

Ronald John Pardini, 8th Dan - Judo Story

By Chirs Moore, April 2024



Gary Goltz (on left) and Chris Moore (on right) presenting Ron Pardini (in center) an Award

Ronald John Pardini was born on November 23, 1937 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; his roots in Pittsburgh Judo run deep.

Sensei Pardini, Shichidan, 8th Dan, Kyoshi, began his lifelong study and practice of judo in 1958 at the age of twenty-one when he responded to an ad in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette offering an eight-week judo class at the Pittsburgh YMCA, taught by Sensei Shale Paul, a Dan-ranked judoka from Washington State. When Sensei Paul returned to Washington State at the conclusion of the course, Sensei Pardini and his judo classmates continued to practice judo at the YMCA, often turning to Jigoro Kano's seminal text, Kodokan Judo, for instruction.

Sensei Pardini was among the founders of The Pittsburgh School of Judo, the first formal judo dojo in the city of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh School of Judo was notably successful, often attracting twenty to twenty-five judoka to its training sessions.

The Pittsburgh School of Judo was part of the Shufu Yudanshakai, a charter member of the USJF, United States Judo Federation. Founded in 1952 by Senseis James and Edwin Takemori, the Shufu Yudanshakai covers a large portion of the Mid-Atlantic States including the Washington DC metro area, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, the Carolinas and Georgia. Sensei Pardini advanced through the ranks, ultimately achieving the rank of, Hachidan, 8th degree black belt.

Sensei Pardini competed at the national level regularly from 1984-2005, placing first in the Masters Division at the Senior Nationals twelve times, never placing lower than third place.

In the early 1960's, upon learning of the great All-Korean Judo Champion Kyu Ha Kim was visiting the US, Ron Pardini and the members of the Pittsburgh School of Judo contacted Kyu Ha Kim and invited him to instruct at their school. Sensei Pardini and Robert Voge later sponsored Kyu Ha Kim's (February 24, 1935 - May 14, 2021) application for US citizenship. Kyu Ha Kim agreed to teach at the Pittsburgh School of Judo and did so for a number of years, which began his long association with Sensei Pardini's. (Note: the legendary Kyu Ha Kim came to be addressed as Kwanjangnim or Grandmaster, GM, his honorific in the martial art of Taekwondo, or simply by his preferred, Mr. Kim). After teaching at the Pittsburgh School of Judo for several years, GM Kyu Ha Kim established his own martial arts school, Kim's Judo and Karate (later Kim's Martial Arts and Fitness, KMAF, which became a Pittsburgh institution and is still in operation), attracting many of Pittsburgh's judoka, including Sensei Pardini. The opening of KMAF was the end of The Pittsburgh School of Judo, which closed its doors shortly after KMAF began operation. .

Sensei Pardini was a valued member of KMAF for decades, initially as a student, later as Sempai and senior instructor. Training several times a week, he not only freely shared his considerable knowledge of judo but also provided a role model for aspiring judoka who were privileged to share time with him on the mat.

In addition to his highly decorated career as a judoka, Sensei Pardini has led a full life outside of judo. The trajectory of Sensei Pardini's academic career and professional life mirror his achievements in the judo world. His working life began in 1958 when he went to work at Colterlyahn Dairy as a milkman, where he worked for nine years. In 1969, Sensei Pardini joined the Upper St Clair Police Department as a patrolman. During this time, he attended the Community College of Allegheny County,

earning an associate's degree in criminal justice 1976 after nine years of study. He later transferred his hard-earned academic credits to Duquesne University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology in 1981. Somehow during this time frame, he entered and completed the 117th Training Session at the FBI Academy, from which he graduated in 1979, followed by attending the FBI's Executive Development Program in 1981. Later, he attended the US Secret Service Dignitary Protection School, graduating in 1982. Sensei Pardini then entered a graduate program in Regional Planning at California University of Pennsylvania, from which he graduated with a master's degree in 1990.

Sensei Pardini joined the Upper St. Clair Township police department as a patrolman and rose through the ranks to become Chief of Police in 1986. In 2013, he retired as Chief of Police after a distinguished forty-five year career. Sensei Pardini was elected President of the Allegheny County Chiefs Association in 1993 and served as the President of the Western Pennsylvania Chiefs Organization in 1996. Sensei Pardini's long experience in law enforcement provides both hard won knowledge and credibility to his Self-Defense instruction.

Sensei Pardini continues to serve his community as a member

of the Upper St. Clair Township Council, where he recently began his third four-year term.

Sensei Pardini has been married to his lovely wife Nancy for sixty-five years, who, in his own word,"...blest him with four sons and one daughter."

I began my long association with Sensei Pardini on the mat at KMAF in the 1980's. From the moment we first met, his encyclopedic command of judo technique and fierce spirit were clearly in evidence. Today, Sensei Pardini, at eighty-six years old, regularly teaches judo at Spirit Forge Martial Arts, including a Master Class on Saturday afternoons, where he freely passes on the wealth of knowledge gleaned from his lifetime of judo practice.

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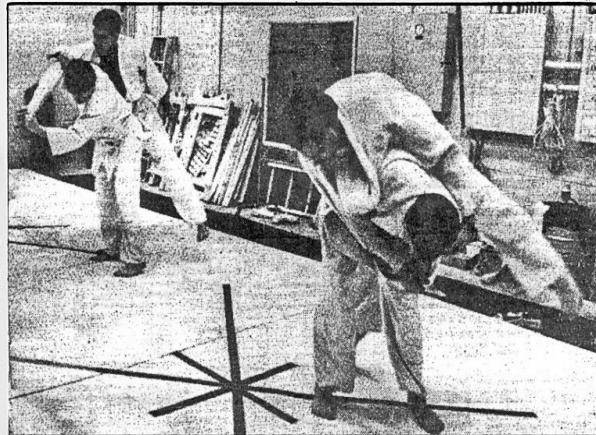


Sgt. John Sakolan is about to throw Sgt. Robert Williams during a judo training exercise.

Derrell Sapp/Post-Gazette photo



Police Chief Ronald J. Pardini shows Cpl. James Murphy the correct way to use one's hands to fend off an attacker.



Four members of the special investigations and tactical team practice grappling and throwing a would-be attacker.

USC chief trains officers in judo

By Harry Tkach
Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Upper St. Clair Police Chief Ronald J. Pardini holds a March 21 newspaper clipping showing a man in police custody after a siege in Bloomington, Calif.

It is part of a file of similar incidents that Pardini keeps.

"You never know when something like this may happen here. We've had hostage situations in Munhall and a few sections of the city," Pardini said.

Preparing for what "may happen here" is the reason he formed the Special Investigations and Tactical Team, two five-officer units that started training in 1986.

"It's like insurance. You hope to high heaven that nothing like that ever happens, but if it does happen, you are able to hold your own until help arrives," Pardini said.

"I've never had to use them and I

hope I never have to, but this is the kind of a job that you never take anything for granted."

Pardini, a champion judo player, trains the officers himself. It is a supplement to police academy training where two types of self-defense are taught: armed and unarmed.

Police are taught how to use night sticks and blackjacks in armed self-defense and are taught to go for pressure points on the body in unarmed self-defense such as grabbing the fingers back at the knuckles, the ear lobe or the piece of skin between the nostrils.

Because of scheduling, Upper St. Clair's two units only train together from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays in a three-bay garage converted for training in the municipal building. But members work out on the techniques at least one more time during the week.

Pardini works out Monday, Wednesday and Friday and teaches

his team the sport of judo, a form of self-defense that began in Japan. It emphasizes the use of quick movement, balance and leverage to throw an opponent.

The officers divide into pairs and practice throwing opponents and grappling with them.

It is no secret that police officers often have to fight when making arrests. Pardini believes proper training and good physical conditioning can reduce injuries to the officer and to the suspect.

"Do you realize that the danger zone for someone facing a person with a knife is 21 feet?" Pardini said, pointing to a wall to estimate the distance.

"By the time you reach for your service revolver, he could throw the knife and kill you. But let's be serious. Are you going to shoot him? So what do you do? You fight him."

The officer will win if he's trained correctly, Pardini said.

"Let's face it. You throw a guy down once when he's not expecting it, he's in a state of shock on the ground for a few seconds that gives an officer enough time to get control of the situation," he said.

The judo techniques even work with drunken drivers.

"They're the ones who are the most surprised when they land on the ground," Pardini said.

Ronald J. Pardini won first place in the national 173-pound judo master competition in 1985 and again in 1988.

Pardini, Upper St. Clair's police chief, missed competing in 1986 because of the expense required to travel to Hawaii. In 1987, he was disqualified because he showed up at

the mat wearing his wedding band.

"Even my wife was mad at me for that one," said Pardini, who has a fourth-degree black belt in judo.

"You would think after 30 years as a judo player, I would know better," he said. "But looking at it another way is that it took me 30 years to become good."