

My Karate Journey, Part 24 -- Strong Mind, Aging Body!

This “aging thing” has GOT TO GO!!! After almost 75 years — just about 3/4 of that time in karate — you would think that this body of mine would be falling apart and spending most of its time on the sofa in front of a TV. Well, you’re SORTA right!!! Yes, it IS falling apart ... literally!!!

One fact I learned about getting old: I BRUISE EASILY!!!

I now find myself coming home bruised and bleeding whenever I join in on the kumite which, by the way, I love! Just in case you were wondering — I love kumite, NOT bruising and bleeding!!! My skin has thinned to the point that just a block or a tight grasp on my arm can cause bruises and even peel my skin off!!! Of course, I just claim that my wife Paula has been beating me up!!! HAH!

Difficult and painful as it may be, I am going to have to cut down on the amount of sparring that I do in the future. My latest episodes happened just about a week apart recently. I was teaching the class how to get out of the grasp of an opponent. This technique is included in the second kata that they learn, and the one that I am now teaching them. I asked one of the female members to grab my wrist firmly, and she did. The technique involves twisting my wrist to position the hand for escape, and then yanking my arm down and away to break the grip. I did the whole sequence at about half-speed. My students watched intently.

When I was done, I stood in front of the group to further explain the intricacies of the technique. One of my students raised her hand and asked, “Sensei, are you okay?” I had no clue what she meant. Then she said, “Look at your arm!” When I looked down, I noticed blood trickling

down my arm from where my student had grasped my wrist, and the skin had been slightly torn.

Everyone looked totally shocked and concerned that I was seriously injured. I explained to them that as you age your skin begins to thin and you tend to bruise easier than before. Actually, my exact words were, "When you get old, ...". Curiously, I recall my Dad had the same condition when he was alive. I would often visit him and notice that he had bruises on his arms. When I asked how he got them, he would explain it the exact way that I just did!

About a week following this incident, we were doing reflex kumite, where one person would do a specific attack, and the other one would defend himself. Knowing there would be contact, I put on ALL my armor ... well, actually, pads! Hand pads, forearm pads, and shin pads are our standard protective gear. Apparently, this was NOT enough padding, as I felt a slight pain in my forearm after the exercise. Peeking under the padding, I noticed a HUGE patch of the skin on my right arm had torn away, and the blood had soaked into my pad and gi. It has been over a week since then, and the wound continues to heal slowly!

Another fact I learned about getting old: YOU HEAL SLOWER!!!

I am quite surprised and incredibly happy that this old body of mine is STILL going strong after almost 75 years, 56 of them in karate! I am also fully aware that the reason for my longevity has been because of the active lifestyle that I have led, from sports as a youngster to karate as an adult. Undoubtedly, it's also due to my strong and stubborn mind!! I am truly blessed to still be able to join the Senpais in our intense workouts three times a week!

Now, if I can just keep this old body moving, and the skin on me for a few more years, I would love to continue doing what I NOW do! However, I know that my time in karate is QUICKLY shortening, so I desperately want to teach my students as much as I can while I am still able!!!

Alan Sekiguchi, November 18, 2022