# Keiko Fukuda

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In this Japanese name, the family name is "Fukuda".

**Keiko Fukuda** (□□□□*Fukuda Keiko*, born April 12, 1913) is the highest-ranked female judo practitioner in history, holding the rank of 9th *dan* from the Kodokan and the United States Judo Federation (USJF), and 10th *dan* from USA Judo, and is the last surviving student of Kanō Jigorō, founder of judo. [1][2][3][4][5][6][7] She is a renowned pioneer of women's judo, being the first woman promoted to 6th *dan* (*c*. 1972), and later 9th *dan* (2006), by the Kodokan. She is also the first and, so far, only woman promoted to 10th *dan* in the art. [8] After completing her formal education in Japan, Fukuda visited the United States of America to teach in the 1950s and 1960s, and eventually settled there. She continues to teach her art in the San Francisco Bay Area.

	Keiko Fukuda
Born	April 12, 1913 Tokyo, Japan
Residence	San Francisco, California, USA
	,
Style	Judo
Teacher(s)	Kanō Jigorō, Kyuzo Mifune
Rank	10th <i>dan</i> judo (USA Judo), 9th <i>dan</i> judo (Kodokan, US Judo Federation)
Notable	Soko Joshi Judo Club
school(s)	
Website	http://www.sokojoshijudo.com/

#### **Contents**

- 1 Early life
- 2 Judo career
- 3 Later life
- 4 See also
- 5 References
- 6 External links

# Early life

Fukuda was born on April 12, 1913, in Tokyo, Japan.<sup>[2][9]</sup> Her father died when she was very young.<sup>[1]</sup> As a youth, she learned the arts of calligraphy, flower arrangement, and the tea ceremony; typical pursuits for a woman in Japan at that time.<sup>[1]</sup> Despite her conventional upbringing, Fukuda felt close to judo through memories of her grandfather, and one day went with her mother to watch a judo training session. <sup>[1]</sup> A few months later, she decided to begin training for herself.<sup>[1]</sup> Her mother and brother supported this decision, but her uncle was opposed to the idea.<sup>[1]</sup> Her mother and brother had thought that Fukuda would eventually marry one of the judo practitioners, but she never married, instead becoming a judo expert herself.<sup>[1]</sup>

Fukuda's grandfather, Fukuda Hachinosuke, had been a samurai and master of Tenjin Shinyō-ryū jujutsu, and he had taught that art to Kanō Jigorō, founder of judo and head of the Kodokan. [2][5][10][11][12] Kanō had studied under three jujutsu masters before founding judo, and Fukuda's grandfather had been the first of these men. [13] Kanō had taught female students as early as 1893 (Sueko Ashiya), and had formally opened the *joshi-bu* (women's section) of the Kodokan in 1926. [10][14] He personally invited the young

Fukuda to study judo—an unusual gesture for that time—as a mark of respect for her grandfather. She began training in judo in 1935, as one of only 24 women training at the Kodokan. Apart from instruction by judo's founder, Fukuda also learned from Kyuzo Mifune.

#### Judo career

Fukuda, standing at only 4' 11" (150 cm) and weighing less than 100 lb. (45 kg), became a judo instructor in 1937. [11][13] She also earned a degree in Japanese literature from Showa Women's University. [10][11] In 1953, she was promoted to the rank of 5th *dan* in judo. [16] She traveled to the USA later that year, at the invitation of a judo club in Oakland, California, and stayed for almost two years before returning to Japan. [1] Fukuda next traveled to the US in 1966, giving seminars in California. [1] At that time, she was one of only four women in the world ranked at 5th *dan* in judo, and was one of only two female instructors at the Kodokan (the other being Masako Noritomi, also ranked 5th *dan*). [13] In 1966, she demonstrated her art at Mills College, and the



Fukuda has taught judo in San Francisco for most of her life

institution immediately offered her a teaching position; she accepted, and taught there from 1967 to 1978. [1][10][15][17]

During this time, Fukuda lived at the Noe Valley home of one of her students, Shelley Fernandez, and taught judo there in addition to her teaching at the college.<sup>[1]</sup> When the class sizes grew, she shifted the classes to the Sokoji Zen Buddhist temple in the Japantown, San Francisco.<sup>[1][10][15]</sup> She named her school the Soko Joshi Judo Club.<sup>[1]</sup> Having settled in the San Francisco Bay Area, Fukuda gave up her Japanese citizenship to become a US citizen.<sup>[1]</sup>

Around 1972, following a letter campaign against the rule prohibiting women from being promoted higher than 5th *dan*, Fukuda became the first woman promoted to 6th *dan* by the Kodokan. [6][7][10][14] In 1973, she published *Born for the Mat: A Kodokan kata textbook for women*, an instructional book for women about the *kata* (patterns) of Kodokan judo. [10][15][18] In 1974, she established the annual Joshi Judo Camp to give female judo practitioners the opportunity to train together. [11] That year, she was one of only three women in the world ranked 6th *dan* in judo. [10]

In 1990, Fukuda was awarded Japan's Order of the Sacred Treasure, 4th Class (Gold Rays with Rosette), and the United States Judo Incorporated (USJI) Henry Stone Lifetime Contribution to American Judo Award. In 2004, she published *Ju-No-Kata: A Kodokan textbook, revised and expanded from Born for the Mat*, a pictorial guide for performing Ju-no-kata, one of the seven Kodokan *kata*. Fukuda has served as a technical adviser for US Women's Judo and the USJI Kata Judges' Certification Subcommittee. She has also served as a National Kata Judge, and was a faculty member of the USJI National Teachers' Institute, a member of the USJF Promotion Committee, and a member of the USJF and USJI Women's Sub-committee.

Fukuda holds the rank of 9th *dan*, the second-highest in judo, from two organizations,<sup>[1]</sup> and in July 2011 received the rank of 10th *dan* from a third organization.<sup>[6]</sup> In 2001, she was awarded a rare red belt (marking 9th *dan* rank) in judo by the USJF for her lifelong contribution to the art.<sup>[1][3]</sup> On January 8,

2006, at its annual New Year's *Kagami Biraki* celebration, the Kodokan promoted Fukuda to the rank of 9th *dan*—the first time it had awarded this rank to a woman. <sup>[20][21][22]</sup> On July 28, 2011, the promotion board of USA Judo awarded Fukuda the rank of 10th *dan*. <sup>[6][7]</sup>

### Later life

Fukuda still teaches judo three times each week, hosts the annual Fukuda Invitational Kata Championships, and teaches at the annual Joshi Judo Camp. [1][11][23] She has established the Keiko Fukuda Judo Scholarship to encourage and enable women to continue their formal training in the art. [24] Apart from teaching in the USA, she has also taught in Australia, Canada, France, Norway, and the Philippines. [11] Fukuda's personal motto is: "Be gentle, kind, and beautiful, yet firm and strong, both mentally and physically."[1][5]