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# Sword and Pen

Official Newsletter of the International Combat  
Martial Arts Federation (ICMAF) and the  
Academy of Self-Defense

## EDITORIAL

# Integrating Weapons Into a Combat & Self-Defense Curriculum

**T**HAT weapons are part and parcel of the original Eastern and Western martial arts is no revelation. However, today's atmosphere presents two challenges that, for the most part, have either not been met or have been poorly met by those who teach and who practice close combat and self-defense.

While a significant number of those who come to the study of martial arts today do so for self-defense and not in order to partake of a classical/traditional discipline or a competitive sport, the truth is that perhaps only three to five percent of those schools and teachers purporting to teach "self-defense" are truly doing so. For the most part the plethora of

schools in the United States, Canada, and Europe teach antiquated fighting methods; methods that, at the expert level, may be adapted to use in emergencies, but that are not in any sense all-out practical combative arts. The statistically average black belt holder in virtually any of the typical systems being taught today is probably no better able to defend himself for real than would be someone who has been wrestling or boxing for six months or so. The reason why native Asian masters (notably men like Richard Chun, who dispatched a gang of punks single-handedly, and Takayuki Kubota, who established a reputation when he came to Los Angeles in the 60's by helping LAPD officers "pacify" dangerous street louts) fare so well when they are put to the test is: They have put in year upon year upon year of grueling practice for hours EVERY DAY before arriving in this Country. In fact two months of the training that these masters have undergone exceeds what most of the more serious black belts who have been promoted here amounts to, in two years!

A champion boxer or a champion wrestler can also defend himself exceedingly well. But that which a "champion" can do after devoting himself body, mind, and spirit full time to his training says nothing about what most people need — and possess the genetics to do — before they can protect themselves in a real life predicament.

Classical/traditional, no more than sporting/competitive, is NOT the way to go for close combat and self-defense!

Weaponry as taught in the martial arts today bears not the slightest relation to that which the private citizen needs for practical self-defense. And when students of the martial arts become enamored of such implements as the nunchuku, sai, tonfa, bo staff, and samurai sword, etc. they may in fact

become capable performers of traditional weapons skills, but that are not acquiring practically functional weapons abilities for 21st century requirements — in peacetime or in war.

We have spoken with some excellent classical/traditional students and teachers over the years. Their attitude, when and where they see their training as being undertaken for "self-defense" is either: "Oh, I don't bother with that 'traditional' weaponry. I just do the unarmed stuff, which I can use in the street," or "I realize that those traditional weapons are limited, but when you get really good with 'em they're better than nothing!"

We respectfully disagree with those philosophies. And although we respect and appreciate that classical/traditional weaponry — like classical/traditional unarmed combat — can be a most valuable practice for those enthusiastic about such things, we must insist upon its impracticality for actual use, today.

What is practical and effective today? Primarily firearms. Secondarily, weapons such as fighting knives, walking sticks, and combat tomahawks (like the superb La Gana "American Tomahawk"). As a last resort one may use improvised and expedient "weapons-at-hand" (like a letter opener, a pen or pencil, a rolled up magazine, a utility knife, a screwdriver, hammer, a rock, or a chair, etc.). But relying upon a manriki-gusari (length of chain that is weighted at both ends), throwing darts or stars, or any of the myriad other "martial arts weapons" is — for practical, modern use — foolish.

The weapons of today are the weapons that the modern student of close combat and self-defense must acquire and train to use.

Unfortunately, a percentage of those who come to the study of martial arts for self-defense actually do so because they prefer not to use weapons! They "don't like" guns or knives, for example. What these people need is to be trained correctly. The fact is that it doesn't matter what these individuals "like" or "don't like". Weapons are and always have been a reality! The person who believes — and who is encouraged by some commercializer who has no business representing himself as a self-defense teacher, to continue to believe — that unarmed self-defense is sufficient and will enable him to protect himself against weapons that may be employed against him, is dangerously misinformed! He is living in a fool's paradise, and the greatest favor that a real teacher can do such a one is to frankly confront him with the truth. Weapons — real, effective, modern weapons — are not an "option", but are rather a necessity for practical self-defense. And unless weaponry is regarded as being integral to a study of close combat and self-defense, that study is dangerously and seriously incomplete.

The modern adult student of self-defense regards unarmed combat, and armed combat, as his proper concern.

Naturally, weapons must be taught carefully and responsibly. The acquisition of weapons should of course be legal, and we encourage no one to violate any laws. Our point here is merely to emphasize a point that must be understood because it is true. Weapons are integral to martial arts training, or the training is not "martial", at all.

In our System we focus on laying a strong foundation in physical, technical, tactical, and mental training first. (We refuse to teach weapons to anyone, save perhaps an elderly or handicapped person, who does not first acquire unarmed capabilities). This provides some measure of assurance that the individual will be confident and adept enough to keep the use of weapons in their proper place. He will not, in other words, regard them as a crutch, and resort to them when their use is neither necessary nor lawful.

We respectfully suggest that other teachers follow this example. Our advocacy of weapons is always for their lawful and responsible use only when absolutely justifiable and necessary in legitimate self-defense.

One final thought: Of great importance in modern close combat and self-defense training is improvised weapons — or "expedient" weapons, or "weapons-at-hand". While the modern handgun, shotgun, fighting knife, and walking stick are appropriately taught as formally manufactured practical weapons, no student should miss the acquisition of knowledge and skill in the use of everyday objects and tools that are at hand, as weapons: eating utensils, pens, pencils, items of furniture, even such things as gravel, rocks, branches, and grooming aids, etc.! The only limit here is imagination and will. (Note:— While so-called "martial artists" do not appear to appreciate the fact, many of their "traditional weapons" were incorporated into the martial arts because they were conveniently improvisable at the time. Nunchucks, tonfa, long bo, etc. are ALL archaic "weapons-at-hand" that were incorporated into classical Okinawan karate because that was all that the unarmed peasants could speedily improvise and employ with their unarmed [karate, or "te"] skills! It is hilarious to hear some hallucinating moron in 2009 who — topknot and all —

fancying himself a "true martial artist", espouses these "traditional" improvised weapons, yet who disdains the idea of a modern student learning some of the improvised weapon skills that, for instance, we teach to our pupils!).

We are realists in teaching self-defense. So should you be in learning self-defense.

Bradley J. Steiner

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## **Workplace/Public Place Violence**

LAST month another nut massacred a group of innocent people, for no apparent reason. The incident occurred in Binghamton, New York, and doubtless our readers are familiar with the story.

One of our Black Belts suggested that we discuss this problem of workplace murder and mayhem, and that if possible we offer some suggestions on how people might prepare themselves just in case it ever does happen to them. It would seem, from the news reports of late, that it is happening to someone, somewhere — all of the time.

There are no "nice" ways to handle a would-be murderer, and so we shall not insult the intelligence of our esteemed readership by suggesting any. Instead, let us be straightforward and clear:

First, no one should overlook the fact that it could happen to him. Any workplace or public place is the possible site of explosive violence by some lunatic.

The obvious "best" reaction to the appearance of an armed madman who is apparently intending to unleash lethal force is immediate armed response. Shoot him! Thus, we advocate when and where it is possible to do so legally: Have a loaded firearm available to you, with which you are proficient, at all times. (Of course this sounds "outrageous" to those who have been brainwashed into believing that private citizens ought not be armed. That is most unfortunate).

Most likely, one will not have access to a firearm when and if a deadly threat manifests unexpectedly in the workplace or elsewhere. Things are still not hopeless, but it must be emphasized that without a loaded gun that one is able to handle competently, it becomes a significantly greater challenge to handle a crisis in which one is threatened by armed violence. Unarmed, insofar as firearms are concerned, your initial reaction to the awareness of a would-be killer's presence must be to **ATTACK HIM, AND TO ATTACK HIM WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!** The killer's initial approach will likely consist of his appearance on the scene or his suddenly arising and making some kind of announcement or insane statement that momentarily astonishes all who are present, as he physically moves to produce the weapon with which he intends to carry out his plan. It is at that moment when some piece of furniture should be smashed into him or thrown at him, and when he should be pounced upon with force-to-kill. If there is nothing at hand, drive into him physically and attack his throat or his eyes. Plainly put: This is the moment of truth. It is now that every ounce of your strength, every measure of your fighting

spirit, and every nuance of physical combative skill that you possess must be mercilessly brought to bear in order to save not only your life, but the lives of any other innocents who may be present. **USE DEADLY FORCE.** The threat is clearly lethal, and there is no time to delay or to bother with forbearance and restraint.

Get the madman. Render him unconscious and helpless. Do not stop until he cannot move! Don't worry, right now, about the weapon on his person. If you've smashed him down and battered him into unconsciousness, it doesn't matter which pocket, or where upon his person he may be concealing the gun with which he intended to commit murder. He can be disarmed once he has been neutralized.

If the madman already has his firearm in his hand then the situation is worse — but it is still not hopeless. He still must be attacked.

Countering the lunatic when there are many people present is somewhat easier than if you are the sole target of his rage. Act, if possible, when the weapon is directed away from you and, if you can do so, while he is speaking. Follow the same instructions outlined above, if possible striking his weapon bearing hand downward with some heavy object (or, if necessary, with a powerful handaxe chop) before going at the nut, himself. (Question: "Isn't this risky?" Answer: "Of course it is, fool! But it's more risky to simply allow yourself and anyone else present to be passively shot dead! This is the real world, bubba! There is no more any 'guaranteed way' to handle a crisis such as this than there is a way to go to war with any sort of 'guarantee' that there'll be no casualties on your side!").



If you are directly in the gunman's sites, so to speak, and he is clearly intending to fire, and he does not move the weapon so that you are, for a moment, out of alignment, then you'll simply need to take a chance and attack him. You've always got at 50/50 chance of successfully saving your life when you resist. There is a 100% certainty, however, that if you do not resist, you will simply die.

Dodge without warning out out the weapon's path and move in at the lunatic as fast as you possibly can. Use deadly force on him, forthwith. Remember: It's kill or be killed, plain and simple, and HE caused the situation.

When and if a gunman is within reach at the time he issues his threat, take him down at once. A powerful blow to the throat, a jab into the eyes, or a knee breaking kick, following by a good stomping when he hits the floor should accomplish what needs to be done. If there is a weapon in the madman's hand at the time he issues his threat, then employ proper counter-weapon actions. These should be successful if done without warning and if undertaken with all-out force, speed, and no restraint.

No doubt our advice will be resented by many and discredited "publicly" by some who hold jobs as cops (but who, in our position, have no business being law enforcement officers), and who know that we are spot on in what we say. Readers must take responsibility for their own thoughts and actions, and each person must decide for him or herself what makes the most sense when deciding how to handle life-threatening crises. We take no responsibility for anyone's use or misuse of that which we espouse. You have a mind; you decide what makes sense to you. Then, take full responsibility for whatever you choose to do.

If one will study the outcome of such incidents that have occurred over the decades in which this sort of atrocious violence was visited upon innocents by armed crackpots (in San Ysidro, California or in Stockton, going back some, right on to the Canadian incident a few years back, when a lunatic massacred the female engineering students in a classroom, after dividing the students into two groups, and then mowing down the females, etc., to Killeen, Texas, to Columbine, and on and on) one will understand that surrender and passivity and ducking under desks just will not cut it. We, as a professional, HAVE studied these incidents — and dozens more — and the solution is for the populace to get tough, and to be prepared to crush these murdering nutjobs whenever and wherever they make their appearance.

There you have our input, for whatever it may be worth. We'll conclude with some obvious suggestions:

- Try always to secure a workplace, permitting access only to authorized employees and expected visitors
- Report any threats, in person or by phone, to the police, and if threatened, prepare, "just in case"
- If you are a supervisor or executive learn how to tactfully and decently speak to and manage people. The phenomenon of "going postal" did not receive such a label because of employees' responses to the conspicuously excellent management style of supervisors in the various post offices where and when some loosely wrapped carriers or others finally snapped

and went ballistic. Some people have a very, very low tolerance for sarcasm, disrespect, and verbal abuse or humiliation

- If you are an employee, be respectful and tactful with your coworkers. Same reasons as above
- If anyone with whom you work shows signs of violent resentment toward anyone and verbally discusses using violence against others, report it
- Once again: Never think that it will never happen to you, or that "it couldn't happen here"

## **First Strike Often Decides The Battle**

SOME very basic facts that every close combat and self-defense student needs to learn:—

- It is folly to "square off" with an adversary in any engagement
- Never should blocking to evading be one's first action choice
- The "first action" in any real world engagement should, ideally, be ferociously destructive — it is this action that enables proper followup attack — and it should be "all out", a 100% drive-to-the-wall with all of one's ferocity, momentum, speed, and bodyweight behind the attack.

There are different ways in which a person who has been targeted for attack may experience his aggressor's onslaught. The troublemaker might initiate the attack with verbal intimidation and threats — harassment — accompanied by relatively low-level, but still physically offensive, actions (ie shoving, pushing, taking hold of the intended victim's clothing, wrist, or arm; or physically "leaning" on him, backing him to a wall, knocking something out of his hand, etc.). Or, the troublemaker might simply block his intended victim's path, proclaiming his intention to do injury to his victim — or "challenging" his intended victim to a fight. Still another approach may be the assumption by the troublemaker of some kind of "fighting posture" or stance, clearly indicating his desire and intention to draw his targeted victim into a fight. This last normally follows some verbal threats or challenges, and/or possibly some form of mild battery (ie a push, for instance). On occasion a troublemaker might commence his attack by focusing on a third person (ie his intended target's wife or girlfriend who is present) and using foul and insulting language directed at this individual, in order to provoke his intended victim. The worst and most dangerous form that an attack may take is that of a surprise action — either executed after a misleadingly nonaggressive approach from the front, or executed from behind.

The specifics regarding the attackers' capabilities, ultimate intentions, possession of weapons or lack of weapons, etc. is not relevant here. Nor should this be any real concern for which any amount of training time is invested, since no one possesses any form of mind-reading power, and it is simply not possible to determine an attacker's intentions or abilities, no matter what form his initial aggression and mode of attack may take. Nor can one "figure out" if some violent type is or is not armed. (One always assumes that one's attacker is armed — if one has been properly trained).

The simple and politically incorrect TRUTH is this: Realistic self-defense training demands that any physical attack be regarded as potentially serious and dangerous, and that no aggressor must be permitted to carry out any onslaught for even a fraction of a second longer than it takes for his would-be victim to realize that it is happening, and to go into ferocious action immediately to neutralize the attack.

One of the greatest follies in martial arts training, insofar as self-defense and hand-to-hand combat is concerned, is the idea that "fighting stances" must be assumed when facing an attacker, and that in fact one's awareness that one's attacker has taken a stance of aggression himself, ought to prompt the defender to respond in kind — instead of driving into his attacker like a wild animal, and devastating him on the spot.

Nor is it rational and effective to allow the attacker a "first blow". Blocking, dodging, evading, deflecting, parrying, etc. all have a necessary but very minor place in the combatant's repertoire. The Big Thing is the **ATTACK!**

Readers have perhaps heard those famous admonitions from the classical/traditional world of the karate arts: "In karate there is no first attack." And, "Karate begins and ends with blocking." Ju-jutsu students, too, are normally taught to wait for the attacker to make the first move — to give him the "first shot", so to speak.

Those admonitions provide prima facie evidence of a great flaw in classical/traditional karate and ju-jutsu (most styles), and they eloquently (although that is not the intended purpose of the statements) indicate one

of the reasons why, in its strict forms, karate and classical ju-jitsu are NOT the most effective or practical paths to the acquisition of reliable skill in close combat.

Real world close combat and self-defense demands that **WHEN YOU ARE ATTACKED, YOU ATTACK YOUR ATTACKER!**

Assuming that the reader understands, appreciates, and accepts that which we have thus far presented, the next question is: "How should I 'attack the attacker' in order to insure the most positive defense, and so as to provide for the greatest degree of assurance that neither I nor anyone whom I must protect are ultimately injured or endangered further?"

Remember that in real combat the first powerful attack very often determines the victor. It may be nice to pretend that there is some sanitized and socially palatable way in which dangerous violence can be "civilly managed", but there is not. In point of fact, violence is uncivilized, dangerous, risky, and the province of the savage — the malicious savage, at that. And the only way to handle it properly if it ever comes to you is to **DOMINATE, OVERWHELM, and DESTROY** — acting **SAVAGELY**, yourself — and to do it **FAST!**

Get that first decisive attack in . . . and then followup like a maniac — relentlessly continuing to pound, hammer, and batter the enemy into helplessness. It isn't pleasant, and no one of the "New Age" or "flowing robe" persuasion is going to accept it. But it is the truth. It works. It has been proven effective. It will work for you. And, if you are ever so unfortunate as to be targeted by some violent predator, this is what you want to rely upon for your salvation!

What kind of "first strike" ought one to employ? What is the best first action for a fellow who has been set upon by a dangerous bully, a gang member, a mugger, or a couple of street scum? What should a woman resort to when she is put in danger by some freak bent upon violating her, kidnapping, or murdering her? The answer is simple — although, once again, socially unpalatable and politically incorrect. It is the kind of thing that the highly commercial "martial arts studios" and the popular media eschew:

- Attack the eyes
- Break the knee
- Smash the throat or neck
- Rip off the ears
- Crush the sternum
- Kick the testicles
- Bite a large chunk out of the face
- Crush, yank, and twist the testicles

Those are examples. They fit a wide variety of circumstances. They depend more on decisiveness and mindset than on any spectacular level of skill.

Such actions in and by themselves should never be relied upon as "single moves" to stop an aggressor. But they are powerful and reliable first moves — and when ferociously done, using the element of surprise and the most intense concentration of all of one's power, speed, and will to destroy, pave the way for what normally will prove to be followup that the attacker is helpless to prevent, and that will leave him where, properly, he ought to be left: lying unconscious or broken apart and in agony, on the ground or sidewalk where he intended to leave his victim!

Good tactics assist good techniques. Distract the adversary through words and gestures. Feigning compliance, fear, cooperation, illness, misunderstanding, and so on — when there is an opportunity to do these things — sets up the enemy beautifully for these moves. Use good tactics. Distract.

Suddenly shout! Throw something in the attacker's face! Stab him in the throat with your umbrella! Turn a table over on him! Hurl a cup of coffee in his face — or use anything that you cannot beat, cut, strangle or stab him with, to toss in his face as you go after him, emitting a blood chilling yell!

Once you realize that you are in imminent danger of grievous bodily injury, or you are convinced that unless you stop the individual threatening you, either you or a loved one — or both of you — will be injured or killed, ATTACK! And keep on attacking once that first blow lands and gives you that precious opening and opportunity to prevail over your enemy!



Avoidance of trouble is always and invariably the best course of action. However, life does not always leave us with the opportunity to utilize the "best" course of action. Sometimes we must opt for the second best. And the second best option when avoiding a dangerous attack is not possible, is to **ATTACK THAT ENEMY FIRST AND KEEP ON ATTACKING HIM UNTIL HE IS UNWILLING TO CONTINUE HIS ONSLAUGHT, AND HE IS RENDERED INCAPABLE OF ENDANGERING YOU FURTHER.** That is self-defense that works.

By getting there "first with the most" you shift the odds in any battle to your side. And in any dangerous emergency where you are called upon to protect yourself or those you love, you want the odds entirely with you, if possible!

## **It's Primarily You — Not Your Weapon Or Technique**

A quality weapon is always an asset to a good fighting man. Providing he possesses competence, an individual combatant will certainly be able to take advantage of a good hardwood stick, a well-balanced fighting knife, a pistol, tomahawk, shotgun, rifle, or what-have-you.

The important fact that too many enthusiasts (most particularly in the firearms field, but in regard to other forms of personal weaponry as well) miss is this: The first and foremost requirement for effectiveness with any weapon is the mindset, technical ability, and tactical savvy of the one using it.

Let's consider one pristine example from early American history that proves our point: James Bowie. The famed frontiersman who, as most who have seen the various movies about the incident know, died at the battle of the Alamo in March of 1836. Bowie is reputed to have killed several Mexican soldiers who attacked him while he lay on his sickbed, using the fabled knife that bore his name. The soldiers were armed with rifles and bayonets. The soldiers were determined, and were fighting fit. They charged in on Bowie, who was quite ill and weakened at the time, and was at greatly reduced efficiency.

That Bowie would succumb to the overwhelming onslaught was inevitable; but that he was able to do what he did do before succumbing remains phenomenal!

Just imagine yourself in a similar situation (no matter how "tough" or "expert" you might fancy yourself). You are sick and you have been disabled by illness, and bedridden for some time. You are lying in your bed. The only weapon you have is a knife. Suddenly a group of soldiers burst in on you and — en masse — attack you while you are in bed. They charge you with bayoneted rifles and move as speedily as soldiers can move when pumped up with the adrenaline of battle and the fierce determination to kill you as speedily as possible.

Think you might find the predicament a rough one to handle?

Speaking for our self: We are an expert with the knife. We have trained in the Fairbairn/Applegate technique, the Biddle/Styers technique, and we have picked up quite a few other nasty tricks and maneuvers over the decades, with fighting blades of all types. We have even created some

excellent techniques that we incorporate into the knifework that we train our black belts in. We suppose that, in a situation analogous to Bowie's we would be 100% helpless, perhaps able — at most! — to merely make some ineffective, token gesture with our knife before being instantly killed by the attacking force!

We're being honest. We have no illusions about our own capabilities or about those of a potentially overwhelming attacking force.

What made James Bowie the force to be reckoned with that he unquestionably was, was the fact that James Bowie — the man, himself — was a fierce, powerful, ruthless, and relentlessly determined and courageous fighter and killer. He was an anomaly, and there is no "training program" that produces a James Bowie. Nor will the finest fighting knife produceable by man enable someone to duplicate what Bowie did. Training can teach students about the mindset and formidability they need, and can guide them to actualizing as much of that mindset and capacity that their personal inherent mental and physical equipment allows them to achieve. But to "be a James Bowie" one must be born that way. And to use a knife the way Bowie was able to employ it, one must be a James Bowie!

Here is the corker: Bowie made his reputation not with the famous knife that he carried with him in the Texas war of independence at the Alamo, but with a KITCHEN KNIFE! Years earlier, in the famous fight at the Vidalia Sandbar, Bowie fought with a large kitchen knife, and killed a man after having been run through the chest by the man's sword cane!

We researched James Bowie years ago. The Daughters of the Alamo, a most helpful and excellent source in San Antonio, provided us with reams of newspaper articles and other materials about Bowie. The Bowie reputation was solidly earned and very well deserved!

Learn this lesson:

In point of fact, and to a certain extent, this concept is applicable to unarmed skills, as well. A ferocious, powerful, murderously determined and highly experienced man with the killer instinct will likely fare better against an attacker in the street, using Kodokan Judo (which is practiced as a sport) than might a dilettante who had trained in a combat system. Good techniques, like good manufactured weapons, depend upon speed, strength, determination, aggressiveness, relentless followup, and a viciously merciless **WILL TO DESTROY** — generated by a competent individual — for success under realistic, real world conditions of battle.

Obviously, a combat rather than a competition method is to be greatly preferred if and when an actual enemy must be dealt with in hand-to-hand battle; however, our point is that the quality of the man using the techniques is no less important than the techniques, themselves, in most instances. This is why, in American Combato (Jen•Do•Tao)<sup>TM</sup> we emphasize the most intensive mental conditioning for combat, coupled with rigorous physical training, and **ENDLESSLY SERIOUS DRILL AND MORE DRILL** in the core components of the most savage close combat known to man. The techniques that we teach are certainly the finest known — but someone who neglects to practice seriously, who trains irregularly, and who refuses to follow a program of serious personal conditioning while hammering away at the acquisition of mindset, will

likely find that he is ill-prepared to handle dangerous aggression from a murderously determined foe — with or without weapons! No system is magical.

We have known some fabulously competent judo, competitive karate, kick boxing, wrestling, boxing, and other "sport-oriented" martial arts people over the decades. Each of these men, we can assure you, would have had little trouble dispatching almost any solitary, unarmed assailant whom they had a moment to perceive coming at them. They could, in short, defend themselves to a high degree. We have also had, during the 45 years that we have been teaching, many dilettantish (or plainly inattentive or lazy or otherwise extremely poor) pupils who, despite the fact that they "showed up and went through the motions" for a while — usually, but not always, for a very short while — would likely never have been able to defend themselves, because despite their having been taught excellent and workable skills, these individuals never did that which is required to learn and to acquire those skills.

This is unfortunate, but it is also the way of things. We hope that by bringing the matter up for discussion we have encouraged at least some of our readers to put some seriously intensive efforts into their own training and self-development as combatants.

Whether you are a student of ours or a student of another teacher and system, remember: **NO WEAPON OR TECHNIQUE WILL WORK UNLESS YOU DO, TO ACQUIRE, INSTILL, AND MAKE THEIR EFFECTIVE USE A PART OF YOU.** In a crisis the technique that you employ will depend upon how well you deliver it, for its effectiveness.

## **Learn To Roll With Training Slumps**

PERSISTENCE is critical for success in close combat/self-defense training. That means you must keep on keeping on — stopping training only for illness or for other unavoidable situations that literally keep you from practicing.

Benefits and results are measured over time; and over the long haul the one who is successful is the one who simply never quits training.

Unfortunately, progress in personal development and technical mastery never comes in steady, rising, endlessly successful increments. Rather, it comes in spurts — progress is made, plateaus and sticking points are reached and overcome, gains occur, then setbacks arise, and so on. At times frustration will be there.

While there are certainly better ways to train, and we do know certain things that inhibit progress (like overtraining) and that should be avoided, the inevitable fact is that no matter how well you train and regardless of how sensibly you approach scheduling, you will encounter training slumps. There will be times when you make no progress at all, when you might even regress, and when your enthusiasm will wane.

What to do? PERSIST!

Such times are to be seen as tests of your resolve, not as indicators of failure or of hopelessness. Those of us who have experienced these things and who have worked through them, know very well that training slumps are only temporary. Those who give up when they hit difficult times in

their training are sad, indeed. They will ultimately fail if they give up, and there is no need to fail; just realize that slumps and setbacks are normal and inevitable, and that by biding your time, perhaps moderating your efforts for a while or changing your training routine, etc., you will pick up your progress again.

This is as true for combatives training as it is for the ancillary training (ie weight training, and other conditioning procedures) that you follow.

You are going to experience "downtime". This is because the complex human organism is actually never the same for very long. The body is in a constant state of change and flux. You can achieve a wonderful peak of skill and ability and strength and fitness . . . but do not expect it to last permanently. This will only make you depressed and it will discourage you. Instead, look forward to those peaks as special rewards for your persistence. And accept the slumps when they come as inevitable, too.

The good news is this: If you train and practice properly you will always retain a large degree of the ability that you enjoyed during your best periods. It might feel as though you've "lost it all" during a slump, but you really haven't. The skills of unarmed close combat are simple and are highly retainable. They are designed and intended for application when the body is not at its best; so don't worry about being able to defend yourself if you are not at your very best when an attack comes! The truth is that if you practice persistently even when training is not going perfectly you will retain at least 80% of your "best", and when that is applied with the adrenaline surge and state of mind that is always attendant real battle, you should have little to worry about.

The same goes for muscle and strength building. Once developed the human body can recover its past "best state of muscle and power" within weeks following a serious slump or layoff from training. Serious trainees have often marveled at this, in fact! It may take two years or more to build yourself to your genetic limit — but if you lay off for a few months, lose your edge, but then return to systematic training, you will almost certainly find that within six to eight weeks you have recovered (possibly even surpassed!) your previous best.

We all go stale occasionally. Boredom is part of the training lifestyle from time to time — and so is discouragement. The trick is not to succumb to these things. PERSIST! Keep on keeping on, and you'll achieve, in the end, that which you sought in the beginning.

## **The Plain Hard Truth**

THE reality of combat and self-defense emergencies is that they pose a serious — even deadly — threat, to all of us.

We have been immersed in the martial arts since we were a young child (about seven or eight years of age, as best we can recall), and we have similarly been devoted to physical training (weight training) since 1963. We know more about how to handle violence than most people know, and we are reasonably confident that we can look after ourself in a difficult or dangerous situation. However, we have no illusions of being "unbeatable", or of possessing the ability to make anyone else "unbeatable" when we train him! We are above all a realist. We never fail to keep in mind that which is the plain hard truth about self-defense, and we endeavor at every class we teach to convey it to those who study with us.



Real combat is chaotic, unpredictable, and poses a challenge to those who strive to prepare for it that is uniquely separate from the challenges that are posed by training in order to excel in competition or in the classical/traditional performance of a formal, Asian martial arts system.

That which can be done in training, assuming that it is practical, stands an excellent chance of working under "real world conditions". However, there is no guarantee.

We see the acceptance of this incontrovertible FACT as being a great potential boost in any trainee's efforts to master combative skills, if he embraces it and never permits himself to forget it. Why? Because it will insure that in any emergency he will be scared, desperate, and ferociously determined not to lose. He will never feel overconfident and he will never underestimate anyone.

Feeling and believing the truth about the potential severity of the predicament in which he finds himself, the practical realist will have no difficulty exploding with 100%-plus ferocity, speed, ruthlessly vicious and destructive actions, and continuing to hammer his adversary relentlessly, until in fact he is safe from further danger from that adversary.

Overconfidence or some ridiculously fostered belief in the "unbeatability" of any particular system or method of which he may be a student, can do more to cause a combat arts pupil to FAIL when he is called upon to defend himself, than is any formidability in his adversary! The individual who recognizes the truth about the inherent dangers to him in an attack by anyone, stands the greatest chance of being able to deal with it.

Train seriously, regularly, systematically, and hard. Work at instilling and fostering the combat mindset and all other relevant psychological and tactical elements that go to preparing you for the real thing. Work to build all round strength and excellent overall fitness and condition — and do not allow yourself to get out of shape. But, having done all of that, never allow yourself to feel or to be convinced by anyone else that no one can take you out, or that you are able to wade into any affray now, and emerge unscathed! You are always (because you are a human being) vulnerable and imperfect. This should encourage your cultivation of excellent security and personal protection habits.

In the real world there is no "toughest kid on the block".

Not only can you expect (indeed MUST expect!) the four critical factors that we teach our students, to be true; you must constantly reinforce this expectation, and train and live with it in mind! Remember:—

- Your attacker must be assumed to be your physical superior in every way
- Your attacker must be assumed to possess a weapon on his person that he is ready and willing to use against you
- Your attacker must be assumed, when he initiates aggression against you to be intending grievous injury and harm — even murder
- Your attacker must be assumed to have one or more individuals to help him — even if you do not see those additional attackers straight away.

And, be honest. You are not able to remain in peak condition all of the time — although you definitely ought to try to do so. Nor are your techniques always optimally sharp (fast, strong, and accurate). And, strive mightily as you will and should, you simply cannot maintain a "perfect" level of situational awareness or readiness-to-explode-with ferocious-violence.

You may be ill (or recovering from an illness) when you are attacked.

You may be with a loved one when attacked — and thus have the incredible burden thrust upon your psyche of being aware that someone you love (perhaps your entire family!) now depends upon you for protection.

You may be attacked by a calculating, clever individual who succeeds in taking you off guard.

You may be in an environment where the last thing in the world you or anyone would expect is a physical attack — and thus, even though you are expert with your skills, you will be caught in "condition white".

You may be at home, in bed, asleep when you are suddenly awakened to the presence of home invaders.

Etcetera.

It is no mean feat to be well prepared (even if being "perfectly" prepared is acknowledged as impossible). This is why the study of such Systems as American Combato (Jen•Do•Tao)<sup>TM</sup> is no "short term course" or "quick

and easy method" that may be acquire in ten easy lessons". Such short-term training as Prof. Bryans and we do offer is offered with the understanding that ongoing, serious practice of that which has been taught, is mandatory.

It is also why we INSIST that practical, realistic, modern weaponry be integral to the long term training program. A genuinely prepared combatant in the 21st century should be able to utilize ANY object at hand to assist his efforts at destroying a foe in lose combat. He also should be able to use a handgun, a fighting knife, a walking stick or baton, the La Gana tomahawk, and a shotgun or a carbine. And, even with all of this, the realist who is properly trained and prepared will understand and appreciate that he can never be "assured" of victory.

We have studied Korean tae kwon-do, Japanese and American forms of ju-jutsu, kenpo-karate, Chinese ch'uan fa, Indian varmannie, police defensive tactics, all of the key WWII Methods, modern weapons, rough-and-tumble ("street") fighting, Western boxing, the Nelson System, the Sigward System, Jakata (Caesar Bujosa's method), and we are an ardent devotee of hard physical training. We are a State licensed hypnotherapist and have received the honor of being entitled to use the letters "FCH" ("Fellow in Clinical Hypnotherapy") after our name, due to our pioneering work in mental conditioning for combat and self-defense, and our pioneering adaptation of the principles of hypnosis in combat arts training and in physical training. Our System — American Combato — is internationally recognized and has been the unacknowledged inspiration of at least a dozen imitators. We believe in our System which has incorporated the cream of a lifetime's study, research, training, experience, and innovation into a single, integrated, logical, cohesive, well balanced,

comprehensive Western Martial Art. BUT ONE THING WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN IS ANY SORT OF "SUPERHUMAN" POSSIBILITIES OR "GUARANTEES" OF VICTORY, OR "INVINCIBILITY"!

Please . . . don't fall for that nonsense, either!

## **Mining Gold From The Art Of Boxing**

NO doubt about it, Western boxing is an immensely underrated combative discipline. While there is no question about the fact that boxing is a sport, there is also no question that a professional boxer is considered to be in possession of deadly weapons (ie his HANDS) because of the incredible power and devastation that his hands can produce. This does not mean that the clenched fists are the most effective natural weapons (they are not). It does not mean that boxing is the "best" martial art (there is no "best" martial art). And it does not mean that a person who wishes to learn how to defend himself — or prevail in a military close combat engagement — should depend upon boxing as his hand-to-hand method (he should not). It does mean, when you analyze the art of Western boxing, how boxers train, the way they utilize their weapons, etc., that there are priceless **PRINCIPLES OF USING THE BODY IN MAN-TO-MAN BATTLE THAT BOXING OFFERS, AND THE HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT STUDENT WILL BENEFIT BY LEARNING THOSE PRINCIPLES, AND THEN APPLYING THEM TO HIS OWN THINKING, TRAINING, AND APPLICATION OF COMBAT SKILLS.**

In a number of ways, Western boxing is superior to the art of karate. Malcolm Harris, a well respected police instructor in England (and a black belt in both judo and karate) opined that without its techniques of kicking,

karate is inferior to Western boxing. We vigorously agree. (Note: Harris' book, *Unarmed Close Combat* — also published as *Lethal Unarmed Combat* — is one of the finer presentations of real world, practical close-in combatives. This book is, unfortunately, out of print. If the reader can locate a copy on line or at a used bookshop, we certainly would recommend its purchase).

We do not have space here to delineate all that Western boxing offers the combat arts pupil, but we would like to mention a few of the most valuable and adaptable principles, and let the reader ponder how he might begin to utilize them with the skills that he is learning in order to make those skills more effective for actual hand-to-hand combat.

No "counterbalancing" when a boxer punches:

The corkscrew punching action, accompanied by a snapping of the opposite arm and hand back, as the punch is delivered, which is typical karate form, is never done by boxers. The truth is that counterbalancing actually serves to negate the true delivered force of the blow, not to mention drastically delays action for the second blow.

Punching is a secondary kind of hand strike in close combat. But if the combative arts pupil will emulate the manner in which the boxer delivers his punch, and if he will follow that same method of delivery with the handaxe chop, the chinjab smash, the fingertips thrust/jab, and so on, and if he will cultivate more of a whiplashing delivery of his basic kicks (something that will, to a degree, make his kicks approach the old school la savate method of French footfighting in form) instead of employing the "chamber-and-then-kick-and-retract-to-chamber-then-return-foot-to-floor" style of strict karate type kicking, he will be amazed at how fluidly fast

and more practically versatile his blows become. And they will always be more powerful.

No focusing on minutiae:

Boxers drill incessantly on four basic blows. They realize that they must adapt those blows to an infinite number of situations and occurrences, and that only ongoing practice, practice, and more practice of those simple punches will give them this adaptive capability. If the unarmed combat student would take half a dozen key blows and drill them the way a boxer does, he would be **ASTOUNDED** at how effective he became. But "martial artists" like complexity, acrobatics, detailed step-by-step choreography, and — ahem! — bullshit. Hence, they often end up knowing a thousand techniques and being realistically able to do not a single one under combat conditions!

Simple, basic stance and movement:

Boxers train to stand and to move easily, naturally, in perfect balance, and so as to be able both to withstand punishment and be able to dish it out. So practical and efficient is the basic stance and movement concept of Western boxing that it provided the basis for the United States Marine Corps' original bayonet fighting stance. We adopted boxing's footwork and stance concepts to unarmed combat, and while we do not go to any obvious "fighting position", we do stand in a manner approximating how a boxer positions himself, and our footwork follows the time-honored boxing mandates: 1) Never cross your feet, and 2) Never face a man head-on.

Combat trainees do not use a "boxer's stance" per se. But that which typifies how a boxer stands and moves is all but "required doctrine" for any hand-to-hand combat course.

Boxers train to HIT, not to block:

"Karate begins and ends with blocking". That's an old adage, and those of our readers who are highly experienced in any of the karate disciplines have doubtless heard it. "In ju-jutsu we do not attack, we defend." Another venerable adage. And both these old adages have something in common: They teach the individual who applies them to abandon one of the most important principles of real combat; a principle that — to a Western boxer — is and always has been, self-evident: In order to win in hand-to-hand combat you must attack, and you must keep on attacking!

Many years ago we ran a rather large gym in New York City. Attending that gym were all sorts of athletes, including martial arts people, wrestlers, police officers, and boxers. We taught a series of programs in unarmed self-defense at that gym and we were incessantly interested in garnering whatever information we could from any members who knew anything about any form of barehanded or armed close combat. Among the friendliest and most generously helpful people we ever approached were boxers. These terrific athletes were in many ways like judo men: tough, accomplished, rugged, and without pretensions.

We learned pronto that one CANNOT use karate and/or ju-jutsu type "blocks" and counters against a boxer's punches! Even a rank amateur boxer who has been at training seriously for only six months can whip a series of speedy punches into a black belt's face and body before the black belt can say, "Rising block!" (let alone even begin to apply a block)! We developed our counterattacks against boxing by working with these wonderful fellows, and we remain grateful to every single one of them for what they taught us.



Streetfighters too, just hit. They aren't afraid of your blocking a punch they throw, and they certainly don't waste time waiting to block your blows! They HIT.

Boxers hit expertly. That's how they fight. That's how they win. Don't use boxing in hand-to-hand combat; but do use the boxer's wisdom and train to defeat a dangerous enemy by going after him and attacking. Forget about emphasizing blocks.

Boxers train hard:

You will not walk into a boxing gym and smell burning incense, or see groups of yuppies sitting in the zazen posture. (One of our back belts once visited a dojo where a young lady sat in a corner playing a flute — presumably providing background music with an authentic Japanese "flavor" so that the dojo's clientele felt assured that they were getting their tuition's worth).

Now we understand that people have a perfect right to train as they wish, and to conduct their programs and arrange their facilities as they please. Our only point here is that, despite whatever "charm" or "ambiance" classicism and its trappings may have for the Westerner who dabbles in the Eastern arts of combat, these things are not relevant to the matter of hand-to-hand warfighting. And boxers know this; and boxers' training reflects their knowing this.

Go into any boxing gym and you will smell sweat, see people pounding heavy bags, rope skipping, shadow boxing, sparring, and whipping away at speed bags. They are training and they are training HARD.

Obviously, hand-to-hand combat requires training that is quite different than that of a boxer's. However, few people are willing to train **ON THEIR HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT SKILLS** with the intensity that a boxer trains on what he does. We freely acknowledge that commercial schools

must not demand that everyone follow a program that requires "boxer-like" adherence to a vigorous, demanding training regimen. The dropout rate is high enough as it is from the necessarily rather mild training that is generally demanded in self-defense programs!

Smart students compensate by drilling themselves fanatically away from class, as well as going as all-out as they are able when in class. And good teachers will encourage those students who really want to develop, to **TRAIN HARD.**

**Boxers train as INDIVIDUALS:**

Boxing is perhaps the simplest and least "technique-inundated" martial sport on earth. (It is possible that I am incorrect, and that Japanese sumo wrestling is . . . but since I know little or nothing about sumo, and only observe that it seems to have only a few techniques, I prefer not to make a statement about the Art). Boxers utilize four basic punches, some simple footwork, and a couple of simple strategies — like dodging, slipping, etc., and that's it. Yet, no two boxers train exactly alike, and no two boxers' styles are exactly alike. Boxers train and workout individually, and their coaches invariably work on their (ie the boxers') personal and individual capabilities, talents, and propensities. The combinations that are worked out for the boxer are designed for his unique boxing "style" and capacities. Result: In short order a boxing student can box! And he can apply his boxing, to a limited extent, in unarmed combat — often far better than a lot of "martial artists" with ten times the amount of training behind themselves than the boxers possess.

None of this is said to denigrate the martial arts. Nor do we wish to give the false impression that boxing is viable, across the board, as a "combat system". It isn't. But the sensible and excellent manner in which boxing training cultivates the individual and encourages him to maximize the

manner in which he becomes able to express his renderings of a select few techniques, is a lesson that — hopefully — combatives practitioners will begin to heed. The classical/traditional way of martial arts training (ie there is one right way to "do it", and you've got t do it that way) just does not make sense when preparing for actual hand-to-hand close combat and self-defense.

Boxers really know how to hit live opponents:

Not that all martial arts people are completely lacking in this regard, but many are. It is obviously not feasible to train by hitting human partners using the blows of unarmed combat. Such would be insane. However, combatant trainees should emphasize the loose, cat-quick fluidity of motion that so typifies the boxer when he hits, and in our opinion they would be well advised to train in striking posts, bags, and dummies, by utilizing this style of power transference.

Boxers punch in a manner superior to that of the martial arts men. We recall seeing this actually proven scientifically on a cable TV show titled, if we recall correctly, "Fight Science".

Boxers never loose site of reality:

Not all martial arts people are guilty of living in a kind of misty never-never-land where fantasy either overtakes or mingles with fact, but those of us who go back a ways know for damn sure that a hell of a lot of them do live in their own little world of non-reality.

Boxers do not.

Boxers get pounded hard and knocked unconscious routinely. They cannot afford the luxury of indulging in mysterious, foolish, unrealistic flights of fancy wherein they imagine that they are supermen, or that they are privy

to "secrets", "mysteries", and knowledge that enables them to defeat all comers with ease.

Those who train for self-defense could learn something from boxers on this score.

Boxers train to stay in tough, hard shape — and they always appreciate the role that conditioning plays in being prepared:

A boxer's conditioning is much more combat-specific than that of the classical/traditional martial artist. Boxers emphasize the acquisition of practical, usable, effective bodyweight and strength, and they endlessly work to harden and to toughen themselves. They expect to get hit (and hit hard) and they learn almost to disregard being hit!

The closest that martial arts people come to the boxer's "kind" of conditioning is in the art of Kodokan Judo — in our opinion KING of the competition Asian martial sports. A judo man in his 20's and 30's who is in hard competitive training is a tough, rugged, rock hard individual. Like the boxer, the judo man's techniques are not ideally suited to unarmed combat when the battle is for real — in war, or on the street. However, the judo man and the boxer are physically tough individuals.

Boxing training's type of toughening (ie being hit, pounded, and subjected to endless drills in tempering his natural weapons against targets that condition those weapons) should serve as the combat trainee's model. The combatant will forge his hand edge, heel of hand, fingers, elbows, knees, feet, and arms, and give only perfunctory attention to clenched fist work. But his body needs the same kind of toughening and hardening that the boxer's body needs — and for the same reason. In the street or on the battlefield, the combatant is **GOING TO GET HURT** no matter how good he is. And he must be able to "take it", as well as dish it out.

We actually could go on, but we'll call a halt at this point. We feel that we've gotten our message across to anyone who's paying attention.

Take a long, hard look at what boxing teaches. It has a lot to teach you, if you're a serious student of self-defense and close combat!

Postscript: It has always been our opinion that the finest introduction to self-defense for young boys (say, between the ages of eight and fifteen) is a combination of Kodokan Judo and Western Boxing. Those fabulous arts teach a wealth of things, and do so in a venue that does not instill the kind of "warfighting" attitude and genuinely mayhemic, over-the-top violence that a pure combat curriculum must — if it is to be worth anything — teach and emphasize. Responsible adults can and should train in unlimited, unrestrained, all-out skills for emergency self-defense. Children should not do so, but they do need to be introduced to skills with which they can avoid the encroachments upon themselves that their contemporaries sometimes impose.

<http://www.americancombato.com>

Please do let others know about this FREE monthly Newsletter! We will be back with another in June, and we wish you good training until then!

YOURS IN DEFENSE,

Prof. Bradley J. Steiner

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