



UNITED STATES JUDO ASSOCIATION

Gary S. Goltz, President

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For Immediate Release

January 22, 2011

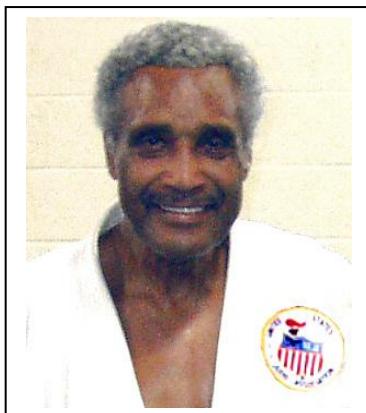
We are pleased to announce that the United States Judo Association has promoted George Lee Harris to Judan (10th Degree Black Belt) effective January 15, 2011, which would have been his 78th birthday. This honor was approved unanimously by both the USJA's Promotion Board and Board of Directors. Mr. Harris passed away on January 7th, 2011. This is the first recognized 10th dan promotion by one of the 3 major judo organizations in the United States.

Sid Kelly, the Chairman of the USJA's Promotion Board stated, "Mr. Harris placed 5th in the 1956 World Championships, won six Air Force judo championships, four US National titles, two Gold Medals in the Pan American Games, and represented the United States in the 1964 Olympics. After his retirement from competition, Mr. Harris became a goodwill ambassador for judo." He was one of the leaders of the Armed Forces Judo Association (AFJA) that became the United States Judo Association (USJA) which he and several others founded in 1968. Mr. Harris served as one of our early presidents and chaired our promotion board for several decades.

In addition, Mr. Kelly said, "Mr. Harris was one of the founders of the YMCA International Judo Camp which is now in its 39th year. He also has assisted the directors of the AM-CAN International Judo Challenge every year since its inception. Mr. Harris is known not only in the United States but in many other countries for his judo accolades and his service to judo. For this he was one of the first in the United States to be promoted to Kudan, 9th Degree Black Belt on October 24th 1997."

A formal presentation and tribute to Mr. Harris will be held during the opening ceremonies at this year's [Joint USJA/USJF Junior Nationals on July 2nd](#) in Toledo, Ohio. We hope to see many of club leaders and members at what is sure to be a very memorable ceremony.

Sincerely,



George Harris Mourned

George Lee Harris passed away Friday January 7, 2011 and was laid to rest on January 14, a day prior to his 78th birthday. He will be remembered as an American judo icon and one of the USJA's most beloved founding fathers.

Eulogy for George Harris, by Jim Bregman

George Harris is our friend. He is with us now and will remain with us in our hearts and memories. The Bible commands humanity "To do Justice, love Mercy, and walk Humbly with G-d." This is, in Eastern Tradition, "Mutual Welfare and Benefit". To quote George, "Everything that happens in life shapes your values and, whether you'll be an honorable person. I've tried to be a good person, to touch other people's lives, to impact them to live honorably."

The measure of a person's life is not in what they "have" but is in what they have "given" to the world. To heal, to repair, and to transform the world with dignity and respect so that all mankind shares generously of its bounty is the responsible "Way Forward".

George demonstrated to us all by his actions and deeds, by his example, in his personal life, his professional life, and his life as world class judo athlete/coach/administrator that the responsible "Way" is to "Pass It All Forward" to future generations.

George is a gentle, kind, generous, soul who has impacted in very personal and unique ways literally thousands of people, young and old alike, throughout the world. Unassumingly, by example, he does Justice, loves Mercy, and walks Humbly with his G-d.

George's love radiates in our souls and reminds us all to Heal, to Repair, and to Transform the World by example, deed, and action. George has transcended from the loving arms of his wife, Jan, to the loving arms of his Heavenly Father. He is with us forever. Peace.

Announcement on George Harris from the IJF - January 8, 2011

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of American judo legend George Harris 9th Dan. The genial and gentle giant Harris had fought a long battle with cancer and died peacefully in the arms of his wife. George Lee Harris was born in the tiny village of Kittrell, North Carolina on 15 January 1933. By 1952 Harris had moved north to Philadelphia and the Korean War was at its height. Harris showed an early taste for combat activities and was an amateur boxer from the age of 12, continuing through high school. Yet, despite the knowledge that many of his high school friends had been killed or were missing in action he joined the US Air Force. Harris was sent to Travis Air Force Base in California for medical combat training.

It was here that he was offered an introduction to judo by Lt. Philip S. Porter Jr., USAF who brought George to a judo class taught by Walter Todd, Chief Civilian Combatives Instructor, Physical Conditioning Unit, Strategic Air Command. In 1954 a 10-man AAU-Air Force team visited six Japanese cities to compete in 16 contests. Harris was a successful member of this team and reportedly won all of his 16 contests. In 1956 Harris, by then a 2nd Dan, took third place in the heavyweight division at the national AAU Judo Tournament at Seattle. After winning the US National Championships in 1957 and '58 Harris was transferred from his original Air Force responsibilities to the Physical Conditioning Unit (PCU) where he was able to concentrate on learning judo, karate, aikido, and jiu jitsu. His new role was to maintain the fitness levels of Air Force flying personnel and, in the Strategic Air Command, teach hand-to-hand combat to bomb crews.

Over a period of ten years Harris would spend many months in Japan training at the Kodokan and, when not training in Japan, the Air Force sent Harris to compete throughout Europe and South America. In 1958 Harris won the 3rd Dan category at the Pan-American Judo Championships held in Rio de Janeiro. Later that year, Harris represented the U.S. at the 2nd World Championships in Tokyo where he placed 5th losing to eventual gold medalist Sone of Japan. After his efforts in Tokyo Harris was promoted to 4th Dan. He competed at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo when judo made its Olympic debut. Harris, an African-American, competed alongside teammates Jim Bregman, who was Jewish, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Native American, and Paul Maruyama, a Japanese American.

In 1968 Harris, along with fellow Armed Forces Judo Association (AFJA) leaders George Bass, Robey Reed, Jim Bregman, Phil Porter, Rick Mertins, and Karl Geis, attended a meeting in Chicago that saw the founding of the United States Judo Association (USJA). Widely regarded as an honest and upright figure in US judo, Harris came from a family where his father and all uncles had all died before the age of 50. Harris was only a few days short of his 78th birthday. He was the father of three daughters, all college graduates, of whom he was immensely and understandably proud. In 2000 Rebecca Barnett interviewed him for an article later published in *The Masters, Judo for Adults*. "Everything that happens in life shapes your values and whether you'll be an honorable person. I've tried to be a good person, to touch other people's lives, to impact them to live honorably" said Harris.

Sheldon Franco-Rooks, IJF Media Team

George Harris, 77, judo great

Posted on Wed, Jan. 12, 2011

By Elliott Denman
For The Inquirer

BRICK TOWNSHIP, N.J. - "America is not like a blanket: one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt: many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread."

Jesse Jackson declared that in 1984 as he formulated his Rainbow Coalition. However, for four United States Olympic athletes - George Harris, Jim Bregman, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and Paul Maruyama – that concept was decades old.

On Friday, Mr. Harris, a resident of Brick Township, N.J., died of leukemia, eight days before his 78th birthday.

Mr. Harris was an African American who grew up in Philadelphia. Bregman is a Jewish American from Virginia. Campbell is a Native American of the Cheyenne tribe from Colorado, and Maruyama was a Japanese American from California.

They were America's "Rainbow Team" in the sport of judo at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Long a Japanese specialty, judo went global by the mid-1960s and was added to the '64 Games at the urging of the Japanese hosts, who went on to win three gold medals and one silver in the four weight classes.

The "Rainbow Team" was like a brotherhood. They shared the camaraderie of their pioneering Olympic mission, and they remained a tight fraternity in the 46 ensuing years.

To International Judo Federation spokesman Sheldon Franco-Rooks, Mr. Harris was "an American judo legend, a genial and gentle giant."

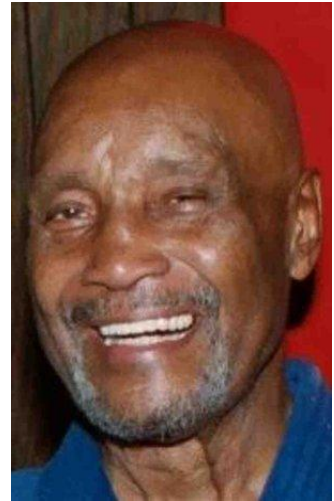
Just a handful of men have ever reached international 10th-degree black-belt status in judo. As a ninth-degree black belt, Mr. Harris was the highest-ranking American in judo history.

Mr. Harris already was a young veteran of the judo wars when he got to the Tokyo Olympics. Born in North Carolina, he moved to Philadelphia at an early age. An amateur boxer as a teenager, he enlisted in the Air Force after high school.

Judo was a skill required of all Strategic Air Command personnel. At Travis Air Force Base in California, Mr. Harris learned judo and taught it to other airmen.

"Every year for 10 years, I spent four to six months training in Japan at the Kodokan," Mr. Harris said in an interview last year. Kodokan is Japan's leading judo institute. "The Air Force would send over 26 men at a time."

Mr. Harris went on to win six Air Force judo championships, four U.S. national titles, and two Pan American Games gold medals.



George Harris was on the first U.S. Olympic judo team.

Competing in the heavyweight division at the Tokyo Olympic Games, Mr. Harris won his first-round bout over a British rival but bowed out in a second-round loss to a Russian who went on to win the bronze medal.

It was one of the few major disappointments in Mr. Harris' long competitive career.

"I was totally inspired by watching George Harris at the top of his game. He was the best there was at what he did," said Bregman, the only American judoka to medal in Tokyo, taking a historic bronze in the middleweight class. "I learned so much of the technical aspect of the sport from George. I owed so much to him. And in his later years, he became a renowned teacher of judo and an international spokesman for the sport. George was respected everywhere."

"George Harris was like a superman," said Campbell, who competed in the open division at Tokyo and went on to a career in politics as a three-term U.S. representative and two-term U.S. senator from Colorado. "We traveled the world together," Campbell said. "We had so many wonderful experiences. And the biggest thing he taught me was never to give up, something I took with me in everything I ever did."

Mr. Harris starred in the late-1970s martial-arts film, *The Year of the Gentle Tiger*, a forerunner to *The Karate Kid*.

"In Japanese, judo is 'the gentle way,' " said Jesse Goldstein of Toms River, N.J., a former U.S. heavyweight champion. He and Mr. Harris taught judo at Ocean County YMCA and at many schools and academies.

"George Harris was truly a gentleman," Goldstein said. "No one I ever met spoke badly of George. Everybody looked up to George, the Japanese, the Brazilians, the British, the Dutch, everybody."

"I loved the man. That's why I named my fourth son after him. Jacob Harrison Goldstein."

Mr. Harris is survived by his wife, Janice Conner Harris, and three daughters. Funeral arrangements were pending.



In Loving Memory

Sunrise
January 15, 1933

Sunset
January 7, 2011

George Lee Harris

Thursday, January 13, 2011

Viewing: 2-4 PM and 6-9 PM
at

Weatherhead and Young Funeral Home
885 Mantoloking Road * Brick, NJ 08723

Funeral Service:

Friday, January 14, 2011

10:00 AM
at

Brick Presbyterian Church
111 Drum Point Road * Brick, NJ 08723

Officiating: Reverend Douglas G. Chase, Pastor



Obituary

George Lee Harris was born in Kittrell, North Carolina on January 15, 1933 to the late Harriet and Elmos Harris.

George was married twice. His first marriage was to Nilah Harrell on July 11, 1953. From this union, three children were born. He later met and married Janice Connor on July 16, 1988.

George was a member of the United States Air Force until he retired after 20 years of service in 1972. He was also a competitive athlete. His adolescent years were spent boxing, where he won a Golden Gloves championship. He later took up Judo, which would define his life.

In Judo, George ascended some of the highest podiums on the world stage. In addition to competing in the 1964 Olympics, he twice medaled gold at the Pan American Games. He was a four-time national champion and took the Air Force championship six times.

George Harris departed this life on Friday, January 7, 2011 in Brick, New Jersey at the age of 77. He was preceded in death by his sister, Clarice Perry Harmon.

He is survived by his devoted and loving wife, Janice Connor; sister, Helen Ricks; former wife, Nilah Harris; three daughters, Cheryl Harris-Lee and her husband James Edward Lee of Columbia, MD; Valerie Harris of Ewing, NJ; Wanda Perry and her husband Jeffery Perry of Burlington, NJ; three grandchildren, Elan and Ian Perry of Burlington, NJ and Miles Lee of Columbia, MD; and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Humbly Submitted by: The Family

To My "G"

You're not a dream,
You're not an angel,
You were a man,
I'm not a queen,
I'm just a woman,
Take my hand,
We'll make a space,
In this life that we planned,
And here we'll stay,
Until it's time for you to go.

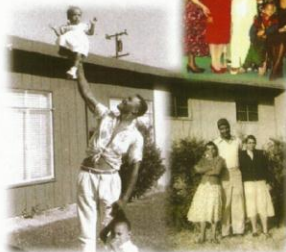
Yes, we're different, worlds apart,
We're not the same,
We laughed and played,
At the start, like in a game,
You could have stayed,
Outside my heart,
But in you came,
And here you'll stay,
Until it's time for you to go.

Don't ask why,
Don't ask how,
Don't ask forever,
Love me, love me,
Love me, love me now.

This love of mine,
Had no beginning,
It has no end,
I was an oak,
Now I'm a willow,
Now I can bend,
And tho' I'll never,
In my life see you again,
And still I'll stay,
Until it's time for you to go.

Love Jan

A Family Man



A Champion



Eulogy for George Harris, by Jim Bregman

George Harris is our friend. He is with us now and will remain with us in our hearts and memories. The Bible commands humanity "To do Justice, love Mercy, and walk Humbly with G-d." This is, in Eastern Tradition, "Mutual Welfare and Benefit". To quote George, "Everything that happens in life shapes your values and, whether you'll be an honorable person. I've tried to be a good person, to touch other people's lives, to impact them to live honorably." The measure of a person's life is not in what they "have" but is in what they have "given" to the world. To heal, to repair, and to transform the world with dignity and respect so that all mankind shares generously of its bounty is the responsible "Way Forward".

George demonstrated to us all by his actions and deeds, by his example, in his personal life, his professional life, and his life as world class judo athlete/coach/administrator that the responsible "Way" is to "Pass It All Forward" to future generations. George is a gentle, kind, generous, soul who has impacted in very personal and unique ways literally thousands of people, young and old alike, throughout the world. Unassumingly, by example, he does Justice, loves Mercy, and walks Humbly with his G-d.

George's love radiates in our souls and reminds us all to Heal, to Repair, and to Transform the World by example, deed, and action. George has transcended from the loving arms of his wife, Jan, to the loving arms of his Heavenly Father. He is with us forever. Peace.

Death is Nothing at All **By Henry Scott Holland & Read by George's sister**

Death is nothing at all.
I have only slipped away to the next room.
I am I and you are you.
Whatever we were to each other,
That, we still are.

Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way
which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me. Pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word
that it always was.
Let it be spoken without effect.
Without the trace of a shadow on it.

Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same that it ever was.
There is absolute unbroken continuity.
Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you.
For an interval.
Somewhere. Very near.
Just around the corner.
All is well.



**George Harris Promoted To 8th Dan
At 1988 USJA Junior Nationals
(Tournament Results Inside)**

**American
Judo**  Fall 1988
Number 132



DEDICATION

This issue of "American Judo" is dedicated to Olympian and beloved teacher and supporter of Judo, George Lee Harris, upon his promotion by the USJA to the well deserved rank of 8th Degree Black Belt. The story of this important American Judo Great is found starting on page 8.

ON THE COVER

Kari Gabriel, an NJI Team Member and a true Judo champion, has had important help so far in her competition career from the Champion International Corporation. Read how this one great American company has contributed to the making of a winner in our Olympic sport of Judo. The story is on page 4.

Bonus Issue
Summer 1988
Number 131

American Judo

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
OF THE UNITED STATES
JUDO ASSOCIATION

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**GEORGE LEE HARRIS, 8TH
DEGREE BLACK BELT -- THE
MAKING OF A LEGEND**



JUDO GREAT GEORGE HARRIS PROMOTED BY USJA TO WELL DESERVED 8TH DAN

By Phil Porter, Head Coach, America's Judo Team

When the Congress of the United States, through Congressman Ben Campbell, himself an Olympian in Judo from the same team as George Harris (Tokyo, 1964), awarded George Lee Harris a plaque engraved with the words, "For A Lifetime Of Achievement," they said it correctly.

George Harris earned those words. He earned them on the mat at the Kodokan in Japan during the 1950's and 1960's. He earned them fighting a 30 minute final match, and winning, the Pan American Judo Championships. He earned them writhing on the floor in agony from a torn elbow ligament in Tampa after winning his third national heavyweight and grand national championship. He earned them in two world championships and the Olympics, and he earned them devoting the last 24 years since his retirement



The 1964 U.S. Olympic Judo Team. This was the first Olympic Judo Team. From the left: George Harris, Ben Campbell, Paul Maruyama and Jim Bregman. In the background are Ken Busch and Mr. Ichinoe, 8th Dan.



The victorious U.S. Pan American Judo Team which won three gold medals and a silver to win the team championship at the first Judo contests held in the Pan American Games in San Paulo, Brazil, 1963. From the left: George Harris, Gold Medal, Heavyweight; Ben Campbell, Gold Medal, Open; Tosh Seino, Gold Medal, Lightweight; Paul Maruyama, Silver Medal, Middleweight.



At Jim Bregman's Camp Olympus in West Virginia, George shows a counter to one of Bill Montgomery's attacks. This was in 1959.

from competition teaching young kids the art and science of Judo.

I know because I was there for a lot of it. Here's how it happened. In the spring of 1953 I was in the hospital at Travis AFB, California with a severe case of arthritis. One day a young medical corpsman came into the room to ask me about Judo. He had been a Golden Gloves boxing champion in his home town, Philadelphia. Soon after that he came to our little dojo at Travis and started Judo under Walt Todd.

In 1954, the next year, we both placed in the first Strategic Air Command Judo Championships in Omaha, and just before I went overseas to England for four years, I remember throwing George in randori in our club. That was the last time, because a month later he caught me in a tournament for ippon and from then on he was unstoppable.

While I was in England he not only won the National Heavyweight and Grand Championships twice, he fought in the second World Championships in Tokyo, placing fourth. George went on to win the Pan American Judo Championships Gold Medal in 1958 (after winning his second national grand championship the same year), and when Judo was begun in the Pan American Games in 1963, George won the gold there, and went on to place fourth in the Olympics in 1964.

But beyond the competition, George Harris is a marvelous teacher of Judo. His Olympic Judo Development Camp, held each August in Port Jervis, New York, is the oldest continuously run summer Judo camp in the country, with 1988 being its 16th year. He has given everything he has to young people for a quarter of a century after his fighting days were over.



When the national championships were held in Hawaii in 1957, George Harris, after only four years in Judo, won both the heavyweight and grand championships for the first time. The Air Force Team also won the national five-man team championships. In fact, the national team championships was always won by the Air Force Team, so they discontinued the event in 1960 after the team of Tosh Seino, John Martindale, Robey Reed, Phil Porter, and George Harris won it for the 5th consecutive year. Kneeling, from left: John Hodge, Ed Maley, George Harris, Mike O'Conner. Standing from left: John Redding, Sam Williams, (name unavailable), Robey Reed, Martin Tyrrel, and the project officer.



In 1958, George Harris won his second national heavyweight and grand national titles in Chicago, Illinois. Here, Professor Masato Tamura presents George with the outstanding Judoist award.

As twice past President of our Association, his sound judgement and loyalty to the ideals of Judo have been impressed upon our organization permanently. With Jim Bregman and Jim Nichols, George established the legal foundation of the USJA in the 1970's, incorporating both the USJA and the NJI at that time. We all owe him a debt impossible to repay.

When I wrote to all of the high dans of the Association after our National Promotion Committee and Board of Directors had approved his promotion to 8th Dan, there was a tremendous wave of enthusiasm and affection for George beyond anything I had previously seen in Judo.

And so, as our Association made its first award of 8th Degree Black Belt to George Lee Harris, it is truly fitting that we have established the first named scholarship fund of the Association, the George Lee Harris Endowment. In the first few months after this endowment was established, \$30,000 was donated by his comrades in Judo. Their names are listed in this issue of "American Judo." We hope that every reader of this issue will feel that he too would like to become a Charter Donor of the George Lee Harris Endowment.

The interest from the Harris Endowment will be used to provide scholarships for deserving young people who wish to study Judo at the National Judo Institute while they attend college. Our goal for the endowment is \$100,000 by the end of the year.

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Professor Sumiyuki Kotani, the only living 10th Dan in the world, referees a win by George Harris in Chicago at the Nationals. Kotani, now retired, was then a 9th Dan. The Air Force brought him to the United States each year for many years in the 1950's and 1960's to train the Air Force Judo Team.

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Helping kids as always, George Harris runs a clinic at the Kittyhawk Judo Club in Ohio, November 1971. In the background are national kata champions Judy Baker and Linda Stoops.



George Harris leaves the mat after the introduction of athletes at the second world championships of Judo held in Tokyo in 1958. George placed fourth, losing only to the world gold medalist Sone of Japan. Behind George is "Big Sam" Williams, the other member of the U.S. Judo Team to the world games.



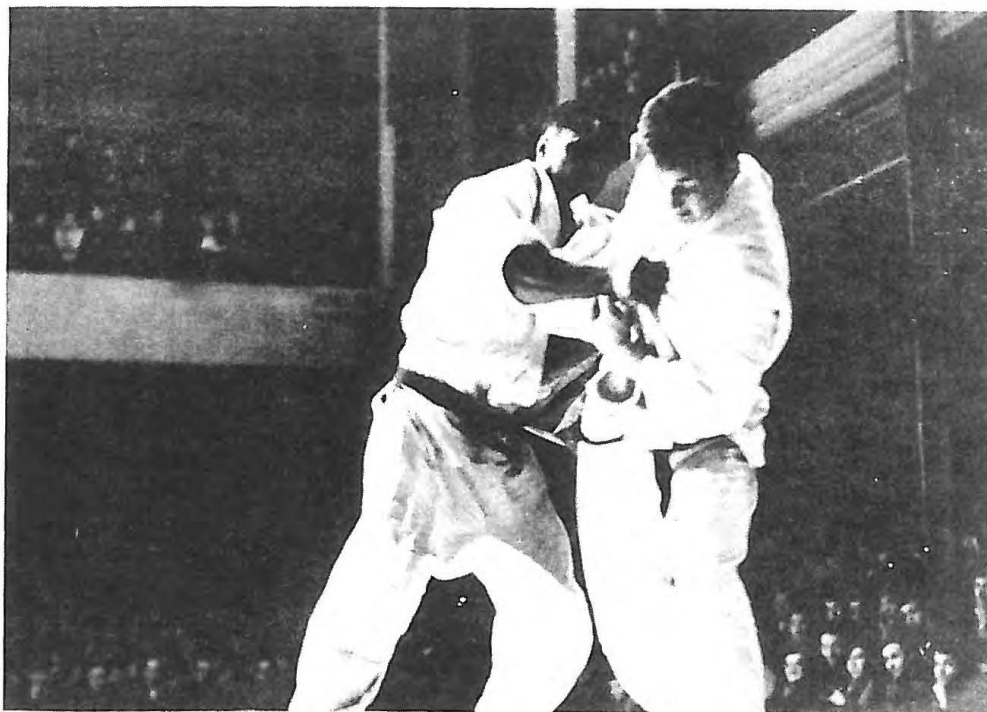
John Schmidt (left), a fine heavyweight Judoist of the Travis AFB Judo Club where George started Judo, takes part in a demonstration of tai otoshi by George.



Professor Kazuzo Kudo, 9th Dan, presents the Outstanding Judoist award to George Harris after he won yet another national heavyweight championship in Fresno, California in 1963.



A young George Harris, after four years in Judo, accepts both the overall champion trophy and the outstanding Judoist awards from Major General Walter C. Sweeney at Portsmouth, New Hampshire at the 4th Annual SAC Judo Championships. This was before his victories in Hawaii the same year.



During the U. S. Judo Team tour of France in 1964, George Harris attacks Alari of France in a team match in the famous Salle Coubertin in Paris. George won the match, and was undefeated on this tour.



The founder of Air Force Judo, Mr. Mel Bruno, gives George Harris a special award after he won the Air Force Heavyweight and Grand Championships at the Air Force Academy in 1961.

