

# Gushiken at last happy as boxer after Hall of Fame induction

By Yuri Kageyama  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — It was a long fight for Yoko Gushiken to find life after boxing. Or rather, to find his life was all about boxing after all.

It took his induction in June into the International Boxing Hall of Fame — an honor only two other Japanese have received — to allow him to reconcile with who he truly is.

Three decades after retiring from the ring — often feeling lost and depressed — and after a secondary career as a television comedian, the former World Boxing Association (WBA) light flyweight champion now accepts his status as a boxing great.

“I saw how splendid boxing was in this world,” said the 60-year-old Gushiken, often clenching his fists to emphasize his points.

He appeared a little embarrassed when asked about his television appearances, particularly on quiz shows, in which he portrays a disarming error-prone character, a gimmick designed to draw laughter from the audience.

Many younger Japanese know him only as a television personality, oblivious to Gushiken’s boxing legacy: He defended his belt 13 times, still a record for a Japanese fighter.

He never had it easy, from the beginning.

He grew up on Okinawa, the southern islands occupied by the U.S. after World War II until 1972. When he travelled to high school tournaments on the main islands, he had to bring a passport. But pride in his Okinawan roots and his determination to fight for his people drove him.

He grew up in the city of Ishigaki, one of the farthest islands, where “we didn’t have anything” — no cars, no clothes, no food, he said.

“We would get sneakers, maybe once a year. That was it,” Gushiken said in an interview at his gym, dotted with colorful gloves, dangling sandbags, and a poster of Oscar De La Hoya.

A fledgling boxer was wrapping his tiny hands by a humble ring.

For years, the island had television reception only for the single public broadcaster. His hometown couldn’t even watch his fights.

Even after turning professional, he was so short on money he worked at a pork-cutlet restaurant while he defended his title five times. Gushiken is still grateful to the restaurant owner for giving him that job.

Shinkichi Kinjo, 70, Gushiken’s high school boxing coach, said he knew right away from the fiery way Gushiken looked at him that he was special. But he had hopes for sending him to college and maybe the Olympics, and was disappointed when Gushiken turned pro, without going to college.

“But he told me he would make up for it by becoming a champion,” Kinjo said proudly, in a telephone interview from Okinawa.

Gushiken reigned as champion for nearly five years, recording eight knockouts, until he was defeated in a 1981 bout, sadly, on Okinawa, where he remains a hero.

“Gushiken was a pressure fighter,” said Ted Sares, a boxing fan and writer, who long pushed for Gushiken’s induction into the Hall of Fame, insisting Asian fighters were under-represented. “By employing constant pressure, he forced opponents into mistakes.”

Back then, title fights went for 15 rounds, although fortunately he knocked out almost every opponent, and rarely had to go the distance. The refs didn’t stop fights quickly, and he fought four times a year.

Younger boxers have technique, Gushiken acknowledged, but many lack what’s most important in the making of a champion.

“They aren’t hungry,” he said in his soft voice. “It’s all about what’s in your heart.”



**LEGENDARY STATUS.** Japanese boxer Yoko Gushiken (top photo, center) celebrates after defeating champion Juan Jose Guzman of the Dominican Republic by a technical knockout in their World Boxing Association (WBA) light flyweight title match in Tokyo in this October 10, 1976 file photo. Gushiken was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame on June 14, 2015 (bottom photo). Three decades after retiring from the ring — often feeling lost and depressed — and after a secondary career as a television comedian, the former WBA light flyweight champion now accepts his status as a legend in the sport.

A slight but sprightly man who sports curly hair, Gushiken made it clear he works as a *tarento*, or “talent,” as Japanese call actors and comics, to spread the word about boxing.

He also needs the television appearances to raise funds for his Tokyo boxing gym, which he has run for 20 years, to get his boxers fights that may lead to his dream to produce a world champion.

But Gushiken did little to draw attention to his Hall of Fame induction in Canastota, New York on June 14, including from the Japanese television shows he frequents. He went quietly, flying at his own expense, booking his own hotel.

And so he was stunned when he was thronged by American fans, who somehow found out where he was staying, and were waiting in the lobby to get his autograph — not on pieces of paper, but on boxing gloves, his photos, and even a pamphlet from one of his fights.

When he went on a victory parade down the streets, he heard someone yell, “Yoko,” he recalled, tears brimming a little.

“I connected with all the boxing champions from around the world,” he said of the four-day festivities. “We became one.”

He dined at a table with two of his biggest heroes, Ruben Olivares and Pipino Cuevas. He was impressed by the fun personality of fellow inductee Riddick Bowe.

And he wasn’t a bit nervous when he made his speech, saying in English: “I will never forget this wonderful day.”

It was so much fun, he would move to the U.S. this minute, if only he could speak English a little better.

“All my suffering in my boxing life, all of it, suddenly turned into joy,” Gushiken said, as though still in a dream. “It was all good.”



**SEEKING EQUALITY.** Teresa Xu, left, and Li Tingting, right, share a moment outside of a beauty salon where the two prepared for their wedding in Beijing in early July. The Chinese couple held a simple ceremony to announce their informal marriage, in their latest effort to push for legalization of same-sex unions in China. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

## China gay couple holds informal marriage to push for union

By Didi Tang  
The Associated Press

**B**EIJING — A prominent Chinese lesbian couple held a simple ceremony recently to announce their informal marriage, in their latest effort to push for the legalization of same-sex unions in China.

The union of Li Tingting and Teresa Xu came six days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to validate same-sex marriages in the United States, and four months after Li was detained in China for her women’s-rights activism.

China does not legally permit same-sex marriage, and there is no broad social effort to push for its legalization.

“I do,” Li said in English, as friends cheered. “So do I,” replied Xu, also in English.

They exchanged vows and put on silver rings serving as wedding bands in front of about 20 friends and an equal number of journalists gathered at a restaurant in a suburb of Beijing decorated with balloons, rainbow flags, and their photos.

“We want to take some action to advocate for same-sex marriage,” Li said earlier in a salon, while Xu was having her hair styled. “It’s doing the impossible when you know it’s impossible, but it takes those constant efforts to make changes in history.”

Li was detained in early March with four others amid China’s crackdown on social activism. They were taken into police custody in a criminal investigation over their plans to hand out stickers and flyers denouncing sexual harassment. Foreign governments, rights groups, and Hillary Clinton, who is running for U.S. president, criticized their detention. The five were released 37 days later, although they remain criminal suspects.

The experience prompted Xu to consider a stronger bond with Li. “I love her, and after her detention I wanted to be closer to her, but not merely as her girlfriend,” Xu said. “I love her courage and her sense of justice.”

The U.S. Supreme Court decision inspired them to seek their own version of a same-sex marriage, Li said.

“That’s a U.S. law. What use does it have in China?” Li said. “We think we should do something ourselves.”

Within days, the couple picked up wedding gowns, scheduled salon sessions for their hair and makeup, and reserved the banquet room.

The couple had initially considered showing up at the local civil affairs office to apply for a marriage license, but stopped the plan so as not to upset the authorities.

“They could detain me on the charge of assembling illegally or provoking trouble to disrupt social order,” Li said.

Li said state security officials had contacted her to inquire about the ceremony, and that she was worried about the possibility of being detained again.

“We are a bit nervous and excited that our wedding should get this much attention,” she said at the ceremony.

## Three Indonesian airports close due to eruptions at two volcanoes

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Eruptions at two volcanoes caused closures at three Indonesian airports, including one serving the country’s second-largest city.

Mount Raung on the main island of Java blasted ash and debris up to 6,560 feet into the air after rumbling for several weeks, and Gamalama mountain in eastern Indonesia erupted after months of quiet.

Transport ministry spokesman Julius Adravidia Barata said volcanic ash

spewing from Raung blew close to the cities of Surabaya and Malang, forcing Juanda International and Abdurrahman Saleh airports to close.

Surabaya, the provincial capital of East Java, is Indonesia’s second-largest city after the capital Jakarta.

The ministry said Sultan Babullah airport in Ternate, North Maluku’s province capital, was closed after Gamalama sent volcanic ash as high as 4,920 feet.

The shutdown came at the peak of the annual exodus of millions of people to their hometowns in the world’s most populous Muslim nation, coinciding with the celebration of the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

An earlier eruption of Raung sparked chaos as Ngurah Rai airport in the tourist hotspot of Bali and four other airports in the region were shut down, stranding thousands of holiday-goers.

Two domestic airports in the East Java towns of Banyuwangi and Jember were also closed.

Volcanic ash is hazardous to jet engines and able to harm other parts of the aircraft.

A 2010 eruption of Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökull volcano produced an ash cloud that caused a week of international aviation chaos, with more than 100,000 flights cancelled.