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# Sword and

# Pen

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## Editorial

### *The Great Myths Surrounding Knife Defense Skills*

**O**NE of the most commonly encountered hand-held weapons in combative engagements is the *knife*. Whether in one or another “approved” fighting knife configuration, in hunting or utility knife configuration, as a folding knife, or even as a kitchen knife, this much is **absolutely certain**:

*Any knife, in the hands of an attacking human adversary, is a fearsome, lethal weapon against which there can be no sure defense.*

This does not mean that defense against a knife attack is impossible. It is possible. It's just *extremely* risky, and its success depends upon a lot that is either not taught in martial arts schools, generally, or is not even understood — by martial arts teachers or by their students. In fact, the truth is “politically and socially unpalatable”. Thus, those of us who do teach it are frequently criticized as being “too aggressive”, “uncivilized”, and “unnecessarily brutal”, etc. People *want* to believe, among other things, the following great myth about knife defense:

***“IF YOU BECOME EXPERT IN MARTIAL ARTS YOU CAN EASILY  
‘DISARM’ A KNIFE-WIELDING ASSAILANT”.***

The hell you can!

To “dis-arm” literally means to *“take the weapon away from the attacker”*. Anyone specifically training to do **this** particular stunt had better be prepared for a lengthy hospital stay (if he’s lucky) or, more likely, to **die** — should he ever actually attempt to put such training into action, for real.

Yes, there probably have been instances sprinkled throughout history, here and there, where and when some extraordinarily competent (and **lucky!**) combatant *did* in fact disarm an enemy who came at him with a knife, intending to kill him. There are also instances of one-punch stops, of people surviving parachute jumps when the chutes didn’t open, and of individuals walking away from head on vehicle collisions, or being shot in the head and surviving. Such occurrences are *anomalous*. That is, they are **flukes, freak accidents, unusual** happenings. They are not the norm by any means, and it is absurd to base planning, preparation, and expectations regarding *that which is realistically probable* on such incidents. When and where they happen they are properly subjects for *Ripley’s Believe It Or Not!* — they ought **never** be regarded as significant for practical instructional courses and manuals on how to cope with dangerous phenomena!

We personally know of a true case where a man killed an attacking grizzly bear with a hunting knife! We would *not*, however, suggest that anyone think himself prepared to handle a charging grizzly because he wore a knife on his belt.

For all practical purposes, remember this: *You cannot realistically train for and expect to undertake the literal “disarming” of a determined enemy who attacks you with a knife.*

Another great myth that is popularly promoted, and that guides much of the “combat training” that is taught:

***“A TRAINED KNIFE FIGHTER IS TO BE MUCH MORE GREATLY FEARED THAN AN UNTRAINED MAN WHO ATTACKS WITH A KNIFE”.***

We are tempted here to be a little sarcastic and to say: “There is no reason *at all* to fear a ‘*trained knife fighter*’. First, because he will move on you so quickly and well that you’ll likely not even register what is happening. And second, *because there is not one damn thing you could do to defend yourself against him, any-*

*way. You'll simply be killed* So why worry? It's like worrying that an asteroid will land on your head. If it does, it does. *No point in worrying about something you cannot do anything about.*"

We won't say that, however.

Instead, we'll be very objective about this. We'll simply tell you that *anyone* armed with a knife is potentially a killer, if he attacks you, and there is no sense at all in trying to determine the presence or lack of "skill" and "training" that your assailant possesses at the time of an attack! *Every single day some "untrained" nut kills some poor victim, with a knife.* And then there are those who *believe* that they are "skilled knife fighters" because they have been trained in some bizarre and utterly ineffective "system" of nonsense — perhaps personally, or perhaps by DVD. In our opinion much of the knife fighting instruction given in the martial arts field today is not at all worthwhile. But that is an aside.

Trained or untrained — any knife attack is deadly, and it behooves every student of self-defense and every teacher to frankly acknowledge that fact, and to stop at once even suggesting that "untrained knife attackers" need not be feared. *Fear any man who attacks with a knife! He is after your life, and you cannot afford to underestimate him!* (Nor, we would add, should you find yourself confronting someone who fancies himself to have been "trained", and who betrays his lack of proper training by his display of elaborate histrionics — much to your *advantage!* — before moving in to attack, an 'easy opponent to take'. Remember: While it is true that if this individual was truly an expert in good skills you would be dead, it is **not** true that because he employs poor skills you need not concern yourself. *He too is potentially deadly!* Bad guys sometimes have good luck.)

Most of us are familiar with the popular reference to the "hammer" and to the "icepick" grips so often employed by "unskilled" individuals who attack with knives. We would urge certainly that a proper program of instruction will *explain* these grips — but also that it will emphasize that they too are quite lethal, potentially, and are *never* to be underestimated. In point of fact *there are some excellent attacking actions that utilize the "icepick" and the "hammer" grips.*

True enough: The properly trained knife man will *not* generally rely upon either hammer or icepick gripping. Nor will he present himself in a poised "knife fighter's stance" as a warning to the man he intends to attack, prior to moving in.

Still . . . whenever it is immediately apparent that any particular knife wielding assailant *is* doing any of those “unapproved” things, it behooves the defender — ie **YOU** — *not* to breath any premature sighs of relief!           Next myth:

***“IT IS POSSIBLE TO BLOCK OR AVOID THE KNIFE ATTACKER’S MOVE AND THEN GET HIM UNDER CONTROL, VIA AN ARM OR WRISTLOCK USUALLY ACCOMPANIED BY THROWING HIM TO THE GROUND, AND THEN FORCING HIM INTO SUBMISSION”***

Again, there is always the remote possibility that here and there throughout the world’s history of hand-to-hand combative engagements, this sort of thing *may* have been successfully done. However, it would be the height of folly to attempt it.

While a knife attacker will normally commit to some deliberate and forceful thrust or slash and thus *theoretically* open himself up for the typical dojo maneuverings that look so spectacular, the fancy dojo moves neglect to take into account that —

a) *Recovery* by the knife attacker when and if his thrust/slash *misses* will be *very* fast, and almost without exception will prevent a secure grip from being taken on his thrusting/slashing wrist or arm. Nor will a conventional “inward”, “outward”, “upward” or “downward” block likely even get there in time to *connect* (let alone actually deflect the thrust or slash effectively).

b) Violent lunatics who attack you with a knife (or quite sane enemy soldiers, for that matter) are, if you haven’t noticed, ***desperately trying to kill you!*** This means that when or if you ever could deflect or seize an offending limb as the thrust/slash was made, **it is a near certainty that the attacker — now even more desperate than he was at the outset! — would, in addition to yanking his knife-holding hand away, *go after you with blows of his other hand, his head, and his feet!*** “Getting this frantically violent and relentlessly attacking *fanatic* under control” is a pious hope . . . it will not become a reality!

c) Since it is your attacker’s intention to kill you, and since he has a *weapon* in addition to his body with which to make the attempt, and since *he is making the first move*, you are a **FOOL** to make any effort short of a ***lethally decisive one***, in order to stop him! The use of “control” holds, pins, submission skills, and

fancy throwing is *ridiculous* in this situation. Absolutely inadequate and foolish.

d) Real world circumstances (ie where the attack occurs, the type of clothing that you or your opponent are wearing, if you have gloves on or perhaps are out of training, etc.) will *dramatically* affect any of the fancy and complex dojo stuff. It behooves you to assume the *worst* when training — not to think that everything will go according to ideal planning and rehearsals, when a knife attack occurs.

Forget all about most of what you see, hear, read, are taught or are told about “knife defense”! It will only get you *killed* if you try to employ it in a real emergency.

“Then what does work?” you very well may be asking at this point. A very good question.

After dispensing with mythology we turn to the *truth*. Here it is:—

The core and basic rule in *any* situation where a knife is being employed against you (to threaten and intimidate, to rob, to facilitate a kidnap, rape, or holdup, or to stab/slash/cut/kill you, outright) is .....

1. Knock aside, dodge, deflect, parry,  
or somehow AVOID the initial wounding  
action that the weapon presents,

— and then —

2. Use DEADLY FORCE WITHOUT HESITATION  
to stop the knife-bearing foe.

Point number one will mean, realistically applied, that you *save your body's “kill zone”*; it does *not* mean that you can, or that you ought to hope to be able to, “avoid any injury at all”. The face, neck, throat, abdominal area, and chest cavity are the primary targets for which a killer will go with a blade. Train in basic skills that **protect those areas** while you employ step one. Does that mean you'll likely be stabbed or cut elsewhere? YES.

Immediately after applying step one, *go after that armed enemy with every ounce*

**of strength, fury, determination, and deadly action of which you are capable.**  
**And for heaven's sake do not stop attacking him until he is UNCONSCIOUS.**  
If your counterattack against an armed, would-be murderer results in his death, then so be it. It is so important that an armed, murderous attacker be stopped that it quite literally does not matter if you kill him in the process of stopping him. **That is why you would be justified in shooting a knife-wielding attacker who came at you, if you had a firearm. That is why a law enforcement officer will never be charged for wrongful use of deadly force if he shoots down a person who attacks him with a knife.**

Unpleasant stuff, eh? *Sure it is.* It's also exactly what you and every student of unarmed self-defense and hand-to-hand combat need to be told, to accept, and to ***adjust your training to.***

One final point: It should be obvious that the sort of advice given by Fairbairn and Applegate during WWII remains as valid and viable as it was then — ie ***Use a chair if one is handy! Use anything to throw at or to strike an armed enemy.***

***You use your bare hands only when your bare hands are all that you have to use.***

The knife is a commonly carried **deadly** weapon. The dangerous myths that influence how so many train to “defend” against knife attack should be understood *as* myths, and then realistic, effective methods should be employed in their place.

## **BJS**

### **YOU NEED REGULAR CLASS DRILL!**

**ONE of the great** martial arts entrepreneurial geniuses is Al Tracy. Al is a legitimate transmission belt for the original *kenpo-karate* of the late Prof. William Kwai Sun Chow. He is a totally dedicated teacher and businessman, and if you're desirous of studying the classical-traditional *kenpo-karate* we recommend either Al Tracy or one of his dedicated, advanced black belts. Al was, like our late friend John McSweeney, one of Ed Parker's original students and earliest black belts.



There is probably no one in the world who understands the *business* of the martial arts better than Al Tracy. One of the things that Al has pointed out frequently is that most enrolled students in his *kenpo-karate* studios will, shortly after enrolling, decide that they needn't go to the group classes that are taught, but that their benefit will come exclusively from their *private lessons*.

Now we teach private lessons, too. We do not teach *kenpo-karate* (although certain elements of that Art have influenced the development of our own System), and while that which we do teach differs markedly from *kenpo-karate* — as it differs from all classical-traditional systems — the *business* end of teaching (regardless of what type of training is being given) is always very similar.

Like Al Tracy, we believe in giving every student his full money's worth. Al is a wonderful, ethical, devoted teacher, and no one who goes to him for training is ever disappointed!

We regard our students, at the very *least*, as extremely important persons whom we are quite fortunate to have come to us for training. In most cases, those who train and who stay with us become our friends, as well as our students. One point that we differ a bit with Al Tracy in regard to, is what seems to us to be his *acceptance* of the fact that most students will drop out of group classes soon after enrolling, and it is all right if they continue to take their private lessons (which most do). **Yes, a student is infinitely better off taking only private lessons as opposed to dropping out completely; however — and we are adamant about this: IF YOU WANT TO PROGRESS, FULLY DEVELOP, AND TRULY COMMIT COMBAT SKILLS TO MOTOR MEMORY YOU MUST GET IN LOTS OF CLASS DRILL!** (Yes, we know. Some few people have the discipline to train on their own, at home. *Some . . .* but precious few. And the person who has the grit to workout regularly and hard on his own ought to be able to discipline himself to get into Class two or three times a week).

Look — we now speak only for our self and for our view of how practical self-defense skills *must* be learned, if they are to be of any value. It is not enough to “learn how to do a technique”. Since the techniques of close combat are extremely simple one can learn them very quickly. The problem is *becoming able to DO those techniques, under stress, under actual combat conditions, against a determined lunatic who is hell bent on preventing you from doing those techniques, and who is trying mightily to kill you, to boot!*

Every scrap of experience and evidence that we possess about real combat has proven beyond doubt that in any deadly confrontation one **cannot think and reason, and one cannot “figure out” what to do. One goes on “instinct”, on trained reflex** (assuming one has been trained) . . . or one simply flails away wildly or covers up, and if luck happens to be against you, well . . .

Only high repetition drill — endless repetitive practice — relentlessly and seriously done, can implant combat and defense skills in one’s subconscious and in one’s motor memory. And no one gets “high repetition drill” in a private lesson, where the purpose is to either teach something new, or to review skills and carefully correct and perfect the actions that have been learned.

Private lessons *guide you* in learning precisely what you then need to *train hard* in! Sure, there is some physical practice in a private lesson, and naturally a good class workout “teaches” you something. But primarily the role of the **lesson** is to teach, and the role of the **class** is to drill and practice that which has been taught.

You need class drill! Never mind what you think about how quickly and easily you are able to learn that which is being taught. In a realistic combat/defense system that merely proves that you are paying close attention, and that you have the mind of a ten year old child. *You are wallowing in a damn fool’s paradise if you really think that you’re not missing enormously valuable training when you “skip” group classes.*

Self-defense teachers must make a living. If it truly becomes impossible to “reach” a particularly thickheaded fool who thinks he knows more about that which is being taught than the teacher does, then — so long as the fool continues to pay his tuition and behave himself properly when in the training hall — no teacher is going to give him too difficult a time. *Don’t be too quick to slam the teacher for this!* Remember: The teacher is damn well fulfilling his responsibility (just like a physician is) when he tells the student the truth, and when he clearly explains that which it is in the best interest of the student to do. The student’s job is to **LEARN** . . . to drop his egotism, stop sniveling, forget the whining, omit the arrogance, and *set himself seriously to the task of doing precisely that which he is instructed to do.*

We have always had the profoundest respect for the way the United States Marine Corps produces — consistently and without a hitch — hundreds upon hundreds of



well trained, disciplined, highly motivated marines, *each and every year*, at their two Recruit Training Depots in San Diego and at Parris Island, South Carolina. We have often remarked that the fabled **marine D.I.** is one of the few government employees who *really* gives the taxpayer his money's worth! It is incredible how those tough, intelligent, utterly devoted professionals take sloppy little groups of over-pampered, snotty, out of shape, imbecilic *jackasses* and — within a period of about three months — achieve the miracle of turning those jackasses into well-trained, absolutely dependable, fit, top-of-the-line “basic marines”.

One of the reasons why the task can be accomplished, of course, is that the only “voluntary” thing about the process is the recruit's decision to enlist! Thereafter, he does what he is told to do — and he does it double-time! When you have (what appears to the young recruits during their boot camp training) the power of life and death over your charges — which they *believe* that **D.I.** has! — and when you have total (really **TOTAL**) authority over them “for the duration”, you can work wonders. Rightfully, there is no marine who cannot look back on his boot camp training, and his graduation from boot camp, without feeling great pride. *However*, if the training schedule at the time when that recruit had been going through boot camp had been left up to him, he'd have slept late, missed the running sessions, skipped p.t., and probably decided not to chance that formidable “confidence course”.

Martial arts teachers cannot exercise much authority over their students. Students come and go as they wish, and they cut themselves all of the slack that they are able to cut themselves, so as to avoid doing whatever they “prefer not to do”.

Quality development does not come by that route. Look at those few who do *not* shirk the effort of regular, hard class drilling. We have had numerous people comment on our outstanding Black Belts — men such as, of course, Mark Bryans, Greg Anderson, Howard Stoppelman, and others (including some of our Brown Belts, and even a Purple Belt or two!). On numerous occasions beginning students have commented on how marvelously devoted Black belts such as Brian Snoddy are so clear and effective in helping them to train correctly during Class. *Such excellence does not come from taking some private lessons and then concluding that your personal brilliance is such that you hardly “need” those onerous group classes.* Outstanding individuals in the combat arts TRAIN HARD. And that means they attend and participate regularly in group workouts (classes).

This holds true for *any* system that you may be in, by the way. We respect **all of them**, even though we might not agree with their doctrine regarding self-defense and close combat. The point is: **IF YOU THINK HIGHLY ENOUGH OF ANY SCHOOL, TEACHER, OR SYSTEM TO ENROLL FOR TRAINING, THEN FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE *TRAIN!*** Get to Class regularly. You never surpass or outgrow your need for high repetition drill in the fundamentals, and you will never achieve the mastery required to **DO IT** when and if you ever find that a genuine emergency arises, unless you put the incessant, repetitious drill in that is required for the cultivation of expertise.

Listen to some of those who denigrate, criticize, and attempt to slam one or another school or teacher. *You will almost invariably find that the "critic" speaks from the position of a disgruntled failure - from the position of a dropout or of a n'er-do-well, or of a neurotic malcontent who perhaps didn't get things "his way" (and thus left the school that he now hurls insults at).* This may not be true 100% of the time . . . but in our experience it is true **most** of the time.

You might not like all that we say here. However, and we mean this sincerely, we say it only out of a genuine desire to help **YOU**. You need to go to classes regularly and workout hard in the techniques that you are learning. It's the only way.

Speaking as a teacher of some 40 years experience we can tell you that we have, certainly, had our share of failures. ***All of them*** have been individuals who took private lessons (some came to us from other countries) but who did not train in group classes. They failed to "get it", they *thought*, however, that they had *indeed* gotten it! Their lessons were successful **only in teaching them something that, unfortunately, they never came to appreciate, understand, or be able to do because they didn't work at it.** They were not, unfortunately, very dedicated or disciplined people, and thus when on their own they simply didn't train much. We suspect that there isn't a teacher anywhere in the world who cannot relate a similar tale!

Train. Go to classes and train. It's the arduous, simple, unglamorous, but utterly reliable way to acquire solid ability.

**The Makiwara: Still A Fabulous Training Device**

**PROBABLY everyone reading this** knows what a “makiwara” is. Originally the surface that was struck was made of sheaved, bound straw. It was very abrasive and in recent years has been replaced by hard rubber, covered with canvas (or something similar). For the reader’s information we will say here that the idea of using hard rubber instead of the original sheaved straw (or, what was popular with the Koreans, wound *rope*) was suggested in the 1950’s by the late Mas Oyama. It is *not* a yankee innovation!

We have over the years experienced training with traditional (Japanese and Korean) makiwara, with heavy bags, and with dummies (ie the *Fighting Man Dummy* and the *BOBXL*, as well as other types). In our opinion the single finest training aid for the combat student is **still** the makiwara. Lifelike dummies come in a close second.

The makiwara is excellent because it permits full power blows to be delivered and to land with no excessive “give” or swing, such as many dummies and all heavy bags react with when struck. And, of course, it hardens the hands, elbows, and feet. (Note: We are not here concerned with the foolish over conditioning of the fanatic who breaks his knuckles and then “enjoys” over calcified masses where his knuckles once were. We are simply concerned with the hardening of the hands and their toughening *without injuring them*, that makes it possible to strike virtually any surface with no injury to the hand).

We would urge readers who are concerned with developing their natural weapons for self-defense to emphasize striking with the **hand-axe** (“edge-of-the-hand”), with the **heel of the hand**, with the **bottom of the clenched fist**, and with the **elbows**. Anyone who cultivates powerful, decisive, shocking *hits* with those four weapons will not likely have too much of a problem stunning any assailant he encounters if he lands a blow with one of those weapons to a vital spot!

The only drawback to a makiwara is the difficult challenge of finding a place to set one up. Outdoors is great, but not everyone has an outdoor space that he can use for the purpose. Indoors is better (in our opinion), however it is really difficult to construct a solid board with secure supports (usually using angle iron).

We’d urge readers to look into the prospect of building a makiwara. It’s an old, simple, very basic, and *proven* training device. And that’s why it’s as good for training the combatant today as it was hundreds or thousands of years ago. It’s a

no frills way to develop dangerously powerful, solid natural weapon strikes.

### When The Police Were Our Friends

**WHEN** we were a child growing up in New York we were routinely assured that “the police are your friends” and “if you’re ever in trouble, you can go to a policeman, and he will help you”. Sadly, with the passing decades since those truly *best* years (the 1950’s) of America’s history, this advice would no longer necessarily be true. Remember that law enforcement is an honorable, righteous, and noble profession **ONLY** when those *laws* that are being *enforced* are **just** laws. The enforcement of **unjust** laws is the enforcement of *injustice*. There are many today who would agree that the plethora of laws now regulating and monitoring American citizens is not merely immensely excessive, but — worse than that — *they are unjust laws*. The state, may God help us, is intruding upon the basic rights of the private citizen.

Our view has long been this: *“In a free and rational society only that which is ‘MALUM EN SE’ (ie ‘evil in and of itself’) may properly be regarded as MALUM PROHIBITUM (ie ‘unlawful, and therefore evil according to society’s laws’).*

Agree with us or not, we thought that the following statement from our close friend and brother *James R. Jarrett* would be interesting for you to read. Mr. Jarrett is a former U.S. Army Special Forces soldier/Vietnam veteran. He is also a former LAPD Police Officer, and member of that Organization’s prestigious SWAT Team. He is the protégé of Robert J. Koga (the world famous police defensive tactics and baton master), is an internationally recognized authority on counterterrorism, a former university professor, and one of the most knowledgeable masters of small arms — and teaching them — in America. He holds a fifth degree black belt and is an Associate Teacher in our International Combat Martial Arts Federation. (We would like to bring James’ resume to a conclusion at this point, since, while we could go on, we would like to get to *his own words* describing what a **REAL POLICE OFFICER** (albeit a *former* officer) thinks and feels about the sad state of “policing” in our Republic today:

“When I wore the LAPD blue, before it became an experiment in social engineering to make various groups of incompetents feel good about themselves, bad guys feared us and citizens knew they could turn to us

for help. I was right out of combat in Viet Nam and a decorated Special Forces soldier and I was one of the smallest guys in my class at 5'10" and 168 pounds.

"My training officer was Del Grant – a true Blue Knight of the Old School. He had 30+ years on and had turned back sergeant stripes at least twice because he wanted to work patrol. He taught me more about policing in my first week in the cruiser – before he let me drive – than I had learned in 6 months at the finest police academy in the world at that time.

"My first night as his partner started out like this.

'Sonny. You answer the radio, keep the log and pay attention. There are three kinds of people out here you will be dealing with; bad guys, good guys, and good guys having a bad day. You better be smart enough to figure out who you are dealing with and treat them accordingly or you will not be working in MY department. Most folks do not need to go to jail and we try to find out what they did that was right before we start putting cuffs on everybody out here.' I passed that advice along to all of the young rookies I started. And guess what? It works.

"It was a time that was far more physically dangerous to be a police officer than now, but cops did not draw their guns at every encounter or call SWAT everytime somebody ran into a house. We did not have tazers or even radios on our belts. When we left the squad car we were expected to be POLICEMEN – not Police Officers. A subtle but important distinction that is heresy in today's politically correct environment.

"We did not empty high capacity semi-automatic pistols at people for having cell phones in their hand and we certainly had a hit rate far better than today's 20% hit rate at a static target under 20 feet. We were held accountable if we hit an innocent. We knew not just how, but when to shoot. If we were so afraid of everyone or the mere presence of guns in the hands of citizens that we pulled our weapons on citizens without cause, we were divested of our badge. We were not sent to sensitivity training and therapy. Our job description included that we might be injured or killed in the line of duty and our job was to take a bullet before an innocent took one at a time when we did not wear vests. We were not

afraid to close with and go hands on with a suspect all by ourselves without a squad of officers as backup and we did not kick and beat the shit out of folks during an arrest, and God help you if you tried to assault a prisoner in cuffs.

“There were fewer of us and we did a better job AND it was fun and we knew we were the good guys. Robert Koga, my dearest friend, mentor of 40 years, first martial arts instructor and fellow officer taught me about honor as a cop and how to be decent to folks and also how to slam dunk them on the pavement when it was required. The Koga Method is used all over the world but it requires physical as well as judgmental competency and decency as a human being in the discharge of the office of policing. Different time. Better time.”

We feel that James R. Jarrett’s words are well worth pondering deeply. (Obviously, James is, in addition to what we have already mentioned, an accomplished writer). Whether or not his wisdom will, in being shared, be able to affect matters at this far remove we cannot say. But anyone with a rational mind will, we feel, be better off for having read them.

### **Do Not Forget The *Stick* And The *Knife***

**THE handgun is, as far as we are concerned, the ideal or the “ultimate” weapon of individual defense.** It requires a bare minimum of physical strength for it to be properly employed, it offers a reasonably powerful and a (usually) reliable means of bringing virtually any human adversary to a *halt* in mid-attack, and it is convenient to carry. It is “handy”. It is *very* intimidating (especially when its possessor is firing it!) and it is simple to learn and to use.

The powerful modern sidearm (we’d prefer one in .45ACP or .357 caliber) is, hands down, the *preferred* tool of self-protection for the modern man or woman. Gun nuts will nit-pick incessantly over this or that weapon, these or those “modifications”, this or that “cartridge”, which is best —revolver or auto?, ad nauseum. But the truth is that *any* quality handgun of .38 Special, 9MM, .357, .38 Super, or .45ACP that is used with proper skill *will do*. And, often, a “lesser” caliber (like the .380 auto or the .22 rimfire) will serve just fine.

The weapon needs to be **top quality** and in a properly maintained, functional



state. The ammunition must be top quality, **factory manufactured**. And the user of the weapon must be **skilled in its basic combat use — mentally and physically**. Those conditions satisfied, we can cease all debates and nonsense regarding the kinds of issues that those whom one encounters in the gunshops so much enjoy interminably chattering about.

Okay — let's say that the handgun is the top choice as a self-defense weapon. However, that does not mean that there are not other excellent weapons, and that, when a firearm is unavailable or when its use is not in a given instance possible, some other implement of close combat cannot serve admirably. At the top of the list of "other weapons" we place:

- **The fighting knife**

—and—

- **The plain hardwood stick (roughly baton length, to walking stick length)**

We teach and advocate these weapons (as we teach and advocate the handgun), and we recommend that anyone interested in self-defense — *real* self-defense — avail themselves of serious study of *both* these implements. Knowing how to use a stick and a knife in hand-to-hand combat could one day save your life!

Debates rage, as they always tend to do, around the question of "which weapon is superior" for personal defense, the stick *or* the knife? The question is ridiculous and marks the inquisitor as a rank amateur. It is like asking, "Which is better, fruits or vegetables?" Sensible people will appreciate the value of **both**, and will understand that each serves its own unique purpose — possessing as it does, advantages well worth acknowledging and exploiting. And then there is always the fact that, if you happen to have *one* of those two weapons at hand, and not the other, then whether one is "superior" or "inferior" hardly matters! *You use that which is at hand!* Both fruits **and** vegetables have a place in and are an important part of a well-balanced, healthy diet. Both the stick **and** the knife have a place in and are an important part of a well-balanced, effective close combat repertoire!

Learn how to use *both* the stick *and* the knife effectively.

### *The Knife:*

For psychological reasons the knife tends to be a much more *feared* weapon than the stick. Ask most men which they would rather have to confront in an attacker's hands, a knife or a stick, and ninety-five times out of a hundred you'll hear them tell you that they'd rather face a stick, any day. Frankly, so would *we*.

The knife is a killing tool. One does not employ the knife to "discourage" or to "control" an adversary. These things may be done effectively by an expert using a stick; but the knife stabs and slashes and . . . kills.

For personal defense this psychological advantage is enormous, and so carrying a knife (**legally**, if possible; we do *not* advocate breaking any laws!) gets high marks here. Also, the knife is readily concealable. Even a short stick is not.

In our experience a disadvantage of the knife is the fact that some people are *so* intimidated and repulsed by what a sharp blade can do that *they do not have the stomach to use a knife, even in defense!* We respectfully suggest that anyone reading this who falls into this category work hard at overcoming his aversion to

the weapon, and that he not carry one until he has done so.

Using a knife on a human being is a bloody and sobering experience, make no mistake about it. Psychopaths and other street garbage, however, do not have qualms about stabbing people, and this is the big reason why — if circumstances compelled it — *you* ought not have any qualms about stabbing *them*.

### *The Stick*

A walking stick offers the advantage of always being in the hand (as does a baton, but unless you're a cop, you are not going to take too many strolls with a baton in hand before you get stopped by the boys in blue!). Still, *training* with a baton as a weapon places in the individual's hands the ability to use any stick or stick-like object at hand (towel rack, chair leg, branch, flashlight, etc.) as a terrific weapon in any emergency.

The stick is versatile. With it one may punish, damage, or kill (though *use* of a stick would likely be construed as use of a deadly weapon, and so the student

should restrict use of any stick to life threatening emergencies where and when the use of deadly force would be justified. Thereafter, he should forget all about “punishing” and “damaging” and simply save his or another’s life by using the stick available to him in its most extreme manner).

*Reach* is of course a tremendous advantage that a stick offers.

A walking stick carried by someone who clearly is not in need of it for reasons of any disability carries a **great deal** of intimidation value, save when we are speaking of genuine idiots (and there are some of those out there).

Both the stick and the knife demand a much higher level of skill, physical prowess, conditioning, and aggressive, combat mindset, than the handgun demands, in order to be effective in combat. *Both* weapons must be taught as integral to and never separate from an **unarmed combat** curriculum. (This actually applies to the handgun also, by the way).

Gun bugs, in our experience, tend to be incredibly out of balance when it comes to becoming prepared for real world emergencies. They laugh at knives and sticks (“What do I need *them* for, pardner? I’ve got my shootin’ iron right here on my hip!”) and they disdain unarmed combat training (in our experience because they are incredibly lazy and pretty uneducated in their appreciation of what *actual close combat* truly entails and requires of those who engage in it). In any case, don’t make their mistake. **Train to use the fighting knife and the stick as basic weapons!**

As far as training in the classical-traditional weaponry of the Asian martial arts is concerned, we see absolutely nothing wrong with this if you enjoy it. Just don’t let yourself think of nine foot poles, samurai swords, ninja darts and stars, and nunchucks as viable weapons of modern self-defense. They have serious shortcomings when dealing with home invaders, terrorists, kidnappers, rapists, and gang members. All of *those* creatures carry the kinds of weapons **YOU** too need to learn how to use!

**P.S.** “What about non-lethal weapons . . . sprays, tasers, etc.?”

Answer: ***Stop worrying so much about how badly you might injure a would-be killer. Your concern should be to protect YOU and YOUR LOVED ONES, not him.***

## What Are You Waiting For?

**PROCRASTINATION** has got to be one of the most self-defeating attributes that a human being can evidence. We see it all the time in people who “want to learn how to defend themselves”. In point of actual fact, they do *not* want to learn how to defend themselves — not really. If they did then they would get started and work seriously to acquire the skill. What these people want is, *somehow*, to “be *able* to defend themselves”. “*How is that to come about?*” you might be rational enough to ask. “**Somehow**”. These people *never get started*. They put off their training . . . and put it off, and put it off, and . . . you get the idea.

If being able to defend yourself is important to you, and if the idea of being able to handle a violent emergency in which your life or the life of someone you love may be at risk, then *what the hell are you waiting for?* Perhaps you want to study with us . . . or with Prof. Bryans. But if you live in a part of the country where doing this precludes the possibility of your training with us, *look for the best teacher you can find wherever you are, pick up the few real classics of close combat for personal reference and to supplement what you are taught, and get started now!* It will be too late if you wait until you are attacked.

**CLASSIC MANUAL BACK IN PRINT —**

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**PALADIN Press** has just reprinted our long out-of-print Manual, *THE TACTICAL SKILLS OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT*, which is now available as one of their “Combat Classics” (right up there with Applegate’s and Fairbairn’s works), with a brand new Introduction which we wrote for this edition.

Like many good things, this Manual is not very big. However, it is — historically — the catalyst responsible (along with our many magazine articles and our out-of-print book, *BELOW THE BELT!*) for starting (in the mid-to-late 1970’s) the “all practical/offense-oriented/WWII system based” movement in American/European martial arts circles that is popular today. The reprint is an *exact copy* of the original (and even, to our embarrassment!) contains our original spelling errors! The only thing different about *this* edition is a better paper quality in the finished product, and the addition of our *new* Introduction

The original edition of this little Manual was self-published, sold out *two* printings, and has been unavailable for more than **30 YEARS!**

Originally, this little combat training Manual was sold through *SOLDIER OF FORTUNE MAGAZINE*, and martial arts magazines. It went to many who, subsequently, took its message to heart and began to alter their own training and teaching — later to become known themselves as purveyors of “WWII system” and “practical, offense-based” self-defense. We are delighted to be able to announce the reissuance of this Manual, which we shall be offering directly to those who visit this Site — *with a double BONUS*. If you order from us .....

- 1. We will personally autograph your copy, and**
- 2. We will provide a document with your copy that explains and discusses the historical significance of the Manual in the field of combat martial arts\*.**

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\*In point of fact it is we who *first coined the term* “combat martial arts”, writing in one of the magazines, decades ago.

The cost of the Manual is \$14.00, which covers first class postage, or \$18.00 which covers foreign air mail costs. Send a postal money order (payable in U.S. dollars to **Brad Steiner**) or cash (U.S. currency). Personal checks can take up to a month to clear, and this is an annoyance for both of us. Send orders to:

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We are absolutely certain that you will enjoy adding this piece of close combat/self-defense history to your personal library, and that you will find its

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**Look for *new* publications soon . . . and until next month, train hard and stay alert!**

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