

The following was written by Al C. Holtmann during the 1970s.

I

History of Judo in San Diego, California Prior to 1946

According to oral reports, the only Judo Club existing in the San Diego area prior to World War II was one located upstairs in Taiikukai Hall, 6th Avenue and Market Street, which operated for several years beginning in 1925. The first Sensei was Mikonosake Kawaishi (unable to discover his grade at that time) who instructed there for two years (sic). Mr. Kawaishi is presently an 8th or 9th Dan and has been for several decades the head of Judo in France. During a conversation the writer had several years ago with Seigo Murakami (8th Dan of Nanka Judo Yudanshakai), Mr. Murakami recalled traveling to San Diego in the mid-1920's for a judo tournament with Kawaishi's Dojo. Following Mr. Kawaishi's departure from San Diego, the Club was taught by Mizuzaki Showa, 5th Dan, for approximately one year and then closed down.

This is the only known record of any organized judo activity in the San Diego area until 1946. There was a Kendo Society at the Buddhist Temple, 29th and Market Streets, which was discontinued at the start of World War II.

II

Judo in the San Diego Area 1946 to 1954

In April 1946, Judo activities commenced in the San Diego area in the city YMCA, 8th and C Streets, and in the Armed Services YMCA (military personnel only), 500 W. Broadway, by Al C. Holtmann – a side activity while he was attending College. Continuing to promote Judo, increasing the membership and teaching these two YMCA classes, Holtmann opened the San Diego Judo Club (the first of planned Clubs) in November 1949, under the organizational heading of Southern California School of Judo & Ju Jitsu, under which all classes, Clubs, and Dojos were placed for administrative reasons. These two classes and the Club were in operation at the end of 1954, with a steady growth in membership.

Late in 1953, Holtmann started a Judo Club at the USO in Oceanside, California, and in early 1954, he turned it over to James Shaw (currently a Yodan) who instructed there and in other locations. This Club was eventually turned over to Sachio Matsubara (Godan) and was the forerunner of the present Sanshi Judo Dojo, which is still located in the Oceanside area 40 miles north of San Diego.

The City YMCA has, excepting for a few periods, continued to have a Judo class taught by various instructors until 1963 when it became the site of the Heian Judo Club, which was founded and instructed by Benso Tsuji (Rokudan – now Shichidan).

A report on the Armed Services YMCA Judo class, and the City YMCA (Heian Judo Club) will be in the next section of this history.

During the immediate post-war years (1946-1954) there was much prejudice against the Japanese, and the writer encountered a great deal of hostility and experienced many difficulties during the first six years of promoting Judo in San Diego area. However, a complete turn-about occurred in 1952 when the former prejudice and hostility of the general public evolved into an interest in Japanese culture. In 1954, the increase in the membership of the classes at the San Diego Judo Club compelled Holtmann to drop his College Graduate work in order to devote more time to Judo Instructions.

Since Judo was a novelty at that time, there was little difficulty in obtaining publicity. Newspapers and publications in the San Diego area several times each year published articles on the Judo classes and the Club. The articles, plus many demonstrations in the public schools, before various organizations, at the San Diego County Fair, and on Television was of material benefit in putting the merits of Judo study and practice before the general public.

The San Diego Judo Club had a substantial membership in 1953 and entered a small team in the First National AAU Judo Tournament in San Jose, and in the Second National AAU Judo Tournament in San Francisco in 1954.

III Nanka Judo Yudanshakai – Membership in 1954 to 1969

A big boost to Judo activities in the San Diego area came with the joining of the San Diego Judo Club to Nanka Judo Yudanshakai (Los Angeles) in 1954 at the invitation of Kenneth Kuniyuki (now 7th Dan). Under Nanka's jurisdiction, much assistance was given to San Diego area Judo in the way of advice, promotions, technical help, plus invitations to all Nanka Judo tournaments and promotional tournaments, with some of the Nanka Clubs occasionally attending tournaments held in San Diego. (The distance between Los Angeles and San Diego is one hundred and thirty miles.)

Nanka officials backed all Judo activities in San Diego and gave much time and assistance to local clubs in the period 1954-1969. Kenneth Kuniyuki possibly assisted the San Diego area more than any Nanka official did, and his Dojo (Seine) always had a special relationship with the San Diego Club. San Diego Dojos that were members of Nanka remember with thanks the help rendered by former presidents Kiro Nagano (Hachidan) and Seigo Murakami (Hachidan); secretaries Ryuji Tatsuno, Frank Watanuki, Lauri Coughran, and Hal Sharp; and registration chairmen Shag Okada, Larry Kobayashi, and Harry Kaisaki, plus many other officers of Nanka.

The second Dojo to join Nanka was the Sanshi Judo Club of Oceanside (Sachio Matsubara) in 1955. This Club developed many strong competitors and a number of Yudanshas during its membership with Nanka and is still in operation at this writing.

Another shot in the arm in the development of Judo in the San Diego area came in 1955 with the joining of Professor Benso Tsuji as technical director of the Southern California School of Judo & Ju Jitsu. As the highest graded Yudansha in the area, he brought his technical

knowledge to bear on the teaching and promoting of Judo in all the Dojos that came to be in the San Diego area. (A Shodan in Aikido in 1955 – a student of Koichi Tohei – Professor Tsuji also started the first Aikido Class in the U.S. – so far as the writer has been able to determine.)

Tsuji's joining of the school caused an immediate expansion – the opening of the El Cajon Valley Judo Club in 1956, the Chula Vista Judo Club in 1957, and opening of the Pacific Beach Judo Club in 1958 – at the time one of the largest Judo Clubs in the U.S. In late 1958 the School's four Clubs and outside classes had more than 500 students on the mats.

Commencing in 1956, from four to twenty tournaments were held each year in the San Diego area in addition to Judo students attending tournaments with Nanka and other major tournaments as is also being done at the time of this writing. Tournaments were held in YMCA's, Judo Clubs, Athletic Clubs, Public Schools, and various military establishments drawing, in addition to local Judokas, competitors from Nanka, Mexico, Arizona, Palm Springs, March Air Force Base, and U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Judo Clubs.

Besides Sanshi Judo Club and the Southern California School of Judo & Ju Jitsu, three other areas Clubs are members of Nanka, the U.S. Naval Training Center Judo Club, Gillespie Judo Club, and the Heian Judo Club. (The Gillespie Judo Club was later known as Santee Judo Club and is now Cajon Judo Club – name change mainly due to change in the Club's location.)

Before commenting on the above three Clubs it is necessary to touch on the Miramar U.S. Naval Air Station Judo Club organized in 1957, developed, and taught by John Evans (now Yodan) as a member club of the Armed Forces Judo Association – remaining so for many years. Evans personally joined Nanka in 1957 and brought the Club membership under the supervision of Nanka. This Club, open to military personnel and dependents only, has been consistently successful due to the personality and teaching ability of John Evans. It has been the site of usually two invitational Judo Tournaments each year, plus the site of Military District Judo Championship Tournament – open only to military personnel.

In 1957, 1958, and early 1959 a Judo Club existed at the Naval Training Center – named Kichi Dojo – which was taught by Lawrence Tierney (Godan – who was then in the U.S. Navy) and held two major Judo Tournaments. Tierney left the area for Japan in early 1959. The present U. S. Naval Training Center was organized by Roy H. Moore, Jr. (Yodan) in 1959. It soon became the major headquarters for Judo Tournament in the San Diego area, especially for the various official AAU Judo Championships, plus the major military Judo Championships. Many Service Judo Champions have benefited from Mr. Moore's instruction, plus hundreds of naval personnel. Moore's background includes 40 years of experience in wrestling and Judo, and his Judo classes have had the unqualified backing of the naval and civil service personnel who supervise the Special Services program of the U.S. Naval Training Center.

In the early 1960's, Roy H. Moore, Sr., ("Pop" Moore is Godan and a pioneer in Judo development in the U.S.) moved into the San Diego area and opened his first club, the Gillespie Judo Club. He has had a Judo Club in the area since, developing mainly younger Judokas – several to Dan Grade status. This grand old man, who is nationally and internationally known not only for his work in Judo, but also in wrestling, has had much to do with National Judo

development – including assisting in Judos acceptance by the AAU. His background is such in wrestling and Judo that he probably has forgotten more techniques than many other instructors have really know.

In 1963, Benso Tsuji left the Southern California School of Judo and Ju Jitsu and founded the Heian Judo Club, which he instructed in the City YMCA until 1974. He has one of the strongest Judo Clubs in the area with the largest number of Yudansha attached.

A number of the smaller Judo Clubs in the area brought their activities under the supervision of the Clubs registered with Nanka.

Off and on through the late 1950's and the 1960's and in the present 1970's a Judo Club has existed at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base – the existence of the Clubs depending upon the stationing of a Dan Grade holder at the Depot or Base. The writer taught a four month Judo course at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in 1957 – a unique experience in that nearly one-fourth of the members of that class, who continued their Judo training elsewhere, eventually became Dan Grade holders – two of them are Yodans today. On May 6th and 7th, 1958, Tsuji and Holtmann organized and referred the First All-Marine Judo Championships in Phillips Hall at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot – which was widely publicized. Among the instructors who taught at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot were Major Robert Brooks (Nidan) and Sergeant William Dye (Sandan). Attached to the area Judo program for a time was a Club in the desert at the Twenty-Name Palms Marine Corps Base.

Already mentioned has been the two U.S. Navy Judo Clubs – Miramar NAS, and Naval Training Center. Another U.S. Navy Judo Club was originally organized at north Island Naval Air Station by Edward Alseika (Godan) in the late 1950's. A Club has existed there since, taught by several instructors, and at the present time by Jesse Jones (Sandan).

Another U.S. Navy Judo Club was organized in January 1966, at Ream Field, a Navy Air Base, by Charles Hartness, Shodan. The Club is still in being.

While most of the military Judo Clubs in the area were members of the Armed Forces Judo Association, the cooperation between them and the civilian Judo Clubs has been excellent. Commanding Officers of Bases have been happy to lend their facilities for the holding of Judo events, and military personnel have been permitted to participate in any Judo event in the area.

Southwest Community College in Chula Vista, in the site of a Judo Club organized in early 1969 by Ray Lyons (Nidan), which has since developed into regular classes in Judo for College PE credit and has a regular Judo Club, plus a YMCA Judo Club that uses the College's facilities. A member of the faculty assists in the teaching of the credit courses. Other instructors have been John Klein (Nidan), Tom Matsumoto (Nidan), and at present, the instructor is Jesse Jones.

In 1964, the Armed Services YMCA closed its physical education department, and the Judo class there ceased to be. Records of the classes held there from 1946 to 1964 (on file)

shows that more than 3,000 Navy and Marine personnel got their introduction to Judo in that facility, with more than 150 students now being Dan Grade holders – two of them Godans.

In the early 1960's a Judo club located in Palm Springs and taught by Jimmie Inouye (Nidan) was attached to the Southern California School of Judo for ten years.

A request came from a small Judo Club in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico, in the early 1960's, for assistance with their Judo program. Within a couple of years three Judo Clubs developed in Mexicali and are now under the supervision of the Mexican national Judo Organization. (Mexicali is one hundred and thirty miles southeast of San Diego.) Frequent visitors to San Diego were the Judo instructors in Mexicali – Dr. Guillermo Figueroa V., Hector Garcia V., Jorge Hugo Garcia V., and Fernando Medina Robles, and occasionally their students participate in San Diego Judo Tournaments. Help also was rendered on occasion to small Judo Clubs located in Tijuana, Mexico – only seventeen miles south of San Diego. Mexican National Judo champion, Gabriel Goldschmeid (From Mexico City) has visited San Diego several times. This exchange of Judo-good-neighborliness still exists.

Many Japanese ships enter San Diego Harbor each year, for San Diego is a port City with one of the ten best harbors in the world. The local Judo group has been fortunate in often entertaining and working out with Judoka from the Japanese Naval and other ships.

Besides Dan Grade Judo champions from Nanka Judo Yudanshakai (including Kazuo Shinohara and Hayward Nishioka), and other National Judo Champions, many high ranking Judo instructors from Japan have taught or held clinics in San Diego. They include Sumiyuki Kotani, (9th Dan), K. Ebi (8th Dan), Keiko Fukuda (6th Dan women's Judo), Isao Inokuma (Worlds' Judo Champion and Olympic Gold Medal Winner), Donn Draeger (5th Dan), and others. Most all Marine Corps Judo Grand Champions have done duty, practiced and taught in San Diego, including Ernie Cates, and John Roseberry. The 10 times Navy Judo Champion, Lawrence Fryar, has spent several years in the San Diego areas as a competitor and instructor. George Harris, several times National AAU Grand Judo Champion, has also visited San Diego. Currently residing in San Diego is one time National Heavyweight Judo Champion, who also placed 4th in the World Games, Gene Mauro who presently instructs at Gihokan Judo School.

IV

AAU Membership – JBBF Membership – USJF Membership

In 1954, the Judo organizations in the U.S. placed themselves under the supervision of the AAU for Judo competition and championship tournaments. The writer was local AAU Judo commissioner for ten years and was for several years an original member of the National AAU Judo Committee. Roy "Pop" Moore, Sr., is still active at the National and Local level.

When the Judo Black Belt Federation (JBBF) of the U.S. was brought into being in the early 1950's, local Judoka were registered with Nanka through the Nanka member Clubs, with smaller Clubs registering their students through the member Clubs. In the 1960s JBBF changed to United States Judo Federation.

McCatty (then MOJA Shodan) to the San Diego Area. Both of these ladies were promoted to Nidan in September of 1974.

There are now 7 women of Dan Grade in the Yudanshakai. In fact, the women's clinics and events sponsored by them are so well organized as compared to the regular Yudanshakai meetings and tournaments, that the men might well take some lessons from them. Possibly, too, it would be advisable to insist that more women be put in charge of Yudanshakai activities.