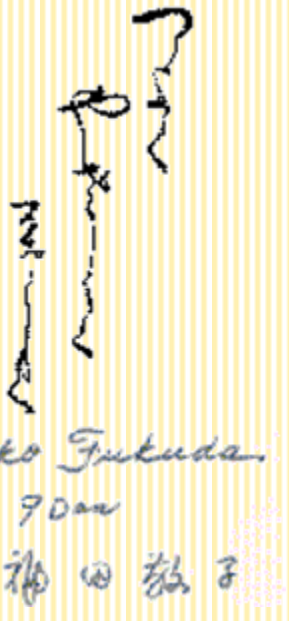
The Judo Compass

May 2011

“… Be Beautiful ”



Keiko Fukuda… Fukuda Sensei…. Highest ranking woman in the history of judo, 9th *dan*, and Kano’s only living student. Her motto is “Be strong, be gentle, be beautiful”. Be strong on the inside, be gentle on the outside, and… What’s this beautiful stuff? Fukuda sensei is saying strong in the sense of character strength, and gentle in the sense of how we present, interact. Beautiful?

Fukuda Sensei has put forth a formidable challenge. Kano himself said that the purpose of judo was the making of better people. Fukuda became, by direct charge of obligation, Kano’s emissary of judo, to women and the world. You must read her story to appreciate this. In her simple motto, she takes Kano’s judo purpose and creates both a formidable challenge and the ultimate reward. Moreover, she is the embodiment of her own advice.

To be strong on the inside, gentle on the outside, is far more of a challenge than it seems when one first reads it. One cannot simply push a magic button and have it be so. It is a process, ongoing and renewed daily. It is part of the infinitive verb *to be*. The result comes from doing, not exhibiting. Inner strength allows outer flexibility, with which to deal with the challenges of life. Outer rigidity is doomed to failure, both in life and on the tatami. To be gentle on the outside allows the flexibility to yield to force and redirect it to advantage, making one confident; and, consequently, stronger on the inside.

What about the beauty parts? Japan’s most revered sword master, Miyamoto Musashi, wrote *The Book of Five Rings*. It has been studied by warriors and business strategists for over 300 years, and is considered one of the most perceptive psychological guides to strategy ever written. In it, he says, “It is said that the warrior’s [way] is the twofold Way of pen and sword.” This is *bunbu itchi,* or ‘Pen and sword in accord’. The ‘pen’ of the time was the calligraphy brush. Perfecting its stroke was considered critical to mastering ones inner beauty. Samurai warriors, whose major philosophical challenge was embracing in battle death as the preferable option to life, were also charged with practicing the arts of tea ceremony, calligraphy, poetic creation of *haiku*. They desired to do so, since life was precious.

Musashi, a remorseless killer, whose sword prowess was measurable best by the warriors he dispatched with it, is also famous for his paintings, poems, carvings and myriad works of art, of such quality that they would have been revered even had he never been a great sword master.

Those judoka who might turn away from the idea of beauty because it is not fierce enough for their warrior spirit, have not learned the way of the warrior. *Be Beautiful.* “The way to do is to be.” This advice from Lao Tse, Taoist master, *circa 600 BCE,* applies. One might also consider taking this equation and reversing it, saying “The way to be, is to do.”

- **Judo Beauty**
- The katas provide tremendous challenges and pathways to beauty, if you dare tread the path. Kata is the most underrated, least appreciated, sorrowfully overlooked prize judo offers. The self-supposed warrior who disdains kata is self-defeated. (Try as best you can and whenever possible to get instruction from a kata sensei.)
- Do not be afraid to seek beauty in judo. It is not only found in the elegant throw, but also in the two judoka entangled in ne-waza, sweating and snarling, seeking opportunity, then responding to it with finesse. Strive for beauty in your waza. Elegance of technique will result in both contest winning moments and in personal appreciation of endeavor. Winning by scruffy, forced, ragged, win-at-all-costs-to-quality applications is not really winning. It certainly isn’t beauty.
- After each practice, take fifteen seconds alone in your head and relive something you did that ***felt*** beautiful. Capture and keep. Just before the next practice, recover it, take it with you onto the mat.
- Go to judoinfo.com/fukuda.htm and read Fukuda sensei’s story. It’s a must read.
- Continue to wonder, ‘What’s this beautiful stuff?’ Discover the answer by *being* a judoka.

The *Judo Compass* is conceived, written and sent by Tom Crone. www.northstarjudo.com

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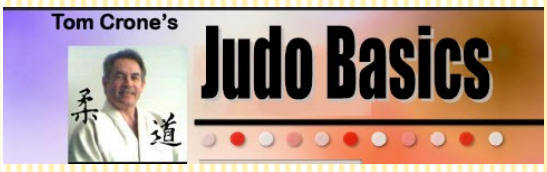

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