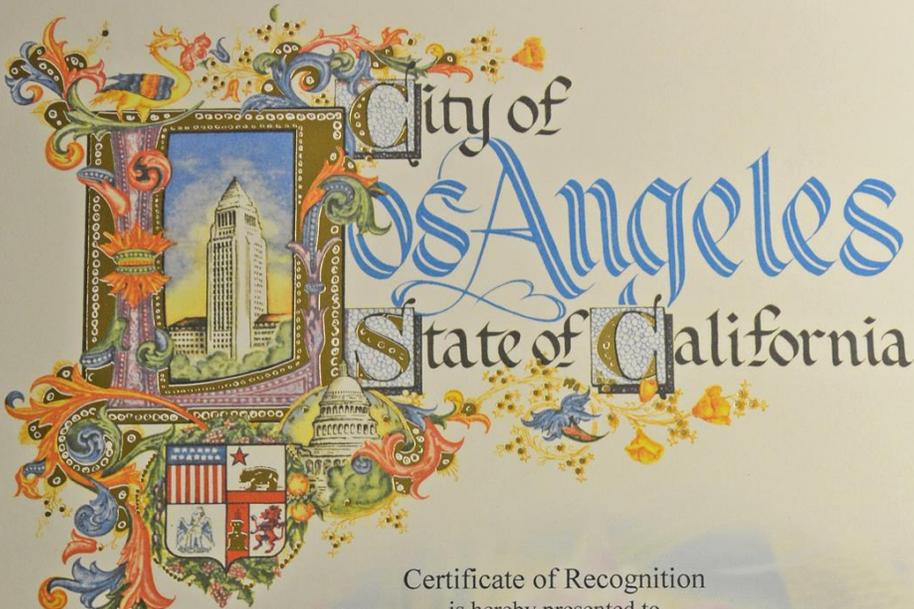

TOM LABONGE
Councilmember 4th District


JOSE HUIZAR
Councilmember 14th District




ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor


HERB J. WESSON, JR.
President, L.A. City Council



Certificate of Recognition
is hereby presented to

Mrs. Judo:
Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful
Yuriko Gammo Romer

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, we hereby salute Yuriko Gamo Romer on her film, Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful. This full-length documentary chronicles the life long journey of Keiko Fukuda's decision to defy thousands of years of tradition, choose her own path, and become judo history's only woman to attain the pinnacle 10th degree. We thank you for sharing this film that depicts Japanese cultural traditions and relations that continue from Japan to the United States through judo. You are truly an Angel in our City of Angels!

November 16, 2013



TOM LABONGE
Councilmember 4th District

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor

HERB J. WESSON, JR.
President, L.A. City Council



Gary Goltz and Neil Simon, Presidents of the USJA /JF with the late Keiko Fukuda



Olivet Gardens of Cypress Lawn Memorial Park, 1601 Hillside Blvd., Colma, CA 94014