

# MEMORIAM

## Karate Great Fumio Demura Dead at 82

The renowned martial artist was Pat Morita's stunt double in 'Karate Kid' pics.

By P.C. Staff

Fumio Demura, the Yokohama, Japan-born *karateka* who helped spread the martial art of karate to the United States and the rest of



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEVIN DEREK

the world, died in California on April 24. He was 82.

Demura's role as a karate ambassador began after he moved to the United States in 1965, when he established a karate dōjō in Southern California.

He gained recognition among karate students by appearing on the cover of more than 60 different martial arts magazines and as the author of several books on karate and *kobudō* or traditional martial arts weapons such as *sai*, *bo*, *tonfa* (aka *tuifa*) and *nunchaku*, the last of which was popularized by cinematic martial arts superstar Bruce Lee in such movies as "Enter the Dragon." It was Demura who taught Lee how to use the weapon that originated on Okinawa.

Demura had his own movie career, most significantly and mostly unbeknownst to the wider world, as Pat Morita's stunt double for the role of Mr. Miyagi in the original four "Karate Kid" movies. His prowess brought an authenticity and lethality to the Miyagi character in a fight scene from the original "Karate Kid" movie when Demura, costumed and in makeup to resemble Morita, defeats several members of the thuggish Cobra Kai dōjō who were intent on savagely beating the Daniel LaRusso character.

The actor Morita and the actual karate master Demura would become fast friends, as shown in the 2015 documentary "The Real Miyagi," directed by Kevin Derek, himself among the many generations of students of Demura Sensei.

"Once in a lifetime you meet a person that embodies all the characteristics of a well-rounded human being," Derek told the *Pacific Citizen*. "Sensei Fumio Demura was that man. He was more than a karate master, he was a huge mentor and a father figure, not just for me but hundred and thousands of people around the world. I was truly honored that he trusted me to tell his life story in 'The Real Miyagi' documentary. Sensei will forever live in our hearts. He will truly be missed."

Echoing those sentiments about Demura was Art Ishii, himself a karate sensei and chief instructor of the Little Tokyo-based Matsubayashi Shorin-ryu Dōjō.



Fumio Demura and Kevin Derek, director of "The Real Miyagi," at the March 18, 2015, screening of the documentary about the famed karateka.

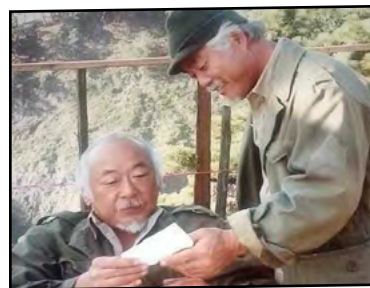
"Demura Sensei has been like big a brother and mentor to me for decades," Ishii told the *Pacific Citizen*. "He was always the person I would go to for advice whether it was when I formed my own dōjō or when I put together the Nikkei Karate Committee for the Nikkei Games.

"I remember one time I was lamenting the fact that I could finally feel my age, that I was no longer as quick, agile and athletic as I used to be in my younger days. He smiled and acknowledged that he knew exactly what I was going through and that now was the time to realize that there was plenty of room to continue to grow in terms of building character and personal growth ... to work on being a better

person and passing my knowledge and experience on to others, that karate was not just about blocking, punching and kicking.

"Another piece of advice he gave me was that no matter how bad an experience we are going through to find the humor, something funny, in the situation. It helps to offset the negativity and helps to strike a balance between good and bad. I still heed his advice on this."

Demura knew from experience about overcoming hardship. De-



Pat Morita (left) and Fumio Demura, both portraying the fictional character of Mr. Miyagi from "The Karate Kid" movie franchise

PHOTO: COURTESY OF 'THE REAL MIYAGI'

spite having won regional and national karate championships in Japan, launching a karate dōjō in his adopted country proved to be difficult. In the early years after establishing his Shitō-ryu karate dōjō, finding enough students to keep the operation afloat was a challenge. To make ends meet with the students he had, Demura put on choreographed karate demonstrations at the defunct Japanese Village and Deer Park Buena Park, Calif., in Orange County, something that did not at the time sit well with his Japan-based home dōjō. Eventually, Demura was able to make his dōjō self-sustaining.

In recent years, although Demura's health had been in decline, he did participate in 2022's Nisei Week parade that honored him and other Japanese *karateka* and martial artists. In February 2023, *Black Belt* magazine honored him for his 75 years of martial arts activity. (Demura began training in the martial arts at age 9.) The magazine also named him its instructor of the year in 1969 and martial artist of the year in 1975. He was twice honored as a member of Black Belt's Hall of Fame.

According to the *Rafu Shimpo*, Demura is survived by a sister, four brothers and a nephew. He was predeceased by his parents.

(Note: To view a trailer for "The Real Miyagi," visit [youtube.com/watch?v=ohCVQvUv4mA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohCVQvUv4mA).)

**Akaji, Elaine, 87**, Honolulu, HI, Dec. 25, 2022.

**Hayashi, Thomas, 87**, Torrance, CA, Dec. 17, 2022; veteran, Air Force; he was predeceased by his brothers, Herbert and Raymond Hayashi; he is survived by his wife, Joyce; sons, Grant (Sheryl) and Dwayne (Margot) Hayashi; gc: 4.

**Nakamura, Mitsuko, 89**, Sanger, CA, Dec. 30, 2022; during WWII, she was incarcerated at a WRA Center in AR; she was predeceased by her husband, Masao; she is survived by her sons, Robert Nakamura and Roger Nakamura; sister, Toki Inouye; brother, Henry Teraoka.

**Uyeno, Susie, 83**, Spokane, WA, Feb. 19.

TRIBUTE

SETSUKO ANDO



Setsuko (Sets) Ando, age 97, passed away in her home on May 9, 2023, surrounded by her loved ones.

Born in California, interned at Gila River, Ariz., with her family during World War II, she lived in New York and again in California before moving to Chicago.

Beloved wife of 64 years of Tadao Ando, loving mother of David (Lori), Allison (Bob) Berger and Elizabeth; cherished grandmother of Jennifer (David) Vollbracht, Nicole, Kelsey, Kimberly and Kaitlin; and adored great-grandmother of William and Setsuko. Sets was preceded in death by her siblings, Hanako Heyano, Shizuko Kimoto and Shigeru Heyano.

Most of all, she loved spending time with her family. Sets' beautiful light and loving kindness will live on in her family and in all who knew her.

A private family service will be held. In lieu of flowers or koden, please consider a donation to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, 1151 W. Leland Ave., Chicago, IL 60640 or to a charity of your choosing in her memory.

TRIBUTE

EDITH MICHIKO YAMAMOTO



March 25, 1928–April 19, 2023

It is with great sadness that the family of Edith Michiko Yamamoto announces her passing on Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at the age of 95. Edith was born on March 25, 1928, to Kuichiro and Hiroko Nishi of Wakayama Prefecture. They established a very successful nursery in the Sawtelle neighborhood. Raised in West Los Angeles, Edith enjoyed a happy childhood surrounded by friends, including sisters in the Nisei

Club called Atomettes, based at the West L.A. United Methodist Church. She was a dedicated sister to her siblings Setsuko, Henry, Midori, Mary and Barbara. Together with 10,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry, she and her family were interned at the Manzanar concentration camp in California's Owens Valley.

After the war, Edith returned to West L.A. Undeterred by her circumstances, she went on to graduate from UCLA and build a successful career as an office manager and bookkeeper. On April 20, 1952, Edith married her lifelong partner Kenneth Yamamoto of Boyle Heights. The couple enjoyed a wonderful, long life together raising their two sons Mark and Peter. A devoted parent volunteer, Edith was elected to the Nora Sterry Lighted School PTA Cabinet in 1961 and was awarded a coveted PTA Lifetime Membership in 1968. Edith and Ken were a big part of the lives of their nieces and nephews and enjoyed traveling with their family and friends. They were dedicated to being a part of their grandchildren's lives and took pride in watching them grow. A lifelong West L.A. JACLer, Edith loved spending time with her friends and family going to ikebana/flower arranging classes, golfing, bowling, fishing and taking dance classes. She especially loved dogs of all kinds, her pet tortoises and collecting tortoise figurines.

Edith is preceded in death by husband Kenneth and son Peter. She will be lovingly remembered by her son Mark, her grandchildren Danielle, Trevor and Jessica Yamamoto, John Nizich and Michelle Olsen, her four great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews, and sister Barbara Taniguchi of Fresno. A service will be held at the West L.A. United Methodist Church on June 3, 2023, at 2 p.m.

FD-929

**KUBOTA**

Sharing. Community. Legacy.

久保田葬儀社

T 213-749-1449  
F 213-749-0265

911 Venice Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90015  
[www.kubotamortuary.com](http://www.kubotamortuary.com)

**福井 FUKUI MORTUARY**

Five Generations of Experience  
FD #808

707 East Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Ph. 213/626-0441  
Fax 213/617-2781

Gerald Fukui  
President