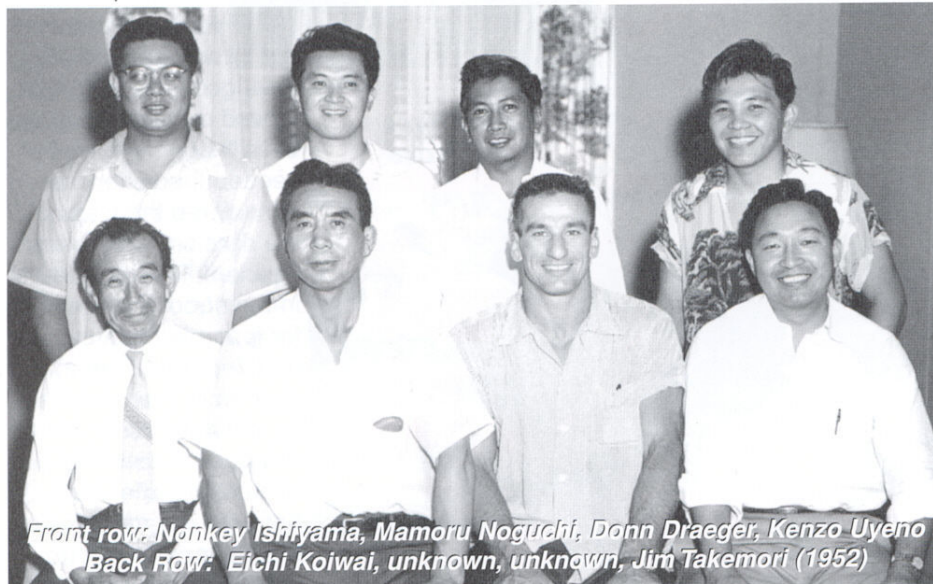


## JAMES TAKEMORI, 9TH DEGREE

by Roy Englert

In September 2008, the United States Judo Federation promoted James H. Takemori to Kudan. This well-deserved promotion crowns the career



Front row: Nonkey Ishiyama, Mamoru Noguchi, Donn Draeger, Kenzo Uyeno  
Back Row: Eichi Koiwai, unknown, unknown, Jim Takemori (1952)

of one of America's great judo teachers.

Jimmy Takemori started doing judo in 1937 in the small town of Parlier, California, where his father had to beg the sensei -- a Buddhist monk -- to let him practice despite overcrowding in the dojo. After the United States entered World War II, Jimmy and his family were incarcerated in a Relocation Camp in Gila, Arizona. Jimmy was the shonen champion of the camp, where he practiced judo 5 days a week. He left camp to join the Army. As a member of the all-Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team -- the most decorated unit, per capita, in the War -- Jimmy served in Italy.

After the War, Jimmy moved to the East Coast, eventually landing in Washington, D.C., where he was living when he resumed doing judo in 1952. He, Bill Berndt, Donn Draeger, and Kenzo Uyeno started what is now the Washington Judo Club in that year. In

1953, the very first National Judo Championships in the United States was held. Jimmy was still just a Nikyu at the time, but he defeated three Nidans and received a batsugan promotion to Shodan.

Jimmy helped form Shufu Judo Yudanshakai and traveled throughout

the Eastern United States to promote judo. He retired from competition in 1960 at age 34. He has said, "When my student Jimmy Bregman (the Bronze Medal winner of the first Olympics in which judo was included in 1964 in Tokyo, Japan) started throwing me around it was time for me to retire."

For the 48 years since his retirement from competition, Jimmy Takemori has been -- and still is -- the head instructor at the Washington Judo Club, which now practices at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Because of Jimmy, the Washington Judo Club is an important stop for visiting dignitaries; for example, Yasuhiro Yamashita has given two clinics at the club, most recently in February 2008.

Jimmy has developed a number of champions, but the champions he is understandably proudest of are his four daughters, who hold ranks ranging

from Sandan to Rokkudan. Jimmy also has seven granddaughters. Edwin Takemori, whom Jimmy still calls "my kid brother," is a Hachidan and sensei of clubs in the Washington area. Both Jimmy and Edwin Takemori have served as judo instructors at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis.

Jimmy Takemori has always been a promoter of contributions to judo through activities other than competition. He and his daughter Miki both hold the rank of IJF-B referee. Four of his current or former students, including his daughter Teri, hold the rank of IJF-A referee.

Jimmy has received awards too numerous to list. Among the most noteworthy are the Henry Stone Award, the John Osako Award, the New York Athletic Club Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Ambassadors' Citation presented by Ambassador Risei Kato in 2002. Perhaps most noteworthy of all is the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, presented by Ambassador Kato to Mr. Takemori in late 2004 on behalf of the Emperor of Japan. In presenting the award, Ambassador Kato said: "Mr. Takemori,



Jim Takemori with Ambassador and Mrs. Ryozo Kato after receiving "Order of the Rising Sun" Award.

the Government of Japan wishes to thank you for your contributions to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the United States as well as between our two peoples. You, sir, are a diplomat. Your accomplishments stretch across half a century and across an ocean."

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ON THE COVER: Ronda Rousey winning a bronze medal at the 2008 Olympics. Photo by Lou DiGesare



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