



Mrs. Judo

Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful

photo © Cathy Cade

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Mrs. Judo

Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful

Logline:

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful documents the life-long journey of Keiko Fukuda's decision to defy thousands of years of tradition, choose her own path, and become the only woman in history to attain judo's pinnacle of 10th degree black belt.

Synopsis:

Once in a long while, the life destiny of one woman lines up to make a radical shift for women around the world. In the summer of 2011, Keiko Fukuda broke through a glass ceiling for women when she was awarded the pinnacle of judo, the 10th degree (black belt).

Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful is the story of Keiko Fukuda, whose life commitment was to spread judo around the globe. The film offers a thematic exploration of profound shifts in Japanese society and the altered status of women on both sides of the Pacific, with a visual style that honors Fukuda's motto, which is also the film's subtitle. Fukuda explains the crux of judo – literally "way of gentleness" – is the flexibility to move with the energy of the moment.

Fukuda's life-long adventure is told through a special trip in 2009, when she was invited as an honored guest to attend the All-Japan Judo Tournament. Ironically, she was hosted and honored by the very organization that had held her back. Scenes from the trip cue moments from Fukuda's rich 78-year career.

Fukuda was born into an upper-class samurai family, where the path for women was to marry, bear children, and to manage the home. One of the words for wife in Japanese literally translates to "the person at the back of the home." A young woman was expected to study the traditional arts of tea ceremony, flower arranging, traditional musical instruments, and brush calligraphy. Fukuda's life was predestined differently, two generations earlier when her grandfather (a jujitsu master) became the first teacher for Jigoro Kano. Kano then went on to develop a new era of martial arts, by creating judo.

Fukuda who had never met her grandfather, inherited this destiny and lived to spread judo around the world for women. When she was 21 she was invited to join the newly formed women's division of the Kodokan (the home of judo) by judo founder, Jigoro Kano. Kano was a visionary and had women throwing each other around, at a time when women dared not bare their legs. Kano's untimely death in 1938 left judo stuck in those times for several decades.

Fukuda survived WWII after braving the streets of firebombed Tokyo, as she commuted daily to teach her beloved judo classes. Kano had charged his students with going abroad and expanding the world of judo. She'd made a lifetime commitment, married judo, and took this charge on. Soon after the war, she was invited to the U.S. to teach judo. This opened up a new, much bigger world for her. Later she embraced the opportunity and immigrated to the U.S. in 1966, where she taught judo to women and brought a skill level unmatched in the western world.

She settled in San Francisco during the height of the women's movement and became friends with one of her students. Dr. Shelley Fernandez was the president of NOW - San Francisco. Fernandez took on judo inequality for women as a cause. Until 1972 women had a ceiling of 5th degree, while the men could earn up through 10th degree. Dr. Fernandez

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petitioned the Japanese Kodokan Judo Institute, and Fukuda was finally raised to 6th degree after being stuck at 5th degree for 30 years. The judo world for women seemed to have shifted, until the 9th degree became an issue. This time judo champion and coach, Eiko Shepherd led the charge and lobbied the old-fashioned, sexist Japanese judo organization. Finally, after many years, they awarded Fukuda the 9th degree in 2006, but not until the reigning three 9th degree men had been promoted to 10th degree.

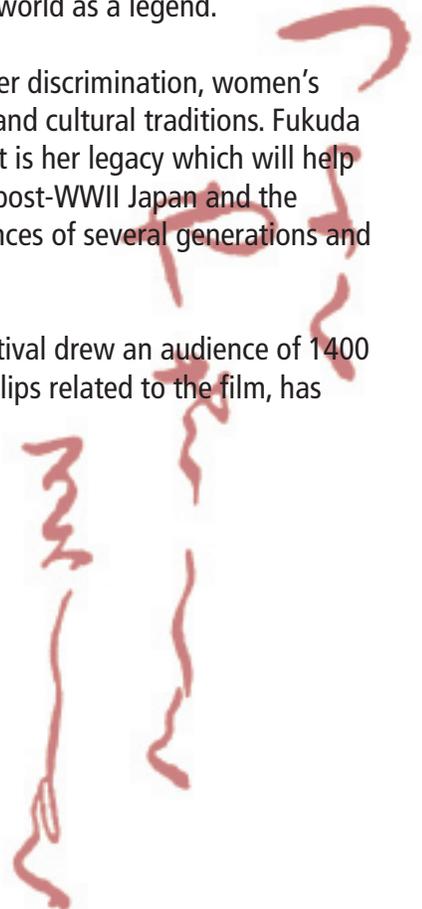
Fukuda's story is also an American immigrant story. The U.S. was founded on the premise of a new world to overcome the limitations and the prejudices of the "old world," wherever that may have been. Fukuda's move to the U.S. in 1966 was bold and unusual for a single woman whose own career had been the impetus for immigration. Then she was given a rare circumstance of entry to become a permanent resident, and eventually become an American citizen, through a seldom invoked "vital to the defense of the country" clause. There is no doubt that her influence on judo, and for women, would never have happened had she stayed in Japan.

In July of 2011 Fukuda broke the last glass ceiling when she was awarded the tenth degree, with no higher to be achieved as a woman or a man. She became an international media darling and a local heroine known throughout the judo world, receiving many high honors, one of which was nomination for the coveted honor of National Heritage Fellow by the NEA and the White House.

Keiko Fukuda Sensei recently passed away on February 9, 2013. She was 99 years old; two months shy of her 100th birthday. Keiko Fukuda truly is a local heroine, but this rare story begs to be told nationally and internationally, as an example and a source of inspiration to women, girls and men. (We receive more emails from men than women regarding the film). The time is now, to tell this story, to honor and spread her influence to the world as a legend.

The film is relevant now due to the array of contemporary social issues it explores: gender discrimination, women's rights, immigration, senior citizens' concerns, and Japanese and Asian American history and cultural traditions. Fukuda was an important Japanese culture bearer as one of the last links to judo's origin. Now it is her legacy which will help to connect back to the origin of judo. Furthermore, the film's historical context includes post-WWII Japan and the burgeoning women's movement in the U.S. during the 1960s, appealing to global audiences of several generations and backgrounds.

The premiere screening at the 2012 San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival drew an audience of 1400 and packed San Francisco's historic Castro Theater and one of several popular YouTube clips related to the film, has amassed over 583,000 hits to date.



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Characters:

Keiko Fukuda

10th degree, Judo Instructor



Fukuda was born in Tokyo in 1913 where two generations earlier, her samurai grandfather was the first martial arts master to Jigoro Kano, who went on to found judo. In 1934, Fukuda was invited by Kano to join his new women's division, a progressive idea at a time when males dominated the sport. Judo literally translates as the "gentle way" and, as most martial arts, began as combat technique. During peace times it was cultivated as a spiritual practice. Judo's black belt has 10 degrees, but gender discrimination dictated that women hit a ceiling at 5th degree, until 1974. Fukuda herself was frozen at 5th degree for 30 years, while her male colleagues advanced.

Facing her own struggle for independence as a young woman, Fukuda defied tradition, choosing not to marry when she realized that as a wife she would have to give up her beloved judo. Her teacher, Master Kano, charged his students with the responsibility to spread judo around the world. For Fukuda, this became her life's vocation.

Fukuda, even at 99-years-old, less than 5 feet tall, and weighing barely 100 pounds, was a force to be reckoned with. She continued to teach judo several times a week at her dojo in San Francisco, even after suffering from Parkinson's, a major heart-attack and triple by-pass surgery. After 77 years of practicing judo, Fukuda achieved judo's highest rank - 10th dan – and is the last disciple of Master Kano, a lasting link to judo's origins, and a legend.



Shelley Fernandez

Fukuda's Dear Friend, Women's Rights Activist

Shelley Fernandez was Keiko Fukuda's dear friend and advocate since 1966. Over several decades, Fernandez fought for Fukuda's deserved recognition within judo's ranking system and helped Fukuda gain U.S. citizenship. Fernandez has been a lifelong women's rights activist and has previously served as the president of the National Organization for Women (NOW).



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Characters:



Kaori Yamaguchi, 6th degree
1988 Olympic Bronze Medalist

Kaori Yamaguchi

6th degree, 1988 Olympic Medalist

Kaori Yamaguchi is a 1988 Olympic bronze medalist in women's judo, and a former Japanese women's national team coach.



Hal Sharp, 9th degree
Judo Instructor

Hal Sharp

9th degree, Judo Instructor

Hal Sharp first traveled to Japan in 1942 as a young soldier during the US occupation of Japan. He fell in love with Japan and returned to live in 1953 as an accountant for the US Navy. There he studied judo and first met Keiko Fukuda. His rare home movies and photographs reveal an intimate portrait of postwar Japan rarely seen in the West.

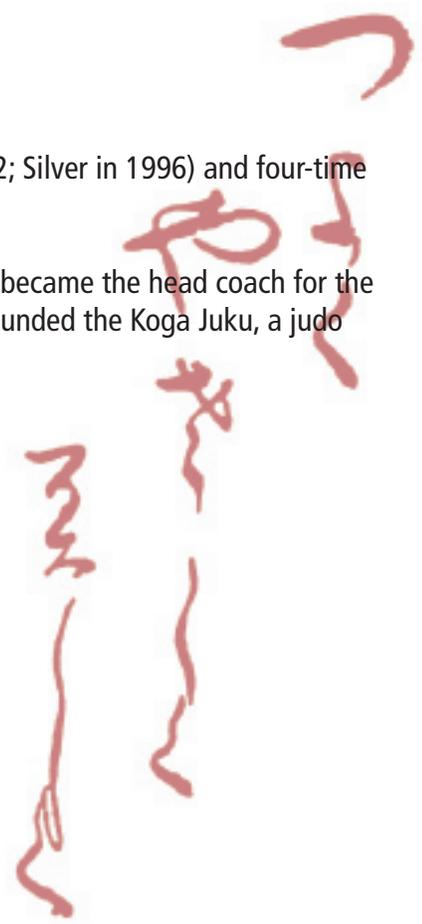


Toshihiko Koga, 7th degree
Olympic Gold Medalist (1992)

Toshihiko Koga

Two-time Olympic medalist (Gold in 1992; Silver in 1996) and four-time World Champion in judo.

In 2000 he retired from competition and became the head coach for the All-Japan women's judo team. He also founded the Koga Juku, a judo school for young children.



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Characters:



Eiko Saito Shepherd
7th degree, Judo Instructor

Eiko Saito Shepherd was born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. She moved to United States in 1969 for competition and to serve as a guest judo instructor. As a young teenager inspired by her older brother Chuichiro, an Asian Games judo champion, she earned her Black Belt at the Kodokan. At a time when there were no competitions for women, Eiko Shepherd made judo history being the first female to compete against men at the Kodokan. During her teenage years at the Kodokan she met Sensei Keiko Fukuda who became her life-long mentor and friend.

Sensei Fukuda and Eiko Shepherd often spoke of the interesting way that their lives crossed first in Japan and decades later in the United States. Honored to have serve under Sensei Fukuda`s direction, Eiko Shepherd currently serves as the Fukuda Scholarship chairman, instructor at Joshi Judo Camp, and for USJF and USJA Judo. She is married with two sons, Jon and Timothy



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Director's Bio:

Filmmaker **Yuriko Gamo Romer's** film *Occidental Encounters* won numerous awards at film festivals internationally, among them a Student Academy Award, The Jimmy Stewart Memorial Crystal Heart Award and a Silver Apple. She recently completed *Friend Ships* a short historical animation about John Manjiro, the inadvertent Japanese immigrant rescued by an American whaling captain. Romer has also directed, produced and edited *Dancing with God*, was a producer for *Virtuoso: the Olga Samaroff Stokowski Story*, and was an editor for *On Common Ground: The Life of Howard Thurman*. Her short films include *Reflection*, *Kids will be Kids*, *Sunnyside of the Slope*, and *Fusion*. Romer is Japanese American, born in Japan, raised in the United States, and is bilingual. She holds a master's degree in documentary filmmaking from Stanford University, a BFA from UCLA, a brown belt from World Oyama Karate and lives in San Francisco with her husband and son.

Director's note:

My life is a melding of Japanese and American, my two cultures. As soon as I met Keiko Fukuda four years ago, I knew that it was my calling to make this film. Fukuda's wisdom, inspiration and tenacity have moved me through my own struggles in making this film. Keiko Fukuda lived her life according to her motto: "Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful." I hope that in seeing this film, the viewers will be inspired by Keiko Fukuda to lived their own dreams.

Thus far my films have been mostly short essays, and my last ten years have mainly been spent working on other people's films and developing videos for various non-profit entities. Embarking on this film marks a new point in my life as an artist to invest myself into a project of this proportion and depth. It is also a chance to take advantage of my Japanese culture, language and sense.

I plan to move forth from this project to develop and grow myself as an artist challenging the medium of film. I feel that my connection to Japan will also continue to play an important part in my work.



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Crew Bios:

Cinematographer Emily Taguchi-Klingensmith's credits include *Silk Grandmothers*, *Days of our Tortuga*, and *The Unforgotten War*. She has also shot and produced stories for Spark, KQED's weekly arts magazine, and for ABC Now, CBS Newspath, CNN's Anderson Cooper 360, Current TV, KQED Public Television, PBS Frontline & World, GOOD Magazine, and The New York Times. Ms. Taguchi-Klingensmith was born and raised in Japan, then was educated at Tufts University. She lived in San Francisco for 10 years and now resides in Paris, France. She is also a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

Cinematographer Monica Lam most recently was producer and principal camera for *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, and its adaptation into an opera. Monica Lam has produced several international reports for the PBS series FRONTLINE/World, including *Paraguay: Sounds of Hope*, *A Message from the Sea*. Lam has worked to document the lives of young sweatshop workers in southern China for China Blue worked as a line producer on *Bolinao 52*, a documentary about Vietnamese boat people, and explored the aftermath of apartheid in the tragic, Academy Award nominated story of a young South African photographer. Lam is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

Consulting Editor Nathaniel Dorsky is an experimental filmmaker, documentary film editor, and preeminent documentary story doctor and editing consultant. Dorsky has been the recipient of many awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship and grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the LEF Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the California Arts Council.

Composer Mark Izu's compositions are characterized by his seamless integration of jazz with other music traditions and his mastery of cross-cultural instrumentation. Particularly relevant to this project is his career long study of gagaku, the oldest classical music form in Japan. Izu has composed scores for film, live music concerts and theater. His film scores include Steven Okazaki's Academy Award-winning *Days of Waiting*; *Wayne Wang's Dim Sum Take Out*; KTEH's Emmy-winning documentary, *Return to the Valley* and James Kulp's PBS documentary, *Westward to China*.

Consulting Producer Marc Smolowitz is an Academy Award® nominated film, TV & new media producer ("The Weather Underground", "Trembling Before G-d"), director("The Power of Two") and executive producer ("Still Around"/The HIV Story Project/Generations HIV) with 20+ years of experience across all aspects of the entertainment and media business. Most recently, he was the producer at TellyTopia, a Silicon Valley start up specializing in interactive television, IP-TV and VOD products for cable companies. In 2012, he works full time as an independent filmmaker, while maintaining a thriving consulting practice that guides other documentary producers through key stages of development, production, post, completion, and distribution. As a freelancer, he regularly works on special projects with a diverse slate of SF Bay Area-based media and technology companies, nonprofits, and philanthropies. Finally, he is also a lecturer in the Film & Digital Media Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Since 2007, Smolowitz has served as Chair of the founding board of directors of the San Francisco Public Press - a nonprofit news start up committed to local, investigative print and online journalism that serves the public interest needs of under served communities in San Francisco.

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Keiko Fukuda made history and news, on July 28, 2010, when she became the first woman ever to be awarded the pinnacle rank, 10th degree black belt in judo. She is one of less than 20 ever to be awarded this rank.

Press:

3/07/13 - Asahi Shimbun - [Asahi Shimbun](#)

2/18/13 - The Japan Times - [Legendary judo teacher Fukuda dies at 99](#)

2/18/13 - The Japan Daily Press - [World's only top-ranked female judo master passes away at age 99](#)

2/18/13 - MSN News - [Keiko Fukuda, first woman to achieve judo's highest rank, dies](#)

2/18/13 - PRI's The World - [Remembering Keiko Fukuda, the Mother of Judo](#)

2/17/13 - Reuters - [Highest-ranked female judo master dies at age 99 in San Francisco](#)

2/16/13 - The New York Times - [Keiko Fukuda, a Trailblazer in Judo, Dies at 99](#)

2/16/13 - San Francisco Chronicle - [Keiko Fukuda, top-ranked woman in judo \(Obituary\)](#)

2/13/13 - The Telegraph - [Keiko Fukuda \(Obituary\)](#)

2/12/13 - The Rafu Shimpo Los Angeles Japanese Daily News - [Judo Loses an Indomitable Pioneer](#)

12/12/12 - The Bold Italic - [Living Legends](#)

10/07/12 - Asahi Shimbun - [9/18/12 Asahi Shimbun](#)

5/16/12 - Commonwealth Club of California (podcast) - [Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful](#)

3/27/12 - Noe Valley Voice - [Local Life Force Found in New Film](#)

3/9/12 - ABC 7 News San Francisco - [98-year-old San Francisco judo master star of new documentary film](#)

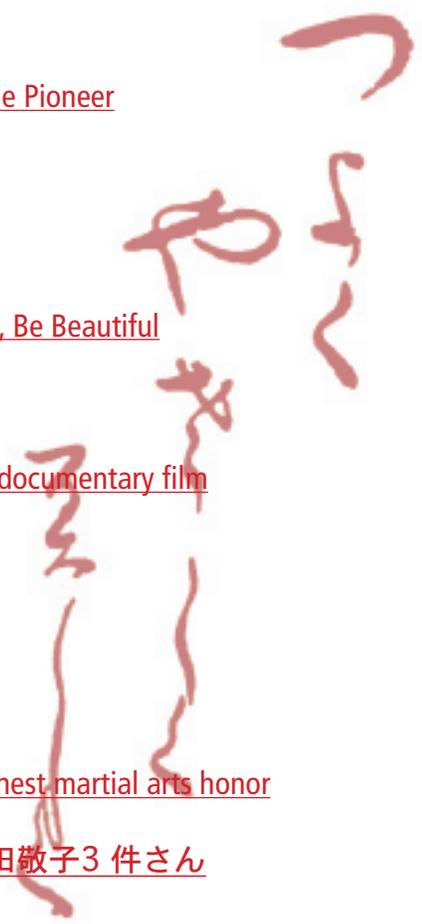
3/9/12 - blogtalkradio (podcast) - [Wanda's Picks Podcast](#)

3/7/12 - California Watch - [Premiere: Mrs. Judo: Be Strong, Be Gentle, Be Beautiful](#)

2/11/12 - Rafu Shimpo - [S.F. International Asian American Film Festival Turns 30](#)

10/1/2011 - AARP Magazine - [Black Belt Judo Pioneer: 98-year-old woman achieves highest martial arts honor](#)

09/26/2011 - 47news.jp [97歳で柔道を教える サンフランシスコ在住の福田敬子3件さん](#)



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09/16/2011 - espnW - [98-year-old woman reaches highest echelon of judo](#)

08/28/2011 - Today.com - [Accomplishing amazing athletic feats - in their 80s and 90s](#)

08/22/2011 - Sports Illustrated - [Go Figure - 98, Age of Keiko Fukuda Shihan, the sole surviving student of judo founder Jigoro Kano and the first woman of 15 people to attain the sport's highest rank, 10th-degree black belt.](#)

08/19/2011 - Frankfurter Neue Press - [Höchste Auszeichnung für 98-jährige Judokämpferin](#)

08/19/2011 - NZZ Online Zurich - [Die Übermutter der Powerfrauen: Höchste Auszeichnung für 98-jährige Judokämpferin](#)

08/16/2011 - TimeOut Tokyo - [Keiko Fukuda: Judo 10th dan at 98 years old: Original judo queen's life is the subject of new documentary](#)

08/15/2011 - Huffington Post - [Keiko Fukuda Becomes 98-Year-Old Black Belt \(VIDEO\)](#)

08/14/2011 - Time.com - [98 Year-old Woman Earns Highest Degree in Judo](#)

08/13/2011 - The Rafu Shimpo - [Fukuda Promoted to 10th Dan — First Woman to Achieve Judo's Top Rank](#)

08/13/2011 - Daily Mail - [Don't mess with Keiko! 98-year-old Judo master becomes first woman to earn highest-level black belt](#)

Press Continued:

08/13/2011 - laRepluclica.it TV - [Judo, super-cintura nera a 98 anni: Keiko ottiene "il decimo dan"](#)

08/13/2011 - Shine from Yahoo - [98-year-old woman becomes first woman ever to earn Judo's highest-degree black belt](#)

08/12/2011 - BBC Radio Global News - Judo Pensioner (18 mins. into podcast)

08/12/2011 - CBC Radio, As it Happens - [She's still getting her kicks — and giving them. A ninety-eight year-old San Francisco judo master becomes the first woman to earn a tenth-degree black belt.](#)

08/11/2011 - ABC News - [Keiko Fukuda, 98, Becomes First Woman to Earn Highest Level Black Belt](#)

08/10/2011 - The Daily Telegraph Australia - [98 year old woman Sensei Keiko Fukuda gets judo black belt](#)

08/09/2011 - NPR - [Nonagenarian Earns Judo's 10th Degree Black Belt](#)

08/06/2011 - San Francisco Chronicle - [Judo master makes 10th degree black belt](#)



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Photos:

*Please note: All of the following photos can be downloaded in high-resolution on the film's website:
www.Mrs.JudoMovie.com



2009 Japan shoot, at the Tokyo cemetery paying respects to Fukuda's ancestors. © Flying Carp Productions



Keiko Fukuda surrounded by the women of her San Francisco judo club, Soko Joshi Judo © Flying Carp Productions



2009 Japan shoot, at the opening ceremony of the All Japan Judo Kata Tournament at the Kodokan in Tokyo © Flying Carp Productions



Kagami Biraki, Fukuda's annual judo New Year's celebration © Flying Carp Productions

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Portrait of Keiko Fukuda in front of her
painted portrait
© Zdenek Mlika



Smiling portrait of Keiko Fukuda
© Flying Carp Productions



Yuriko Romer (filmmaker) and Keiko Fukuda
© Monica Lee Photography



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CREDITS:

A Film By

Yuriko Gamo Romer

Featuring

Keiko Fukuda

And in order of appearance

Katsuko Umetsu

Eiko Shepherd

Kaori Yamaguchi

Hal Sharp

Dr. Shelley Fernandez

Toshihiko Koga

Cinematographers

Monica Lam

Emily Taguchi

Editor

Yuriko Gamo Romer

Assistant Editors

Yuko Inatsuki

Mohawk

Associate Producers

Erika Brekke

Lorna MacMillian

Associate Producer Japan

Jonathan Hall

Transportation and Production Coordinator Japan

Mariko Gamo

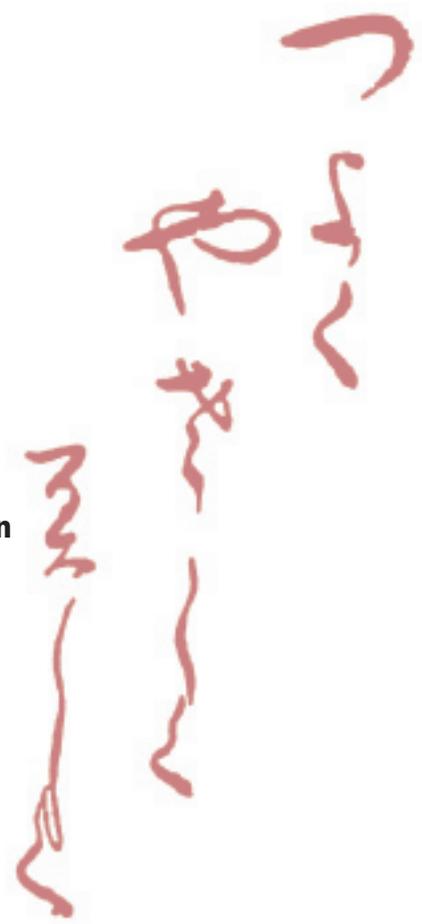
Additional Camera

Erika Brekke

Michel Fraser

Emiko Omori

Yuriko Gamo Romer



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Location Sound

Claudia Katayanagi

Additional Location Sound

Lauretta Molitor

Matty Nematollahi

Ashley Tindall

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Ri Crawford

Color Grading

Leo Hallal

Assistant On Line Editor

Michael Robinson Fleming

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Kevin Jones

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ZAP Zoetrope Aubry Productions,
San Francisco

Post Production Audio

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Berke Sound, San Francisco

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Laura Rodil

Still Photography

Anita Bowen

Cathy Cade

Yuko Inatsuki

Monica Lee

Zdenek Mlika

Consulting Producer

Marc Smolowitz



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Nathaniel Dorsky
Ken Schneider

Photographic Retouching

Tomo Okada

Web Producer

Elvis Murks

IT Consultant

Colin Johnson

Interns

Takuya Mera
Teava Noy
Krystal Solla

Translation

Jonathan Hall
Madoka Ayaki
Yuko Inatsuki
Takuya Mera
Kayko Watanabe

Archival Footage

- 1955 Keiko Fukuda, courtesy of Arol Thorson,
Filmed by Betty and David Thorson
- 1964 Olympics, courtesy of Danny Kikuchi
- WWII aerial, courtesy of National Archives
- 1967 Women's march, Oddball Film+Video
- 1923 Earthquake, Critical Past
- The rest of the beautiful archival footage courtesy of Hal Sharp

Archival Photography Courtesy of

Keiko Fukuda
Dr. Shelley Fernandez
James E. Graham
Keisuke Kitanaka
Kodokan Library and Museum
Hal Sharp
Yokohama City Central Library



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Archival Research

Gretchen Schneider, Granada Arts

BBC Radio Audio

Courtesy of BBC World Service News and Current Affairs
The World Today – August 12, 2011

Fiscal Sponsor

Center for Independent Documentary

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CAAM
US Judo Federation
Center for Cultural Innovation
Japan-US Friendship Commission
Mervyn Brenner Foundation
Fleishhacker Foundation
Eva and Lucius Eastman Foundation
The Kickstarter donors and many other individuals

Original Score

Mark Izu

"Love" by

Mark Izu and Christopher Yomei Blasdel

"Chikara" by

Mark Izu and Janet Koike

"Haru no Umi" by

Michio Miyagi



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Musicians

Pam Arthur
Brenda Wong Aoki
Bean Blaine
Christopher Yomei Blasdel
Anthony Brown
Ray Collins
Denise Fujikawa
Yoko Fujimoto
Shoko Hikage
Mark Izu
Jon Jang
Lewis Jordan
Jin Hi Kim
Janet Koike
June Kuramoto
Miya Masaoka
Kanow Matsueda
James Newton
Jim Norton
Shonosuke Okura
Joe Perez
George Sams
Masazuki Sumida
Suenobu Togi

Thank You!

The Fukuda Family in Japan
The Kodokan Judo Institute
Soko Joshi Judo
Palo Alto Judo
San Jose Judo
The Koga Family and Dojo
Touch of Class Beauty Salon
Palo Alto Buddhist Church
San Francisco Cherry Blossom Parade



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Elaine Abad
Ellen Bruno
Suzanne Buckley
Tom Callos
Elaine Stanifer-Chang & Tom Chang
Mamie Chow
Frances Christie
John Kikuchi & Debra Coggins
Laurie Coyle
Dr. Shelley Fernandez
Leslie Flores
Kay Gamo
Yasko Gamo
Kellie & Jeff Hepper
Megumi & Doug Inouye
Ken Schneider & Marcia Jarmel
Anastasia Jernigan
Colin Johnson
Carlyn Kagawa
Monica Lee
Valerie Lee
Dawn Logsdon
Francis Loke
Greg Marutani
George Membrila
Adrinna Phipps & Pam Mery
Trin Min-Ha
Letitia Momirov
Wilna Monar
Chip & Sydney Nakamura
Randy Peralta
Practical Martial Arts - Marin County, CA
Laura Rodil
Mark Rogers
Bill Romer
Charles & Justine Romer
Chip & Sallie Romer
John Romer
Niko Romer
Mayumi Sakazaki
Paul & Shizu Senda
Amy Fujiwara Shen
Yehudit Zicklin-Sidikman



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Julie Sumida
Leesy Taggart
James & Helen Takamoto
Vicki Trent
Karen & Mike Valentine
Don Robins & Kayko Watanabe
Vanessa Wilson
Donald Young
Dorothy Yuki

And to all who had faith and have contributed in so many ways.

In Loving Memory of Hideya Gamo

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