Gunji Koizumi

The Father of European Judo

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Gunji Koizumi
The Father of European Judo
Early Life

• 8th July 1885 Born in the village of Komatsuka Oaza, Ibaraki prefecture 20 miles from Tokyo
• Second son to a tenant farmer (Shukichi Koizumi) with one older brother and a younger sister
• Aged 12 studied Kendo at school. Studied English with a neighbour in his own time.
• As a second son, only two options in life, start own farm, or marry into a family with no sons.
• Aged 15 decided to “set out to seek my fortune”
• Left home in July 1900 for Tokyo to be schooled in a government subsidised school for telegraphists
Travelling

• After graduating he spent two years at the central post office, but wanted to study electricity in America.
• 1903 left Japan for America, working port to port to pay his way.
• Arrived in Prestatyn, North Wales in May 1906
Teaching Ju-Jitsu in England

- Taught Ju-Jitsu briefly in Liverpool before moving to London in August 1906.
- Taught Ju-Jitsu in London to save for final leg of trip to America.
- This was the last time he taught professionally, after this he was strictly an amateur.
- May 1907 he arrived in America to spend three years studying and working within the electricity industry.
Marriage

• 1910 Returned to London for Anglo-Japanese exhibition
• After failed electricity business, 1912 opened a lacquerware studio which thrived and had many prestigious clientele
• 6 April 1912 married Ida Celine Winstanley (1876-1947)
The Budokwai

• Late 1917 he took a lease on 15 Lower Grovesnor Place, behind Buckingham Palace
• The Budokwai opened on 26 January 1918.
Visit of Jigoro Kano to the Budokwai

• In 1920 Jigoro Kano visited the Budokwai, on his way to the 1920 Olympic Games as Head of the Japanese Delegation

• Jigoro Kano had become the first IOC member from Asia in 1909
The party of the Japanese Olympic Team, 1920
Prof. Jigoro Kano (front row 2nd from left), Mr. H. Aida (front row 4th from left)
Judo in the Media

- Demonstrations of the art of Judo were aired on television in 1938
- In 1948 the Budokwai made an instructional film.
1948

• July 1948 was an important year – the British Judo Association was formed, along with the re-emerged European Judo Union
• Koizumi organised and led both meetings, but didn’t wish to be Chairman of either body
IJKF Formation 1951

- 1951 the International Judo Federation was formed
- “Judo is still young and susceptible, and needs wise and careful shepherding to promote its natural development. Here lies the task of the missionary and crusader for all judoka, especially for those who aspire to qualify as teachers.” Koizumi, Budokwai Quarterly Bulletin, July 1951. p8.
Budokwai dinner c.1948
Koizumi with Ichiro Abe, broadcasting from the BBC World Service in Japan
• In 1962 he was awarded a Kodokan 8\textsuperscript{th} dan
• Having written over 100 articles, his most noted work was \textit{My Study of Judo} 1960
Competition

• Koizumi disliked the transformation of judo into a sport
• His view was that judo was an education
• January 1965 he was working on an article “Judo and the Basic Human Education”
• March 1965 Saburo Matsushita arrived to teach at the Budokwai
A long journey

• He ended his life on 14 April 1965 after feeling he had contributed as much as he could to humanity

• He said: “I should take a long journey for which no return ticket is issued.”
• Days before his death he was asked what he wanted to happen in the world and he answered “To see people thinking for themselves and not being led like sheep.”

• His funeral was held in Chelsea and on the South Bank of the Thames stands a Japanese Cherry tree with a plaque naming Koizumi as the father of Judo.
Charges to pay

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MATSUSHITA

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