

The Legendary Hal Sharp was a Real Mensch!

By [Gary Goltz](#)

3/23/2021



On Sunday, March 21, 2021, we lost [Harold E. Sharp](#), *Hal* to his friends and Sharp Sensei to the many judokas lives he touched over his 70+ years of involvement in Judo. Sharp Sensei was approaching his 94th birthday. He passed away peacefully at home and is survived by his wife Joan *Joanie*, son Richard, and daughters Kary, Denise, and Lisa. Last November, the [Nanka Judo Yudanshakai](#) (the SoCal Judo Association) recognized by Jigoro Kano in 1930, bestowed judo's highest rank of [10th Degree Black Belt](#), on Sharp Sensei.

the Sport of
JUDO

*柔道

*Kraig for Judo

The Pacific Stars and Stripes announces publication of THE SPORT OF JUDO, as practiced in Japan. Here, for the first time, is a big book with an easy-to-follow format explaining the fundamentals and basic throws of Judo. Written by a Japanese and an American, the book combines the knowledge of the Japanese expert with the modern techniques of the American publisher, utilizing picture magazine layouts to teach anyone this increasingly popular sport.

\$ 1.50

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR PX, STARS AND STRIPES BOOK STORES OR BY MAIL FROM: BOOK DEPARTMENT, PACIFIC STARS AND STRIPES, APO 500, U.S. FORCES

Ad in Pacific Stars and Stripes and Sharp Sensei in action circa 1955

Sharp Sensei was known worldwide for his 1955 book, *The Sport of Judo* and subsequent books as well as videos. In 1954 he was gifted by the Prince of Japan for great achievements in winning an international judo competition and being instrumental to the growth of judo after WWII leading to its eventual inclusion in the Olympics.



HSJTF's Board of Directors - Low Dong, Hayward Nishioka, John Moe, Gary Goltz, with Hal Sharp

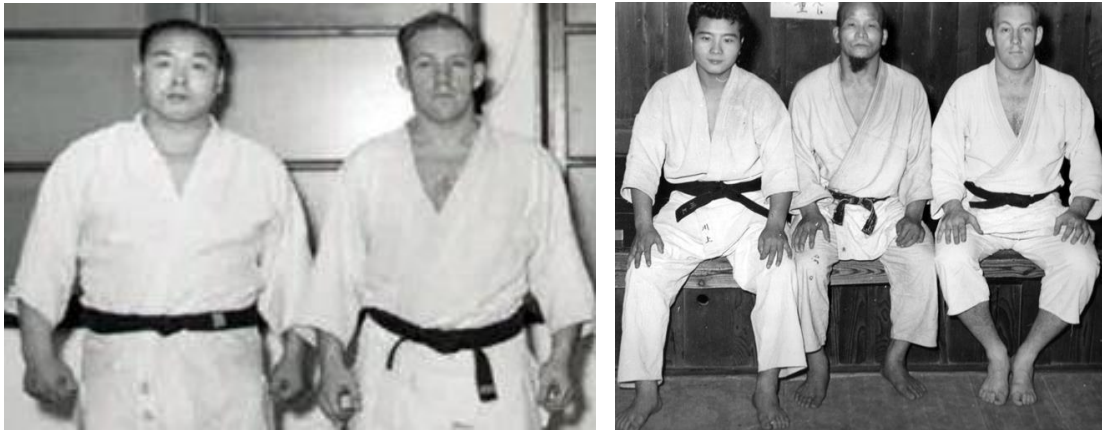
The Hal Sharp Judo Teachers Foundation, documents Sharp Sensei's 75+ years of dedication to judo. The Foundation's website contains approximately 100 hours of instructional videos for an interactive learning experience. Many of these videos were shot by Sharp Sensei.

The complete story of [Sharp Sensei's Introduction to Judo](#) appeared as a two-part *Black Belt* article in 1964 & 65. (I was able to locate a clean copy of this and have meticulously reproduced it for our readers.)

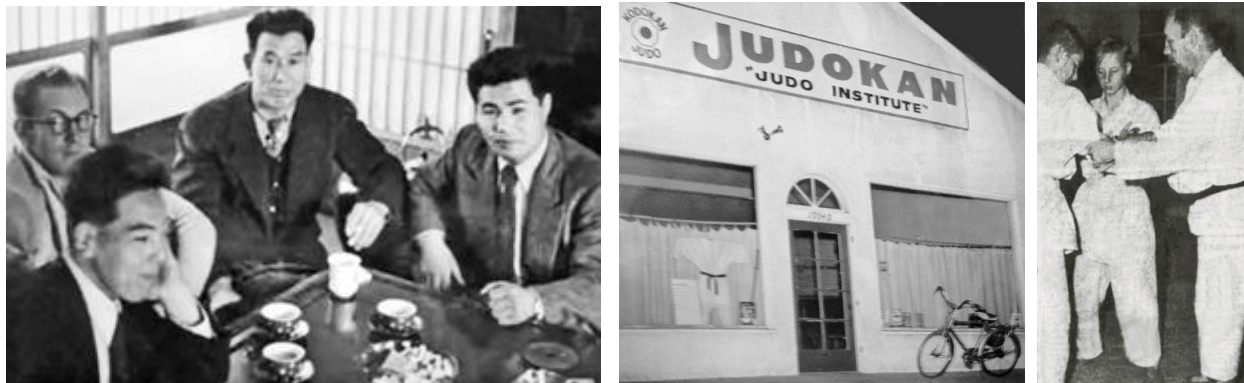


Sharp Sensei's Kodokan *Shodan* 1st Degree Black Belt Certificate from 1953, (the year I was born!)

Sharp Sensei told me that his good friend Charlie Palmer, who was the first President of the International Judo Federation (IJF), use to say *after you get your shodan, it's all downhill!* Funny how that now makes sense to me. With each higher rank, our time here on earth grows a bit shorter.



Sharp Sensei with Ishikawa Sensei, with Kawakami Sensei & son, below with Watanabe Sensei circa 1955



Upon Sharp Sensei's return to the Los Angeles he taught at the San Pedro, Gardena, & La Mirada YMCAs, and opened his own dojo in North Hollywood. Among his early students was Star Trek's, William Shatner!

SUNDAY GREEN SHEET
 News-Herald & Jnl., Bulletin-News, Star-Review, ER Sentinel
 Sunday, August 9, 1959

Reveal secrets of judo at local Do-It-Yourself H&G Show

One of the most unusual features at the Do-It-Yourself House and Garden Show in the new Memorial Sports Arena is the daily demonstrations of Judo by the captain of the U. S. Far East Judo team, Harold E. Sharp. Currently thrilling spectators with his Judo ability, Sharp relates the theory and methods of this Oriental sport gained through his Japanese training. He demonstrates exercise and tumbling, throwing, holding and submissive arts, and special self-defense techniques.

Defined as the gentlemanly art of self-defense, Judo developed from the ancient martial art of jujitsu, the bare-handed defense fighting perfected by warriors in Japan. Its popularity in Southern California is exemplified by Sharp's highly successful Judo studio in North Hollywood. He is also co-author of two books on the subject.

Lecturing from the Judo arena, Sharp introduces the beginner to all phases of the sport. He constantly proves that the do-it-yourself art of self defense is imperative for physical fitness as well as self protection. Sharp's last performance at the show is August 16, the closing date.

Children In Valley Like Judo

The ancient art of Judo as practiced centuries ago by the Japanese Knight of Samurai is gaining as a favorite sport of today's Valley youth.

Children as young as 7 are meeting twice weekly to perfect this traditional art at members of the North Hollywood Judo Club, a non-profit organization founded six months ago to further interest in Judo.

The group meets Monday and Wednesday evenings at 10300 Kling St., North Hollywood, in built-in surroundings. A summer program for boys between 8 and 18 years of age is being planned now.

Leader of the campaign is Harold Sharp, who has recently returned from seven years in Japan. He trained at several of the top Judo institutes while overseas and was named foreign Judo champion.

The soft-spoken Sharp, an announcer, is sincere in his feeling that Judo, if practiced properly, is excellent means as well as physical conditioning for a youngster. He has been termed a part of "Judo evangelist."

Sharp has written two books on his hobby. His first, "The Spirit of Judo," was a best seller in Japan and is now on sale in this country. Published in 1956, it has been used as a training manual by the Strategic Air Command.

In his second literary effort, he has tried to go further into the technique of Judo. This second book, Sharp says, is just off the press and should be on sale soon in the United States.

Proceeds from both books will go into the Judo Club, he said.

When in Japan, Sharp found the sportsmanship high among competitors. He said he was welcomed into many homes and felt that understanding through Judo may be a useful key to aid in the understanding between the East and West.

VALLEY TIMES

VALLEY TIMES, TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 1957 15

JUDO INSTRUCTOR FLIPS—Bruce Berger, 7, flips judo instructor Harold Sharp in practice at North Hollywood Judo Club. Youngsters who have adopted ancient art as a hobby meet twice weekly. Members watching action are, from left, Charles Lopez, 11; Jerry Eisenberger, 11; Alvin Steinberg, 14; Bill Ackerman, 14; Bill Hampton, 6; Bret Hampton, 7, and Roy Hampton—Valley Times photo.

Newspaper Articles from the late 50's on Sharp's Sensei's Dojo courtesy of Jerry Hays' Archives

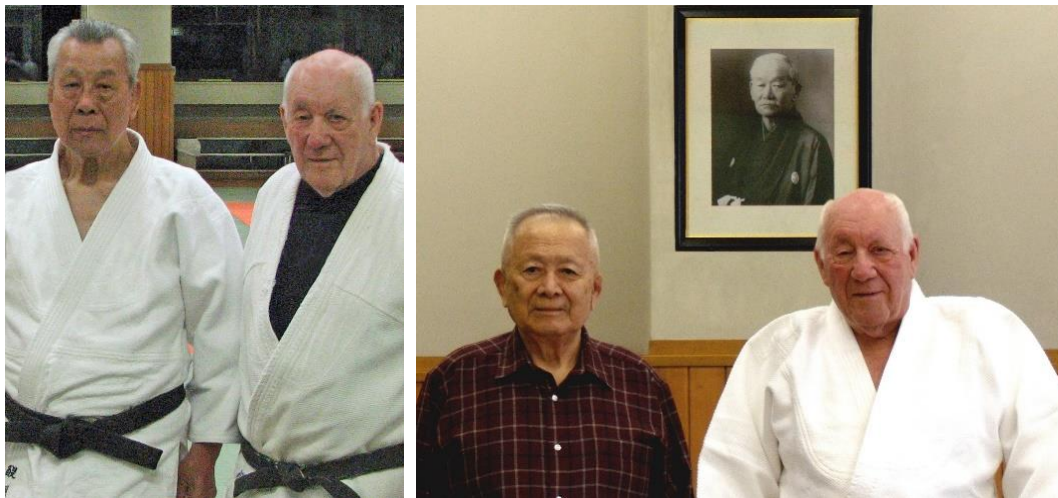


Sharp Sensei as featured in a 1968 [Black Belt](#) article that included Bruce Lee

In a conversation I had with *Judo* Gene LeBell this past Sunday, he expressed deep sadness over the loss of his lifelong friend Hal. Gene recalled being banned from judo tournaments after becoming a pro wrestler. *However, Hal would still welcome me at his dojo anytime*, Gene proclaimed proudly!



Gary Goltz, Gene LeBell, Hal Sharp, and OJ Soler at Judo Nationals in 1994

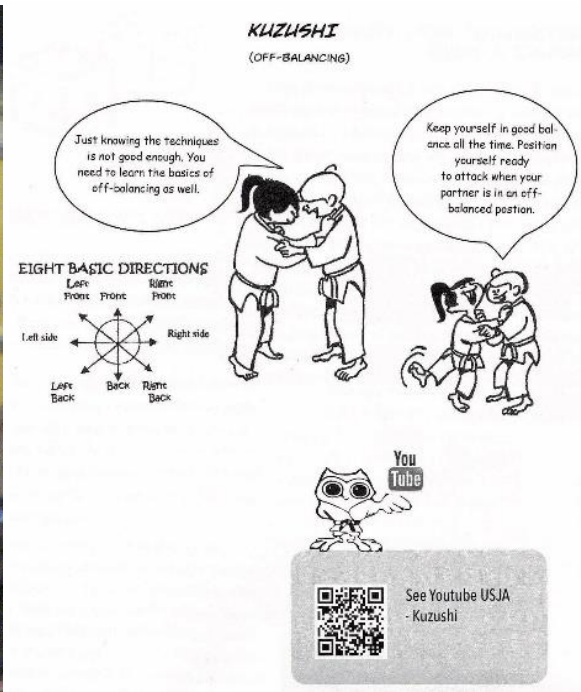


Sharp Sensei at the Kodokan in 2007 with his friend's Daigo & Osawa Sensei also 10th Dan holders (It should be noted Sharp Sensei introduced the late [Karl Geis](#), 10th Dan to judo & Osawa Sensei in 1960)



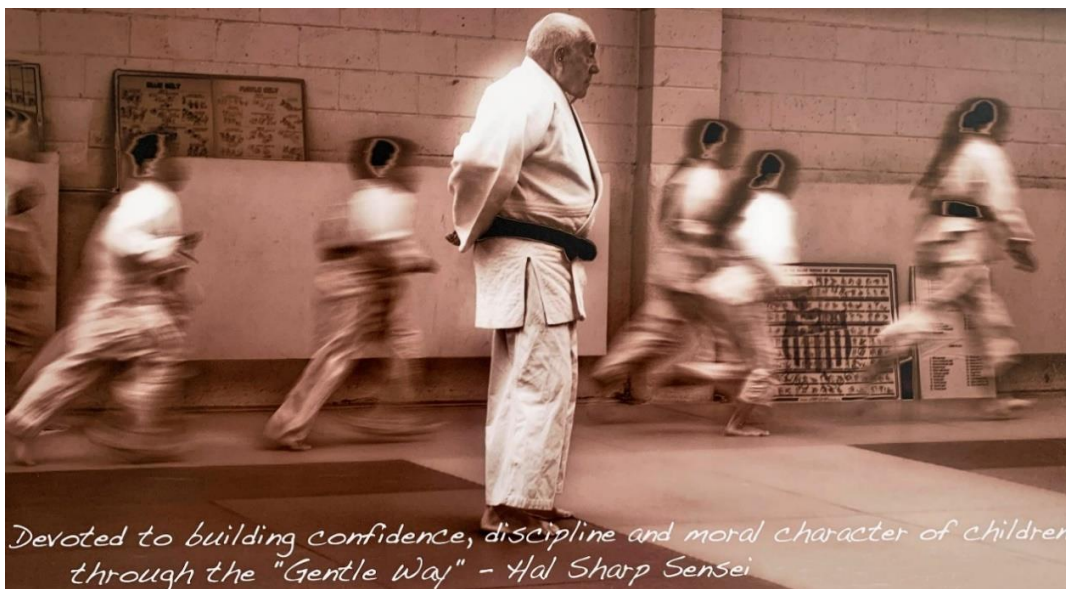
Sharp Sensei is in the [USJF's](#), [USA Judo's](#), & Nanka's Hall of Fame

Sharp Sensei continued making [judo films](#) throughout his later years. This included his coverage of the [Winter Nationals®](#) our nation's largest tournament, which I created in 2006 and in 2019 donated to [Nanka](#).



Sharp Sensei was still innovating in his 80's, inserting [QR Codes](#) that take the reader to corresponding videos he created which underscore the theories and techniques in his final book, *The Road to Black Belt*.

Prior to his move to North San Diego, Sharp Sensei served for decades as the technical director of the Gardena Judo, which is one of the largest dojos in the [USJF](#) and Nanka, ([Hal Sharp Interview from 2013](#)).



Sharp Sensei was married to his beloved wife, Joanie, for over 63 years



The Sharp Family is eternally grateful to the judo community for its support of their father, Hal. He was passionate not just for the sport of judo but for all of you. His life benefitted from your friendship and made it extraordinary. They thank you judoka, for your kind words regarding their father's passing. The Sharp Family can be reached at sharpsan@aol.com. They ask in lieu of flowers, to please continue to support judo and its community...[Hal Sharp's OB in Los Angeles Times](#).

A [Zoom memorial](#) was held on April 10th (the day following what would have been Sharp Sensei's 94th birthday) with nearly 100 attendees. This [Sharp Photo Montage](#) and [Sharp Video Clip](#) was debuted to everyone's delight.

Bonus: Here is a message I received from *Black Belt Magazine's* Two-Time Hall of Fame Member [Hayward Nishioka](#), 10th Dan recently after he read this piece –



Great job Gary for a great judoka. There are few who are as fortunate to have devoted so much of their life in a meaningful activity for the benefit of other judoka as Hal Sharp. Much of one's early life in judo is for the "self." For Hal that was 10%. The rest of the 90% was for others, and is evident in his many books, magazine articles, video's, DVD's, Social Media clips, presentations, tours, and countless hours donated to others in our hallowed dojos. There will never be another one like him. He was our special 10th Dan!