
Judo My Life By John L Duke 3rd Dan Part 1.

Posted by John L Duke - 2008/06/16 12:31

I was born in Edmonton, North London 10th May 1951. My Late father after leaving the army (he was a 'D' Day veteran) joined the London Ambulance Service as a Paramedic Driver, until my sister was born, then he worked as a long distance lorry driver for Lebus furniture company who were at Tottenham Hale, this company had a social club, this is where martial arts started for me.

My late father loved boxing so at the age of 7 he joined me to the Pando Boxing club, where I trained and had 11 amateur boxing bouts, I loved the training but hated to be punched on the nose this made me lose my temper and go into a blind rage so bad that the trainer told my father, your boy is a good boxer but I cant control his temper, so that was the end of my boxing career.

We then moved to Enfield where my parents run a corner shop, It was there I was Introduced to Judo by one of the customers, who told me she trained at a sports club The Rollenmills. I went to see the club one Sunday morning and I was fixated I could not believe that this man with a black belt round his waist was throwing these people around so easily, I wanted to join, I went back to my parents and told them I want to join the class, They replied ok but do you know how much the suit costs, its 10 shillings, = 50p nowadays. I worked for the whole week and my father brought me my first ever Gi.

I joined The Rollenmill Judo Club, My Instructor Was Alf Leatherdale 2nd Dan. And Jerry Jordan 1st dan. I loved it!! I was 11 years old when I started.

I was at the club for 2 weeks when Alf mentioned that there was a competition coming up and he called out the names of all who he thought should enter, I sat there but he never mentioned me at all, I was gutted, so I put my hand up and asked why not me Sensei, Alf replied you have only just started, I pleaded with him to let me go, in the end Alf conceded and I was going to my first competition.

1962 The Tottenham Judo Open Competition. I entered the junior white to yellow belt section, when my name was called, I got on to the mat, the contest started within seconds the contest was over, I had been thrown for ippon, Alf came up to me and said, "why did you let him throw you ?" . I replied, "when I took hold I knew I could beat him so I thought I would let him throw me and I would get up to finish him off". Alf replied "you only get one chance!!! You blew it !!!".

Alf was always right, I should have never entered the competition, I did not know the rules, so I learnt early in my Judo listen to your instructor, I was never thrown again for Ippon in my whole competition career .

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