

## NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE 2015

Shuji Maruyama, Founder and President, Aikido Kokikai International

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and a great New Year. It is my sincere hope that you work hard to cultivate your full ability and continue to grow.

Baseball players hit home runs; violinists play the violin and fascinate their audiences. We must not forget that home runs don't hit themselves and violins don't play themselves: human beings need to perform these actions. In Kokikai, we don't play baseball or study the violin; what we study is how to use our whole ability in the activities of our daily lives. We have tremendous internal power but we can't see it. It is difficult for us to see our abilities but if you find such a power, then you can use all of your ability and the chance of you hitting a home run or playing the violin increases dramatically.

I came to the United States 45 years ago to teach aikido as the art of self-defense. Thirty years ago, after being challenged so often by big, strong Americans, I realized that Japanese aikido does not work well against Americans who seemed to enjoy resisting my techniques. This is when I created Kokikai Aikido as an art of self-defense for modern society. The purpose of self-defense is to protect your body from attack. An enemy will punch, kick, grab and resist and in Kokikai we can throw them. My heaviest weight was 130 pounds and even though I am challenged by big, strong men weighing more than 200 pounds, I can throw them. If I couldn't throw them, how can I eat? The beginning of my time in the United States was a very hard time for me. But I did it! As I got older, I got stronger. 50s, 60s, 70s still growing and still getting stronger.

For martial arts, the most important thing is proof. If you can't prove yourself, you are living in a fantasy or just daydreaming. Sometimes people say that their teacher is strong but he has been dead for a long time and those older ideas cannot be applied to modern society. When I came to the United States, I could not run away; I had to stay and do it! There was nowhere for me to go! I got my teeth broken, my body injured countless times but still, I could not run away. Slowly, I began to understand and I got stronger. I began to understand something and I began to correctly harmonize my mind and my body and because I began to understand this, I could use my whole ability and get stronger and stronger.

In the United States, if you cannot fascinate people, they will soon quit. Maybe the same is true of the whole world but in my experience, this is especially true of American society and American people. First, I proved and fascinated people through kokyū dosa and now I fascinate when people push against my chest. I am only 128 pounds but even at this light weight, no one can move me. If I am in my correct state, something changes within myself. If I am not correct, I can be pushed back or moved easily – this is physics. One time, a few years ago, Joe and I went to Seki, Japan and Joe pushed someone there and fractured his ribs. In the United States, I always choose the biggest, heaviest and strongest men and I can throw all of them. In Kokikai Aikido, we call this a ki test. It is not technique. When performing a technique the timing is much faster. What is more, I would never tell an enemy to push or resist as much as they can!

When I am about 60% correct, my partner cannot push me and I cannot throw him; it is a kind of stalemate. As I get increasingly correct, 70%, 80%, throwing my partner becomes easier and easier. Everyone who tries to resist me but when I am in this state of mind, everyone smiles and falls down. The feeling is like a bouncing ball. My state of mind grows like this. I can do it but when 200 pound men try to do the same thing, both of them cannot throw each other. Therefore, please study more and progress and then, someday, you will be able to do it, too.

Professional athletes train very hard but they know their limits and they try not to go beyond them because they risk injury or serious illness. Golf players, baseball players, soccer players win and become rich and famous. Sometimes they win. Sometimes they lose. The winners catch something and they can beat other people. You, too, can and should catch something. Practice is important – this is common sense – and the more you practice using your whole ability, the easier it is to catch something, grow and throw other people.

You must find your correct road for your aikido. If your road is not correct or if your map is not correct, you might never reach your goal. Maybe Kokikai principles can help you and, as I show you at camps and seminars, year after year. Have the confidence that your map is true; have confidence that Sensei can do it and you can do it, too. If I can do it, you can do it. Rome wasn't built in a day but little by little, day by day, you can grow and maximize your full potential.

Please practice hard and show how much you have grown at Winter Camp. I am looking forward to seeing everyone at Winter Camp!

Best Wishes,  
Sensei

