



JOINED BY JUDO— From left to right: Invermere Sensei Hermann Mauthner poses with his daughter, Karen Sharp, and fellow instructor Bob Gadsby. Karen received her Second degree Black Belt on April 21st. Photo Kristian Rasmussen

Sensei teaches with heart

By Kristian Rasmussen
Pioneer Staff

He could use his skills as a third degree judo black belt to disarm you in an instant, but he prefers to disarm with his greatest strength: his smile.

Hermann Mauthner, judo sensei, has used his friendly nature and volunteer ethic to build a dynasty of judo greats in the Columbia Valley for the past 45 years.

"Most of our kids who come out to the judo club achieve higher levels in life," Hermann said. "We have produced over 12 black belts. We have had five Canadian champions."

The sensei has had a long running involvement with the sport. Hermann fell in love with Judo while still in high school in Austria. The intrepid explorer moved to the Yukon to work in mining camps in 1958 and took up Judo at a local club.

"I was intrigued with the movements, the ability of thinking it out," he said. "I liked seeing the really good techniques in Judo. At higher levels you are really strategizing and improving your techniques. Judo is so varied — from throwing to ground work, to arm locks, to choke locks."

Hermann became so involved in the sport he eventually become head instructor and director of the Invermere Judo Club. The judo master's compensation for his time is seeing what his students get out of the sport.

"Just to see the smiling faces when the kids achieve something, it really is a motivation to anyone," he explained with a smile.

Achievement comes with a price in judo. Partici-

pants in the sport must build control of mind and body to achieve success, according to the instructor.

"You must work on yourself. Don't make somebody else responsible for your own doings. It is what you do yourself on the mat that counts. It is the same thing in life. The principle of judo is living life with maximum proficiency."

Hermann has watched the transformation that judo has had on his students firsthand.

"I have seen real positive change in people," he said. "It is nice when students start comprehending those changes. As a kid you want to have fun. Later on [in judo] it involves life skills."

Despite the sometimes competitive nature of martial arts, the Invermere sensei maintains that judo is based mainly on connection before combat.

"Our logo says, 'In spirit united, in skill opposed,'" he said. "Judo is not a sport where we try to hurt someone. We want to win, but not to defeat someone."

Even with the amount of volunteering and effort that the Invermere sensei has put into local judo, Hermann contends that the support of the valley has been crucial in maintaining the club.

"We have received tremendous support consistently since the beginning. We started out with 27 participants. We have built up to a point where we have consistently had 50 to 100 members a year for the past 45 years."

The judo master received a rare honour in 2001. He was presented with the coveted Steve Sasaki Award. The honour is given to only a select few members of the Judo community who demonstrate the guiding principles of the sport.

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