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Sword and Pen

Official Newsletter of the International
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and the Academy of Self-Defense

EDITORIAL

The Mystique Mistake

COMMENCEMENT of serious, widespread interest in the Asian martial arts in America began following WWII. The big thing until approximately 1960 was judo and ju-jutsu. In the early 60's karate gained a foothold, and soon took the lead, with schools offering primarily Japanese, Okinawan, and Korean styles. The first karate schools in America were those set up by the late Ed Parker and the late Robert Trias — in Southern California and in Arizona, respectively. The late Bruce Tegnér, through his book *Karate: The Open Hand And Foot Fighting* was responsible also for bringing this percussory martial art and way to the awareness of the general public. Although Tegnér was an excellent teacher and practitioner (and did himself operate a school of martial arts for a while, in Hollywood, California) his refusal to adhere to the classicism and antiquated arcania of the “traditional arts” caused him to be a target of what amounted to completely unjust and unfair criticism by those who had

become enamored of the “true, classical/traditional — and often represented as “mystical” — Asian ways”. Tegnér passed away in 1985 at the age of 56; however, his sensible and realistic ideas and publications are increasingly becoming appreciated and respected by a somewhat more rational self-defense seeking public.

When Bruce Lee came on the scene in the late 60’s/early 70’s the Chinese martial arts of ch’uan fa (“kung fu”) were gradually becoming available to the Caucasian public. Until then it was nearly impossible for anyone not of Chinese heritage to find a bona fide school teaching a Chinese system that would accept him. By the mid-1970’s the public had become aware of the “internal vs. external” systems of China, and of the fact that the stylistic variations of martial arts were too numerous to count!

Sensible people were emphasizing that there was much more alike than there was dissimilar about the major styles or forms of martial art and, in the early 70’s, the movement began — in no small way inaugurated by ourself — of ever so gradually, and against serious opposition, pointing out the shortcomings of the classical/traditional ways, and pushing the public’s awareness in the direction of utterly practical, modernized, “street and battlefield validated” doctrine. There were certainly a few excellent teachers scattered around (like Robert H. Sigward, Caesar Bujosa, Charlie Nelson, John Martone, and Pat Butler) who were teaching non-classical and practical approaches to personal combat, but they were not really pushing it hard in the face of the classicists. Bruce Lee was doing a little of this to an extent, but he was himself firmly rooted in Chinese ch’uan fa (ie the “Wing Chun System”). We personally shifted our foundational Asian martial arts underpinnings to the WWII systems which, after poring over the classic texts by Fairbairn, Applegate, Styers, and others, became

totally clear to us as being The Way to go. Our training under Charles Nelson verified and confirmed our commitment to this venue. We sought to extract from the classical/traditional arts and ways everything that would combine well with and bolster the foundational elements that the WWII teachers had so brilliantly introduced to the Allies during the second world war.

Like Bruce Tegnér, we wanted to scrap all of the “mysticism”, the “ceremony”, and the unnecessary trappings that were integral to the study of the martial arts, and we wanted to dump all of that which, plainly put, didn’t measure up to that acid test which we had learned from our study of Kill Or Get Killed, presented by Applegate:

“Will this work so that I can use it instinctively in vital combat against an opponent who is determined to prevent me from doing so, and who is striving to eliminate me by fair means or foul?”

Unlike Bruce Tegnér we saw (and still see!) situations of self-defense against dangerous, violent offenders as being akin to situations in which brutal wartime hand-to-hand combat takes place. We are against all “restraint” and “control” methods (save for law enforcement use), and we advocate the most ferocious, merciless, and viciously foul decisive combat actions whenever a self-defense emergency demands their use. (Note: We have always wondered how and why Tegnér disdained the tough, WWII type commando fighting approach of war, for self-defense. The truth is that violent criminal offenders are generally more brutal and dangerous than enemy soldiers, during wartime. The man whom you face in wartime battle may be a quite respectable fellow, drawn — as you may have been — from a normal, productive, and civilized occupation, and thrust onto a

battlefield. The violent offender, however, has deliberately chosen the evil path of a predatory monster, and pursues the terrorizing, destruction, and merciless plundering of his victims BECAUSE HE ENJOYS IT.)

It was our desire to eliminate something else that we had become disgusted with during our formal martial arts training, and that we were exposed to at every turn when interfacing with martial arts devotees, aficionados, and teachers: The Mystique of the Martial Arts.

As the martial arts gained enormous popularity in post-WWII and then Vietnam-era America, strange things began to happen. Popularity can be a double-edged sword. The exotica of the Asian arts and ways created an appeal to individuals with serious identity problems, and perhaps with mild forms of mental illness. Not that 100% devotion to the physical arts per se was a problem. This was the good part. The bad part was the fantasy. The fact that, in addition to devoting themselves to the physical arts — which understandably have an appeal to any persons from any culture — numerous “fanatics” who were Caucasian to the core began emulating Asian ideosyncratic gestures, nuances of language, and demeanor. These pathetic fools actually tried to “be” Asian! Their efforts, rather than resulting in large exitings from their schools, had the opposite effect in many cases. That is, attracted by this fantasy, countless equally pathetic souls “ate it up”. They added their enthusiastic support to the entire edifice of imaginary bullshit that the hallucinators had constructed. By the mid-1970’s virutally every major city in America had numerous schools of martial arts in which born-in-America English speaking teachers of the martial arts were speaking with an affected broken English, accentuated in a manner typical of a Chinese or Japanese first-generation American who had arrived here only recently. The quite sensible attire of

the Asian systems became “required” in order to “belong” — as though a comfortable pair of sweats or old clothes somehow prevented learning. Terminology became an almost religious requirement. Heaven forbid someone in a Japanese karate school forgot that Funakoshi was O-Sensei, and that the little godlet who was bestowing “O-Sensei’s great gift to the world” was merely “Sensei”!

Teachers in this Country would adopt the disdainful attitude that some (by no means all) traditional teachers in Asia had toward their charges — while conveniently forgetting when they did this that those traditional teachers often taught their students free of charge, and that it is the **HEIGHT OF BRAZEN DISRESPECT AND POOR CHARACTER** to take a person’s money and proceed to demean, injure, and psychologically as well as physically abuse that person — or simply use him as a training dummy!

The **MYSTIQUE** permitted (and still permits) this atrocious garbage to continue. “I who possess the great secrets of the hidden mysteries will deign to teach you,” the hallucinating neurotic fancisers implicitly proclaim to all and sundry, “while you — in deference and due respect to my deific status, will submit to whatever crap I fancy that I’ll dump on you!”

While the proper response to that ridiculous assertion of teaching policy is unprintable, we suspect that our readers will not have too much trouble guessing what it ought to be.

But here’s the really sad thing:

That ridiculous, infantile “mystique” that pollutes the Asian martial arts industry in the West has crept into our own venue! Now we’ve got psychos who represent themselves as being practically related to the icons of the WWII era — ie Fairbairn, Sykes, Applegate, O’Neill, Hipkiss, Feldenkrais, Begala, Brown, and so forth! We are in our 60’s and actually were a student and close associate of Rex Applegate, a student of Charles Nelson, and a student of Fairbairn and Syke’s teachings through the intermediary of a man who, as an FBI counterintelligence officer during WWII, had learned at Fairbairn’s and Syke’s hands. Yet, we observe people half our age — give or take a few years either way — whose “WWII methods training” entailed reading the books that had been written by those teachers, or interviewing others who had been trained by the wartime experts. Fine, that’s a legitimate way to learn, but, when you hear these people speak, watch their DVD’s, or check out the rhetoric they present on the web sites or in articles that the mainstream magazines accept for publication from them, you are essentially told (by each one of these individuals!) that “HE” is the real purveyor of the Truth, and that everyone else is from hunger! A “mystique” has been built up around the very type and style of close combat and self-defense that was created and that evolved in order to be free of mystique!

Well, we’ll have no truck with that, and we hope that you won’t either. Practical, reliable combat techniques and methods of personal defense are anything but mysterious and secret. There are some skills that are not very well known by those who train in the martial arts, and/or by those in occupations in which such skills are genuinely needed. Okay, that’s true enough. But while we always enjoy the expression of delighted surprise that we see on the face of, for example, a classical/traditional black belt in one or another of the Asian arts when we teach him some of the

fundamentals of American Combato's wartime methodology, we do not, never have, and never will represent ourself as some kind of an "exclusive purveyor of close combat mysteries". We have made a lifetime study of these arts, and we have worked hard to develop a modern and comprehensive system that culls and combines the best of the best into an American (ie a "Western") methodology; but we've just taken what the WWII masters presented, combined it with that which is valuable in the classical/traditional systems and organized a syllabus and style rooted in proven, wartime doctrine. That's it. No mysteries. No secrets. No unbelievable or incredible or even "unbeatable" skills.

We've been in this and at this since the 1950's. We came to the arts of boxing and judo — initially — solely for the purpose of "learning how to defend ourself". We have since run the gamut of the martial arts and ways, and we have been blessed with the opportunity to learn, and now to share, the most reliable and effective close combat and self-defense methods in the world. But we've got no mysteries and we've got no secrets or "hidden methods" to offer.

And neither does anyone else. We're in direct descent and trace our lineage to the WWII masters; but neither they nor our self had or have any use for any "mystique" The fact is that we have too much really good stuff to offer. We need no "mystique" to wrap it in!

Bradley J. Steiner

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition . . .

ASIDE from an unfortunate inclination to drop out and simply quit (ie laziness, and lack of discipline required to achieve that which one wishes to achieve, oneself), one of the great reasons for failure in the acquisition of close combat and self-defense skills is insufficient repetitious DRILL. Some individuals attend classes or take lessons regularly — but outside of, in addition to, and beyond whatever is done during those instructional periods, they do not train and drill in the techniques that they have been taught.

The truth is that while there is nothing “secret”, complicated, or difficult to learn about anything taught in the art of personal combat, the skills cannot be acquired — simple as they may be — unless a great deal of high repetition practice is undertaken regularly.

How often ought one train? Every day. Not necessarily for long periods of time, but certainly on a consistent, daily basis. Ten to 30 minutes of serious practice is enough (in addition to formal training sessions, at least twice per week), but unless one does in fact average that degree of regularity in one’s personal practice routine one is unlikely ever to instill one’s techniques into one’s muscle memory.

“But how can I possibly practice all of what I’ve learned each day in a ten to 30 minute period?” you might ask. The answer is, you do not need to practice “all you’ve learned” each day. Just practice some of that which you’ve learned.

Take two or three important techniques. Now work as hard as you can on just those two or three techniques. Really work on them. Focus mentally. Visualize. Use a dummy or a heavy bag or a post if you can and smash — really smash — into it! That’s it! Work in as close to a genuine combat mindset and psychological state of realism as you can muster! Just be sure to do this every single day (obviously, do not train when or if you are ill).

The techniques of close combat and self-defense may be practiced without a partner, but they may not be effectively practiced without intense concentration, focus, and visualization. So take this seriously! Immerse your state of mind in the hypothetical predicament of fighting for your life — or of needing to defend a loved one. If you do practice with a training partner, it may actually be more difficult to practice well, since you know this person, and cannot escape the sense that he is in fact not an “attacker” or “enemy” at all — but rather a training buddy. So here’s a idea: Get your training partner to wear a ski mask — a balaclava — so that you help yourself to “forget” that he is your friend. Be damn careful if you do this! After all, you do not want to get too carried away with any live partner and risk injuring him! When you work with an imaginary opponent, or with a striking post, BOB dummy, or heavy bag, etc. however, **GO AT IT LIKE YOU WANTED TO KILL THE BASTARD WHO’S ATTACKING YOU AND THREATENING YOUR LIFE!**

A thousand repetitions of, say, the chinjab smash done in this manner and with such a mindset will reward you with a natural weapon that is quite capable of saving your life — even if you are set upon by a man who is much larger, stronger, and technically skilled than yourself. Your goal should be to forge a SET of individual, basic blows that suit you perfectly, along with a SET of core attacking combinations that incorporate these

and perhaps other blows and tactics, and a SET of all-purpose, generally applicable counterattacking (ie “self-defense”) reactions. These must be internalized — ie buried into your motor memory and honed to the point where you explode into action with the skills without any need for any conscious deliberation, save the “ATTACK!” command that your mind issues forth to your body in an instance when your organism becomes aware of a dangerous threat.

Questions: “Won’t I be training like a ‘robot’ if I do this? Isn’t the practice of specific, fixed actions — done over and over again — merely that which the late Bruce Lee referred to as ‘organized despair’? Don’t I need to spar and compete in order to establish reliable reactions and fighting abilities?”

Answers: No, no, and no.

Observe the Western boxer. He trains incessantly on but four basic blows — never failing to drill, drill, and drill some more in them. He does thousands — tens of thousands, over the years! — of left jabs, straight rights, uppercuts, and hooks. He pounds heavy and light bags with them. He isolates and polishes them. He is critiqued on them by his coach. He strives to be faster, stronger, more accurate, and more and more perfect in the form and style with which he delivers those four basic, and very simple, blows.

The boxer has his own form of “kata”. It is in fact the boxer’s shadow boxing that inspired our creation many years ago of the practice method which we teach advanced pupils, known as spontaneous kata©. Boxers have no problem with that which — in referencing classical/traditional

kata — Bruce Lee dubbed “organized despair”. Unfortunately, Lee failed to appreciate that the IDEA and the concept of kata is extremely good, and supremely effective as a training device; however the METHOD of employing it is as the Western boxer — not the Asian martial arts traditionalist — employs it. Utilized correctly, kata (or, more specifically, our spontaneous kata©) elevates one’s skills enormously — and most especially assists in cultivating multiple attacker countering abilities). In any case, observe how the WESTERN BOXER (an example anyone may observe and see for himself, which is why we cite it, here) fights, reacts, and moves speedily, and very, very effectively. (Much more effectively in an emergency, we’d point out, than most “martial artists”). His repetitious, never-ending drill — over and over and over again — in his simple but effective repertoire makes him fluid and natural, and able to readily adapt to anything that his opponent may choose to do in the ring. Far from creating any kind of “despair”, focused, high repetition drill and endless practicing of one’s key movements leads to solid confidence, fast, reflexive combative abilities with those movements, and to the most flexible, adaptable, endlessly intuitive competence in handling whatever an enemy may dish out!

Boxing is a sport, and is unsuitable for hand-to-hand combat or serious self-defense against large, dangerous, experienced, armed (and often multiple) attackers. But the principle of movement and the theory of training is what we would like the reader to focus on here. It makes our point.

Sparring is ridiculous, unnecessary, and in fact poses a serious stumbling block to mastering all-in fighting skills (although we readily concede that the opposite is true for the sporting competitor). One of the key factors in developing COMBAT abilities is the inculcation OF UNRESTRAINED,

UNHESITANT, ANYTHING GOES FEROCITY AND DESTRUCTIVENESS. No “sparring” can permit this. It is way too dangerous. Notice, in this context, that before the art of karate began to experiment with and later include sparring as a practice method, it was more effective in serious combat than it has become today! This is because with the advent of sparring, it became necessary (as it always does) to establish rules for safety. Yet, those techniques that have come to predominate in competitive (sport) karate are the worst and the weakest for hand-to-hand combat! High and fancy kicks, and clenched fist punching is a joke in serious combat. However, before sparring became a highly practiced aspect of the art of karate, emphasis was on basic maiming and blinding, and killing skills — on all sorts of techniques — even throws — that were fierce and dangerous, and that (even considering the emphasis upon the inferior practice method of classical kata) enabled the traditional karateka to fare better in REAL COMBAT than does the atypical “freestylist” find that he can fare when and if actually attacked on today’s mean streets.

One needn’t spar to develop the ability to utilize close combat and self-defense skills. Look at bayonet fighting, as taught in the Marine Corps and in the Army: Trainees work in the air and they work against dummies. This prepares them more than sufficiently for combat, because the simple movements of bayonet fighting work, and because the trainees are frankly encouraged to ATTACK and to DESTROY the enemy, while building their fighting actions into reflexive, natural movements through HIGH REPETITION PRACTICE.

There is nothing “wrong” with freestyle sparring, providing one neither confuses it with combat training nor uses it for combat training. (This of

course goes for all “sparring” and competition, generally — including and perhaps especially grappling).

Giving oneself two separate and distinct sets of commands — one for sparring, and one for “real” combat — creates what is almost certainly going to be a block and an insurmountable obstacle to required immediate action. “Okay, use only those high kicks when you spar. No kicking to the testicles and to the knees and shins! But . . . if you’re jumped in the street, keep your kicks low. And get good with your punching so that you can spar effectively. But . . . if you’re jumped in the street use handaxe chops, heelpalm smashes, elbow strikes, head butting, biting, clawing and eye gouging, and close-in knees to the testicles! And use anything at hand to aid your efforts. You’re after the eyes, throat, testicles, knees, ears, shins/insteps, sternum, kidneys, spine, and bridge of nose or philtrum. Just remember never to use any of those kinds of attack in your contests!”

You can train in order to become a terrific sporting competitor (a worthy goal), OR you can train for combat. But do not try to do both.

And if you wish to train for combat, then knuckle down to the task of repetitious drill — endless repetitious drill — in the basics, and in planned, destructive combination sequences of the basics, applied with the attitude of “kill or be killed”.

There is no time to think consciously and decide deliberately before physically moving, in an actual hand-to-hand battle or self-defense emergency. You want the most vicious, reliable, destructively damaging actions to EXPLODE in your attacker’s face if it is ever your misfortune to need to defend yourself. This ability is achieved by putting serious,

regular time in — daily — so that when the moment comes you have done sufficient repetitions of that which you must now do, in order to attack and win; and in order to do it without thinking.

Every repetition that you do with force and spirit in training increases your likelihood of surviving if the real thing ever happens. So do lots and lots of repetitions of the right techniques!

“Combat Physical Conditioning”

FORTUNES are being made and have been made by some, teaching what they refer rather dramatically to as combat conditioning, or physical training for combat, or combat physical training, etc. When and where the substance of that which is being offered and advocated by these purveyors is good, basic, all round physical training and body development, no harm is being done. That’s because that is what “combat conditioning” largely consists of: good, basic, all round physical training and body development. There is no special exercise program that will, per se, prepare you for hand-to-hand combat, as opposed to those exercise programs that make you strong, fit, tough, and healthy for its own sake.

Yes — there are a few types of physical training that pertain a little more to that which, let’s say, a combatant might find helpful. But these forms of physical training are specifically combative exercises, and do not, by themselves, comprise all round physical training systems. For example: training in falling and rolling without being injured, using “pugil” sticks in bouts, smashing away at dummies, posts, or heavy bags, etc. Usually, when these types of exercise are utilized, they are done as integral parts of the combat skills training, per se.

What we wish to make clear is that a supplementary physical training program “for close combat and self-defense” is nothing more than a good physical training program — plain and simple.

For more than 40 years we’ve been saying this: The finest all round physical training program for the individual who trains in martial arts for self-defense is a basic weight training program. The supplementary exercises (such as the practice of breakfalling, in order to toughen the body — not in order to “train you how to fall in combat”, or smashing into heavy bags and posts, and so on) are fine. Serious students are urged to practice these things. But a separate, well planned, balanced, and progressive system of total physical training that is done apart from and in addition to whatever fighting arts work one participates in, should be set up and followed regularly. And there is nothing particularly “combat oriented” or “martial arts related” in such a program.

Instead of sending away for a course in “combat conditioning”, purchase a barbell, a couple of dumbbell bars, plenty of plates so that you can work up to respectable exercise poundages in your training, a set of squat racks, and a flat bench with supports. Arrange to workout two or three days a week on exercises that hit the major muscle groups; and workout hard. Concentrate. Strive to build up to your own hereditary limits in strength and condition and fitness, and realize — while you are doing this — that you are cultivating the attributes of physical capability that will enhance and bolster every single combat skill that you train in and learn. Unarmed combat, armed combat — you name it! — will be improved and enhanced by their application by a strong, fit, healthy YOU.

Two Tips For Mastering Combative Target Points

“VITAL points” is a well known and well worn concept in the martial arts. The truth is that there are nowhere near as many truly vital “vital points” in the human body as is popularly taught in the numerous systems. Still, there certainly are target areas of the human body that should be regarded as PRIORITIES for any self-defense or close combat situation. We offer the following two suggestions to our readers, with the hope that this assists them in clarifying the subject in their minds, and helping them to get a “practical handle” on it, in case they ever need to use it for real:

1. “Pain” per se is largely subjective, and all of the “pain compli-cance” points, pressures, etc. amount to useless garbage when a situation of serious danger exists, and when the adversary(ies) is formidable, determined, and bent upon his opponent’s destruction. The reliable “vital points” for close combat and self-defense are points of the anatomy which, when attacked, result PRIMARILY in crippling injury — with attendant “pain” being merely an inevitable byproduct. In simpler language: DO NOT WASTE TIME ON “PAIN COMPLIANCE” AND “PRESSURE POINT” B.S. IT IS VALUELESS IN SERIOUS HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. Go after the dozen or so target areas that knock out, maim, cripple, or — if lawfully permissible and necessary in order to protect innocent life — kill. They are the only ones worth bothering with in serious, realistic training. If you do not feel justified in causing serious, permanent injury to someone because it has become necessary to do so for legitimate self-defense, then keep your hands to yourself! (Police officers, and others tasked with peacekeeping and law enforcement functions or

security work are of course exceptions. These individuals may from time to time have need for “control” measures. However, that is a separate area of “martial arts” and need not concern the private citizen or military/intelligence student of close combat. This latter category of student has no responsibility to “arrest” and/or “control without injuring” an adversary whom he encounters in unavoidable combat.)

2. Think of the preliminarily available targets as being located in AREAS, rather than as being “points” to zero in on. The concept that we teach in American Combato (Jen•Do•Tao)TM is that, when confronting an adversary, three general areas be regarded at once as proper ones for vicious attack:

- The “BAND” — Which we have designated that area of the head encompassing the TEMPLES, the EYES, and the BRIDGE OF THE NOSE.
- The “LINE” — Which is the precise centerline of the human body, entailing — from top to bottom — the skull, the bridge of nose, the nose, the philtrum, the mouth and jaw, the underside of the jaw, the throat, the base of throat (jugular notch), the sternum, the solar plexus, the abdominal area, the hypogastrium, the bladder, the pubic bones, and the testicles.
- The “TRIANGLE” — Which is formed by the knees and the testicles (which are two of the primary targets for kicking. NOTE: Dropping simple line down from each knee, gives us the shinbones, insteps, and toes — all fragile bones, readily susceptible to breakage and to immediately resulting in a crippling effect in any adversary.

Even in the dark where all that is visible is the basic “form” of an attacking enemy, one can discern — and GO AFTER! — the band, the line, and/or the triangle.

Fuel for thought. We discovered this back in the early 1970’s and have been teaching it to our students as part of the white belt curriculum. We pass it along for your benefit in training for personal defense.

Yes — there are “other” vital target areas. The sides of the throat and neck (vegas nerves, and carotid arteries), the ears, the mastoid process, brain stem, spine, kidneys, liver, spleen, floating ribs, and straight ribs. Our purpose here is to provide an IMMEDIATE ASSESSMENT CAPABILITY to the self-defense student, so that in a confrontational crisis he can readily lash out — in the most instantly practical, natural manner, and to the most obvious, readily identifiable area that is presented by his attacker’s approach — immediately.

When some other specific situation offers one or another other target area that may be assaulted to good effect, GO FOR IT!

Postscripts:—

1) Please do not forget that there is more to be learned by training to attack an enemy’s vital points than mere offense. For practical defensive purposes, remember that you are not constructed of “cut glass”. You are tough. All people are, under great stress and in combat conditions. You must expect that in any engagement you will be injured. Just protect your vital target areas. Get to the enemy’s target areas and destroy them, before he gets to yours! But don’t expect “not to get hurt”. It just isn’t realistic,

dear reader. (Another reason, by the way, why sane, civilized, rational human beings avoid physical violence, whenever they are able to do so!).

2) That which applies to hands and feet also applies to weapons. Thus, if you are fortunate enough to have anything at hand with which to assist your self-defense, use it without hesitation against those same vital target areas that are employed in unarmed combat.

3) “Vital points” does not mean “magic spots”. Delicate and immensely fragile anatomical weak points that they are, the body’s vital points **MUST BE ATTACKED WITH TOTAL FORCE, VIOLENCE, FEROCITY, AND FOLLOWUP**. Remember: You are only justified in raising a hand against another person when you are forced to do so for lawful, morally defensible **SELF-PROTECTION**, or in order to defend another innocent person. Under such conditions we may assume that you will be up against a dangerous, powerful, determined (and most likely armed) enemy (perhaps numerous enemies), and there will be no second chance, no round two, no opportunity to make up for a “too passive” response! Thus, when the wire is tripped you must go 100%-plus! Use every ounce of your speed, strength, mental concentration, fighting spirit, resolve, and commitment to destroy. Yes, it is always regrettable when an unavoidable situation compels such action; but that’s what a self-defense emergency is.

Appreciate A Good Teacher

FOR commercial reasons just about all of us who love the combat arts and whose life centers about the study of, research into, and practice of skills of war, must modify considerably the manner in which we teach most of those who come to us for training. Only a very few would be willing to

follow the “best” approach to training, since only a very few wish to become truly expert and take the subject as seriously as we do. Okay. So we who make our living in this field endeavor to accommodate the modern student whose objective is “only to learn basic self-defense”.

Still, we must insist that all students recognize certain realities and adjust to them, if in fact they are after a justifiable level of self-confidence and practical skill.

If you wish to be able to defend yourself then you need to “make haste in learning slowly” (to paraphrase the late, great physical trainer, Bob Hoffman) and focus upon mastering the basics and the fundamental principles of combat.

The following story comes to mind. It is one of those “classical/traditional” martial arts tales . . . which we were told eons ago at a school in NYC’s Chinatown, but which we feel bears relevance here:

There once was a young man in China who wished to learn ch’uan fa (“kung fu”). He searched for a famous teacher and, when he found him, became the teacher’s student. After the usual months of “proving” his sincerity (ie of serving essentially as a servant, cook, and bottle washer!) to the master, the young man’s training began.

The master took the boy into a training room and had him stand before a heavy bag that was filled with steel shot. The master explained that the student was to practice smacking and slapping the bag in a specific manner — easily at first — and then, after several hours of doing this each day for a month, with increasing severity, speed, and power — always

taking care to employ the exact method of hitting that the master had shown him.

Dutifully, the young man followed the master's instructions. After three months of daily practice for several hours each session, the young man was smashing the heavy bag with incredible power, and the master had begun to have the young man use a special linement so as to avoid seriously bruising his hands, and to assist conditioning. But the young man was becoming bored.

“Master,” the student said one day before beginning his session, “when am I going to learn some techniques? I have been working at this same drill for months now, every single day.” The master smiled. “You are training well,” he said. “Continue.” And he left the student without further comment.

After another month the student became frustrated and disgusted. After again asking the master when he was going to learn more, and receiving the same reply, the young man told the master that he was going to quit training. The master simply nodded. The student left the master's home and returned to his own.

One day while out walking, a large, powerful bully from a nearby village stopped the young man. Nearly a foot taller and perhaps 50 pounds heavier than the young man, the bully — confident of his superiority — demanded money from the young man. Meekly, the young man complied and gave the troublemaker all of the money he had on him.

“I don’t like your face!” the bully blustered. “I think I’ll have some fun with you, before I leave here,” he said. The bully then grabbed hold of the young man’s jacket in obvious preparation to hit him with his opposite fist. In the very instant that the bully seized the young man’s jacket, the young man reflexively whipped a lightning-fast blow to the bully’s head, knocking him unconscious, instantly. He had struck the bully with ease — in the identical manner that his master had him striking the bag.

The next day the young man, humbled by the experience — and the lesson that the encounter had taught him — returned to the teacher’s home. He bowed deeply and asked the master if he would forgive his impatience and please accept him back as a student. The teacher smiled and welcomed the young man back.

In the years to come that young man would become the master’s successor.

We hope we’ve made a point here! We almost never rely upon classicism and tradition to do so — but this has been an exception.

If you have a teacher who insists that you practice more, and that you wait before he teaches you additional skills, do not be too quick to leave his school for another. You just might be receiving the kind of training that produces real ability. Practical combat and defense techniques are simple and are easily learned. But they must be acquired as personal skills before

they can be used “for real” — and that means LOTS of practice, repetition, and drill. Be grateful if you are fortunate enough to have a teacher who insists upon your recognizing that fact, and training accordingly.

Destroying The Opponent’s Balance

“KUZUSHI” is the term used in ju-jutsu and judo for that aspect of the art that entails the skillful breaking of the opponent’s balance by directing his body’s weight toward one of the eight points of unbalance. This action — of breaking the adversary’s balance — is prerequisite to throwing him. We also insist that it must accompany the application of all control or arresting type grips that are used by police officers, but not all instructors agree with us.

In serious close combat it is extremely unlikely that anyone save a highly experienced and expert judo/ju-jutsu practitioner could effect the unbalancing of a determined adversary through the employment of such actions as are invariably used in judo, and that are (rather amazingly) also often advocated in ju-jutsu, too. “Finesse” is really applied wishful thinking, when attempted in anything goes combat! It is one thing to take hold of the judogi of one’s judo opponent and then attempt to maneuver him into an off balance position by tugs, yanks, and deft body movements to and fro during randori; it becomes a considerably more challenging task to achieve such off-balancing when the opponent is a vicious, fast-moving streetfighter, mugger, military opponent, or other determined enemy who lashes out ferociously the very second you close in and attempt to seize his garment.

Still — it is certainly true that off-balancing one’s foe is a highly desirable action to take, and that when such can be achieved in a hand-to-hand encounter, the off-balanced party has lost virtually all of his effectiveness, and even if his adversary is half the size of the one whom he has off-balanced, defeating his larger, stronger enemy becomes a rather easy task, thereafter.

So how does one go about applying what we might call “combatiively effective” kuzushi?

The answer is, of course, by HITTING the enemy correctly . . . and instead of relying upon finesse and sport-oriented maneuverings, utilizing fierce, powerful, hard-driving blows that cause the enemy to stumble, falter, and become an easy target for the followup barrage that will conclude the encounter and end hostilities.

We can certainly use some of the knowledge that ju-jutsu and judo gives us about where, precisely, a man is most vulnerable to impact force, in order to apply our unarmed combat to greatest advantage.

Imagine someone standing immediately before you. Draw an imaginary straight line connecting this individual’s feet. Now, intersect that imaginary line with another line, drawn precisely through the center of the first line, and pointing directly ahead of the individual at the front end, and directly to the rear of the individual at the rear end. By driving a powerful attack directly through the path created by that intersecting second line, the individual’s balance will be most efficiently upset. Force directed straight into the center of the enemy’s body and straight back (or straight forward, if you were pulling him, for instance) will do the best job of

unbalancing him. In contest judo and even sometimes in ju-jutsu, this “force directed straight into” and back, or pulling the adversary straight forward, is applied with a shove (backward) or with a pull (forward). In combat, however, we almost invariably HIT.

Note:— For readers who may not have any experience with judo or ju-jutsu, try the following experiment with a friend: Have him stand in front of you, feet a comfortable distance apart. Take hold of his shirt or jacket in front and pull him forward, directly toward the point between his two feet. However he may move his feet to adjust his balance, by continuing to maintain a pull in the direction between his feet and forward, you will keep him off balance!

So how do we hit our adversary to destroy his balance?

Clearly we would want to drive straight into him with our initial blow, driving him straight back. But in serious combat such an ideal delivery is not always feasible. So let’s draw on some principles of anatomy, and sound dirty tactics!

There is a rule in gymnastics that “the body follows the head”. In other words if you wish to do a forward somersault your head inclines forward — if a backward somersault, it inclines backward. This principle is at work in mastering ukemi (breakfalling), too. One of the best ways to initiate an off-balancing action in your enemy is to smash him solidly in the face, head, or neck area. Anywhere from the base of the neck up. This will offset his physical stability by sending him in the direction of the blow’s impact. Another way to get your man off balance is to kick him

powerfully in the knee, shinbone, or testicles. Followup by crashing into him with relentless followup blows, which should rather easily deck him.

It is generally (although not always) a good idea to avoid launching your initial blow into any area of the enemy's torso. His body is protected not merely by greater muscle mass in this area, but also often by clothing and by the position of his arms, which naturally guard him. **HOWEVER!** — Should your opponent be open to a fast straight punch into his sternum, or to an uppercut into his solar plexus, go for it! Such a blow brings a man doubling forward, and if a vertical handaxe smash to his brainstem is applied smartly as he folds, he'll go sailing to the ground like a sack of potatoes! Or — simply seizing the back of his neck when he doubles over and driving him down to the ground with your bodyweight behind your downward pressing movement, can also bring him to the deck.

Nearly every single one of the attack combinations that are taught in American Combato involve a powerful, surprise attack with great momentum behind it to the enemy's neck/throat/facial area or to some vulnerable part of his lower extremities. This bypasses winter clothing, muscle mass, and any size and weight advantage that the enemy might possess, while naturally assisting in that all important off-balancing tactic that enables us — with fierce and immediate followup — to almost always prevail over the opposition.

Never “hold your ground” and lash out at your enemy with blows. **MOVE IN!** Move in with the same forceful driving energy you would employ to smash down a locked door! As your enemy's mental and physical equilibrium is upset by your initial striking action, he must be driven —

and kept — off balance, while you relentlessly continue your own ferocious attack.

This is a key point in winning in hand-to-hand combat.

Firearm Counteractions

WHEN you consider that semiautomatic and revolving cylinder pistols were not in existence when the arts of karate, ju-jutsu, and so on were flourishing, it should be fairly clear that reliance upon classical/traditional stylists for reliable training in skills to be employed against such weapons might not always be the best way to go. In fact, the finest techniques of countering firearm threats were developed by men like William Fairbairn, Eric Anthony Sykes, Dermot O’Neill, Rex Applegate, Wesley Brown, and Joe Begala. These men had certainly learned a great deal from the Asian ju-jutsu and karate type arts, but what is most important — and significant — is that these men had all been schooled in modern personal weaponry, which included automatics and revolvers. Thus, these men were well able to adopt the principles of the Asian arts (and of Western wrestling and boxing) to the demands of coping with firearm threats. They knew hand-to-hand tactics, and they also knew the way firearms are used, and the capabilities and limitations of firearms in close combat.

There were other excellent Westerners who, like Sven Jorgenson of the Seattle, Washington Police Department in the early 1900’s, knew handguns and shoulder weapons, and were also accomplished ju-jutsu men. Their combined abilities and experiences best enabled them to develop truly practical and workable counterweapon actions against firearms. And unarmed combat coaches like Isadore (“Izzy”) Cantor of the

NYPD, his protégé Paul Weston, and that terrific boxer/unarmed defense expert John Martone all formulated and taught workable, realistic measures of counterforce which could be used reliably when a man found himself staring down the barrel of a pistol.

We ourselves learned the Fairbairn, Applegate, O'Neill, Nelson, and other systems, and went on to add a few touches of our own — having experience with firearms as well as with other modern hand-held weapons, as well as unarmed combat. Back in the late 60's and early 70's we worked with NYPD and other police officers, teaching them what was then (rather inaccurately) called "disarming". We used the officers' own revolvers (back then they all carried issue Smith & Wesson or Colt .38 Specials). We had cotton wads loaded into shell cases and WOW! there was no room for doubt that a technique either worked or didn't when that terrible flame blasted out of the weapon's barrel! No protective gear was used or worn — nothing unrealistic — save safety goggles for eye protection.

Our personal knowledge of firearms contributed to our ability to employ methods of close range defense against them. We drew more from Fairbairn and Applegate than we ever did from our ju-jitsu and karate training in working against handguns (and shoulder weapons).

Here is some hard-won knowledge (not "theory" but KNOWLEDGE) regarding firearms counteractions that we pass on for the enlightenment of any who wish to improve their chances of surviving an armed threat situation.

1. It must be recognized that any threat with any firearm — even with what may appear to be a “toy” firearm or a replica, etc. and not a real weapon — must be regarded as a deadly threat. There are poor quality handguns that may look like toys or fakes, and there have been instances when toy guns have been modified so that they may be capable of firing a live round. Also, remember: If someone intends you to believe that he is lethally armed that is sufficient to demonstrate that you very likely are in some form of deadly danger. The individual who levels a realistic looking pellet pistol or a water pistol at you may also be armed with a knife, or he may be insane and willing to try to kill you with his bare hands, if worse comes to worse. You cannot afford to take any intended weapon threat as either a bluff or a false alarm! (Obviously, the same applies to edged weapons, etc.). **EVERY THREAT IS A LETHAL ONE, IF YOU ARE CONFRONTING WHAT YOUR ATTACKER INTENDS YOU TO BELIEVE IS A DEADLY WEAPON!**

2. This follows from #1, above: If you give up your wallet, briefcase, car keys, etc. because you are convinced that the armed criminal is after your property and nothing more, that is often a wise decision; but never allow an armed thug to tie you up, prone you out, force you to your knees, handcuff you (yeah, hah, hah — you know damn well we are not talking about a cop “handcuffing” you now!), throw you in the trunk of a car, or take you away from the primary scene of the confrontation. You **MUST** resist if there is any indication that the gunman intends to take more than property (and there is most definitely a strong indication of this if he attempts to impose any controls over you, aside from having you surrender the property he is after. And when or if you undertake to defend yourself or another against a criminal who is armed with a firearm, **YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST USE DEADLY FORCE, AND USE IT WITH**

EVERY OUNCE OF YOUR STRENGTH AND WITH UNBRIDDED COMMITMENT! No “taking the weapon away”. It’s him or it’s you, and that’s that. He must be neutralized **COMPLETELY** and **AT ONCE**.

3. While one always hears that “being within arm’s reach” of a gunman is essential for a successful counteraction this is **NOT** necessarily true. Of far more importance than being within reach of the weapon and the gunman at the moment of initiating the counteraction, is **TAKING THE GUNMAN OFF HIS GUARD**. Distracting him by apparent total compliance to his initial threat and demands and by assuring him that he will not encounter resistance by actually saying: “Please don’t shoot. I’ll do anything you say. Anything!” or “Okay, okay, you’re in charge! Please don’t hurt me! Just tell me what you want and Ill do what you say!” is tactic number one. Clearly, it is desirable to be within reach of the weapon, but there have been instances when individuals have attacked their armed adversaries from quite a distance away and overcame them. We mention this so that in a desperate enough situation when you believe that you will likely be shot, you do not submit, but take fierce action rather than die without resistance (which many victims, sadly, have done).

4. Physical movement must initially be that which misaligns the weapon from its intended target (and, if other innocents are present, from any of them). This action depends upon two moves that need to be practiced so assiduously that you are able to do them automatically and naturally, without thinking: — a) Deftly reposition your body so that it minimizes or eliminates coverage by the weapon’s barrel, and b) Physically seize control of the weapon or of the weapon bearing wrist/arm in a manner that coordinates a displacement of the barrel from alignment with your body. Both these actions must be coordinated gross body moves.

5. At the very moment that misalignment is achieved, deadly force should be directed against the gunman.

The integration of fine points that utilize the above-described procedure comprise the techniques and the methods that we teach in American Combato against handguns and shoulder weapons; but that two-step concept is what dominates all counterweapon actions that we regard as valid against firearm threats. It might interest readers to know that, during his lifetime, noneother than Col. Rex Applegate gave his stamp of approval to both our philosophy of close combat and to the techniques that we painstakingly evolved — to include all counterweapon actions.

Certain final thoughts that should be kept in mind regarding firearm counteraction:

- It is not hopeless when you are threatened by a man with a loaded firearm. Because he has placed himself on the defensive by threatening (rather than by shooting) you, you have the ability to make the first move! Action is always faster than reaction. So, unless the gunman simply shoots you (in which case you'll be shot) or you telegraph the initial and correct counterweapon stroke, and fail to followup with lethal fury, your chances of success are amazingly good! In fact, if you do everything right, the odds are stacked enormously against the gunman!
- All techniques, in order to be effective, must be applicable against all types of firearms. Thus, whether your enemy points a six-inch barreled .357 revolver at you, or uses a tiny Browning .25 automatic, the technique must be totally practical.

- The longer you can interact with a weapon bearing enemy and keep convincing him that you are a helpless, terrified, totally passive and cooperative victim, the better! There is a fine line here, and you must not allow a situation to lead you into a position of greater helplessness. However, so long as you can delay taking action without the relative positions of yourself and the gunman shifting so that you are at a greater action disadvantage, keep on interacting. You want the element of surprise to be completely on your side.
- If you are ever ordered to “get into that car” from a distance away from a stopped vehicle, look at the vehicle and see if there is anyone else present inside. If there is, then, after making the appropriate physical gesture of turning (that convinces the gunman you are cooperating, **TAKE YOUR ACTION IMMEDIATELY, RIGHT THERE, WHERE YOU ARE STANDING!** On the other hand, if the vehicle is unoccupied, walk passively toward it. At the last moment, when the gunman is convinced that he is successfully taking you captive and will be able to drive away with you, **GET HIM!** You want to act at once if there is an accomplice in the vehicle, so that the two criminals are separated and you will not have to confront both at the same time. The driver may, additionally, panic and drive off when he sees you attacking his partner.
- Never, ever, under any conditions or circumstances bluff, threaten, or allow yourself to speak or to behave in a disrespectful, aggressive, resistant manner. This is most especially true if a gunman is nervous and appears to lack total confidence. He may well shoot you if you make him panic! Strive to relax, reassure, and convince the gunman of your helpless, totally passive willingness to do whatever he says.

- While it is, as we have said earlier, not necessarily impossible to defend against a gunman who stands out of reach, it is good tactical wisdom to try — subtly and unobtrusively — to get as close as possible to the gunman in any confrontation, before taking counteraction. How this is done must be taught by skilled professionals, because doing so in a suspicious manner will surely get you shot. We raise this point because we believe that all close combat students and teachers should keep it in mind.
- “Knowing” these principles and “understanding” how counterweapon skills ought to be applied is NOT enough, by any means, to instill solid ability and self-confidence. High repetition practice is mandatory — and it must be the practice of GOOD TECHNIQUES. (Some of the so-called “disarming” techniques that are popularly taught in the martial arts amount to being exercises in how to die quickly at the hands of a gunman.). Typically trained classical/traditional karate, “kung fu”, ju-jutsu, taekwondo, etc. black belt experts are NOT generally sophisticated in modern counterweapon skills. And — obviously — sports and competition oriented individuals are not usually experts in these skills, either. If you do not have access to training under a real professional, then you are advised to practice on your own with a willing partner, and use as your source of technical knowledge, the following books:

KILL OR GET KILLED, by Applegate

ALL-IN FIGHTING/GET TOUGH!, by Fairbairn

SCIENTIFIC SELF-DEFENCE, by Fairbairn

HANDBOOK OF SELF-DEFENSE IN PICTURES AND TEXT, by Martone

- Remember to conduct training in semi-darkness, on all types of ground and in all terrain. Wear normal street attire, and this means that training will from time to time include overcoats, heavy jackets, gloves, etc. Real world!

WELL, that concludes this edition of Sword & Pen. We hope you'll visit us next month and that you'll continue to enjoy and benefit from the material that we present. Please tell as many friends and associates as you can about this FREE Newsletter, so that they might benefit from it, also!

<http://www.americancombato.com>

Train hard and train seriously. Until April . . .

ALL THE BEST,

Prof. Bradley J. Steiner

— E N D —