

Tribune

PSRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mach Publishing
WASHINGTON

Please
see Special
Health guide
Insert!

Volume 117, Number 37

Thursday, September 13, 2006

Mach Publishing, P.O. Box 499 Snohomish WA 98291-0499

World's top karate master visits Mukilteo, dojo students



Mike Dunn photo

Grand Master Fusei Kise demonstrates a defensive move on Shain Beecher-Van Horn, who tries to grab the master from behind. Kise was the model for Mr. Miyagi in the "Karate Kid" movies.

BY CHRIS FYALL

Grand Master Fusei Kise, at 73 the world's top ranked Shorin-Ryu Matsumura Seito Karate master, visited the Mukilteo Family YMCA last week, and saw for the first time his fastest growing dojo, the Northwest Budokan.

"It was a good place, it was a good time," said Kise, who does not speak much English. "These are very kind people."

Kise is recognized by the Japanese government as the sole true heir to the karate style's earlier leaders, and he travels the world teaching. Kise was the model for Mr. Miyagi in "The Karate Kid" movies, and is a technical advisor for the U.S. Marine Corps martial arts program, said officials with the local dojo.

"Everybody is happy with today. If you look at their eyes, this is what they strive for: to learn from him," said Bernadette Gravelle, a first-degree black belt, and wife of Sensei Jay Gravelle, founder of the dojo.

"In order to have this group grow to this point — and to have it continue growing — and then to have the grand master come and see what is happening is a real honor," she said.

Grand master

Continued from page 1

students were silent.

From the gym's double doors, Kise entered solemnly, his son, and Gravelle, and a few others in tow. The students began bowing deeply. It was to be one of the last silent moments of the evening.

In his black gi, or practice clothing, and his red worn belt, which only the masters wear, Kise motioned for the students to rise. They did. Soon, the evening was under way.

As one of the dojos' teachers led the students in stretches and basic exercises, Kise and Gravelle spoke, and warmed up, and analyzed the students from afar.

At some point, Gravelle interrupted the stretching, and indicated that Kise believed that the students needed to narrow their stances. The students narrowed obediently. Then, as the students continued their exercises, Kise began walking among them, helping students individually.

"It was absolutely phenomenal," said Sensei Gravelle after the event. "Master Kise was having a great time. I had to stop him eventually, because we were out of time."

After the exercises, Kise led a demonstration of defensive techniques and throws. He asked the black belts

After Mukilteo, Kise traveled to the East Coast, where he will be teaching classes of 200 to 300 students through the end of September.

The dojo was founded about three years ago, and has grown to nearly 200 students with classes meeting around Snohomish County, said Jay Gravelle. Young children and adults alike participate in classes, and roughly 65 attended the session with Kise.

It was scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m., and at 4:30, the YMCA's basketball court was alive with the peculiar sounds of karate, the bare feet slapping on hardwood, the exclamations of effort, and the chatter of advice and consultation between peers.

But, Kise was not there yet. At 4:45 p.m., it was announced that he had arrived in the parking lot. Somebody whistled. "Be quiet!" people yelled. The students immediately hushed, and fell into silent, obedient rows.

A few minutes passed, Kise did not arrive, discipline waned, and the gym grew slowly louder.

Then, suddenly, "Attention!" The

See GRAND MASTER, page 3

who were present to come and attack him in various ways. Each time, he defended as one might expect the world's foremost expert to defend.

"What is next?" he would ask. The black belts would attack.

"OK," he would say.

After a move or two, Kise would inevitably throw the black belt to the ground. Over and over, the same refrain — What is next? OK. — over and over, the same result.

The students loved it. Occasionally, Kise would get a black belt in a position where he had twisted their arm so significantly, that twisting one more inch would force the black belt to dive to the ground. Usually, Kise would pause before twisting that last inch, and look to the youngest students.

"Should I?" he seemed to be asking. "OK" the children's delighted laughter would answer.

"These people strive to learn from him," said Bernadette Gravelle. "Even to be thrown by him is a real honor." Michael Rosen, 11, said the throws were his favorite part.

"It was a lot of fun today," he said. "It was great. It was especially exciting to see when (Kise) went around throwing all the black belts down."



Grand Master Fusei Kise demonstrates a karate technique with Jay Gravelle, founder of Northwest