

Harry Randall (1928-2009) - obituary

It is with great sadness that I report the death in August of Harry Randall.

Harry was 80 in May 2008 and up to then was regularly attending the Dorking Judo Club. When he felt able, he would put on his judo gi and help with the younger players - yes, even at 80 years old! Harry started judo in his 30s at a judo club in Dorking and reached green belt at that time. That club was disbanded and he didn't take up judo again until his late 50s, in September 1986 when he joined the present day Dorking Judo Club, that was established in 1984 by Richard Anderson. Having been called up as a paratrooper, in the 1950s, Harry never lost his grit and determination to succeed in a task undertaken. Despite "Getting on a bit" and suffering from asthma, he continued to study and practice judo and what is more, continued with contesting for his higher grades. Despite major heart surgery in his 60s, within a very short time of recovery - around six weeks - he was back in his judo suit, on the mat, offering to help with coaching judo, the sport to which he is dedicated. He continued to help both junior and senior judo players at the Dorking Judo Club, becoming an instructor in the early 1990s. Harry also became a Table Official and Recorder in 1997, a vital role at judo competitions, and was frequently to be seen officiating at major competitions in the Southern Area, including the Surrey Youth Games on many occasions. In 1994 Harry took up Kata - formal demonstration of precise judo techniques - with a fellow instructor at the Dorking Judo Club, Peter Leach, and together took part in the National Championships. He was awarded his Black Belt, (1st Dan Grade) in 1997 age 69. He is a wonderful example of the "Spirit of Judo" and was awarded the Spirit of Judo Award by the Dorking Judo Club in 1988.

Harry Randall embodies the qualities that we should be imparting to children and to sports people everywhere - enjoy taking part, enjoy helping others to take part, do your best unstintingly to give and receive the best out of your sporting activity, keep active right to the end - if you gain medals on the way, that is a brilliant bonus.

His son Tim Randall writes :

Dad was born on 6th May 1928 in London and was in the 9th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment. He was a keen cross-country runner and ran in the Regiment and used to keep a pet Chameleon in his tent in Palestine: apparently it used to eat the flies!

Dad loved his judo and really enjoyed not just the physical aspects, but also the history and etiquette associated with the sport and martial art. He was also keen on just about any sport, and could always be found watching football (a keen Arsenal fan having been born just around the corner from the stadium in Highbury), or the athletics. I remember when he first started doing judo, he used to try and get me to come along too. I was very young (about 10 or so I guess) and didn't have the first idea what judo was. But he kept plugging away, and eventually he and I pitched up at Dorking Judo Club not long after Richard and Jill had started the club. As they say, the rest is history...

It's also nice to see his leadership being reflected through the generations: not only did he get me into judo, but now both my son and daughter are avid judoka; enjoying not just randori and kata but a degree of success in shiai too. I hope that when my kids have children, they will guide their off-spring towards judo and thrill them with stories of their Grandad and his judo antics.

The enduring lesson I learnt from Dad was one of sheer determination: if you want something enough, you'll just keep plugging at it. He also used to say that if something was easy to get, it's not worth having which just about summed him up.



Tim and Harry