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

EDITORIAL

The Ideal Physical Education Program

“**A** sound mind in a healthy body”; certainly one of the key objectives of a balanced, general education. Subjects such as history, philosophy, music, art, science, and written and spoken expression, etc. are in part the means that are employed to properly educate and insure a sound mind. It is our contention here that the armed and unarmed combative arts, along with their ancillary physical and psychological training, constitute one of the finest paths toward the acquisition of a fully disciplined and educated body.

It is possible that things have changed since we were a student. However, if the so-called “physical education” curriculum that we were subjected to is anything like that which is being foisted upon students today, then the system stinks.

The “physical education” (what a ridiculous designation for it!) that we experienced in school amounted to nothing more than carelessly conducted sports, or (even more carelessly conducted) exercises. The teachers were either indifferent or incompetent (often both), and just like the miserable excuses for those who were licensed to teach the academic subjects, the P.E. teachers simply focused on the few fellows who were natural athletes, and neglected anything resembling an effort to instruct the rest of us in proper physical education.

All is never lost, however; even when the school system wreaks of asininity, neglect, incompetence, and irrelevance. Self-education remains open to all who desire it and who have the self-discipline to work to achieve it. This of course applies in the physical as well as in the intellectual sphere.

We have noticed, with considerable pleasure, that a few of the better institutions of higher education (in which, thankfully, some education actually does take place), like St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, and in Santa Fe New Mexico, now offer serious, ongoing programs in martial arts. A step in the right direction, in our opinion. But not enough. Such schools as St. John’s recognize the value of physical education, and they take it seriously. However, we personally believe that a solid curriculum in no-nonsense combatives — with and without weapons — is the ideal ticket; and we’ll tell you why. We also will say this: Whether you are presently in school or not, and regardless of what foolishness the

schooling of your earlier years subjected you to, in lieu of a sound educational program, there is nothing — save your indolence — standing in the way of your making up for that which the school system failed to provide; intellectually or physically.

Sports and games are recreational. There is nothing wrong with recreation, and certainly we all should enjoy and appreciate the value of recreation in our lives. But education entails and involves a great deal more than recreation. Education is disciplined growth and expansion of the individual's capacities — physically and intellectually.

What follows is a list of ten reasons why we believe strongly that an ongoing program of training in modern combatives is an ideal form of physical education:

1. Learning and practice of the skills involved develops the whole physique and produces balanced cultivation of all desirable physical attributes.

If the practice of the techniques per se does not fully develop a desirable attribute, then working on the ancillary training activities will. Take strength for example. Practice of close combat and self-defense skills does contribute somewhat to an individual's increased strength, but it is weight training (the key supplementary activity for the student of this art) that builds high levels of strength. Other supplementary activities, such as rope skipping or jogging, training in conditioning the natural weapons, etc. rounds out the full developmental benefits of combatives training, when properly taught and undertaken.

2. The ancillary activities that go with modern combatives training are all

valuable and important health, strength, and condition builders in their own right.

3. The proper study of this art teaches a relevant, useful skill. The acquisition of this skill brings with it great benefits, mentally and physically, for the individual's entire life. His intellectual education enables him to form convictions and to establish the values by which the student will live his life. Combatives training (ie physical education) instills the knowledge, skill, and courage that enables the student to stand up for his convictions, and to defend those values, should they ever be threatened.

4. Like any proper educational endeavor, the study of combatives emphasizes the INDIVIDUAL, and not the "group". Unlike pointless competition or merely enjoyable recreation, individual development of close combat and self-defense abilities refines and bolsters the individual as an individual, teaching him to stand alone, if necessary, and to defend himself.

5. Training in combatives is adjustable to the needs, interests, and inherent abilities of anyone, regardless of his possession or lack of athletic acumen. Just as the study of liberal arts is for everyone, regardless of IQ, career path that may be chosen, or natural talents and interests, so combatives training is for — and benefits — everyone who has the opportunity to study the subject properly.

6. While most unpopular today, we nevertheless maintain that the development of MANLY VIRTUES (self-confidence, self-reliance, inner toughness, strength, resolve, and intestinal fortitude, etc.) is highly desirable and all but indispensable in the total education of any man.

There are few vehicles as effective in cultivating the manly virtues as a serious, professionally rendered study of close combat and self-defense.

7. There is a great deal of fascinating history and culture to be studied in the course of learning close combat and self-defense. This is, after all, a MARTIAL ART, and as is the case with the study of any art, there is much more to the endeavor than mere technique.

8. The Art and its ancillary activities may be practiced at home, with or without a partner, with limited or no equipment, and over the individual's entire lifetime.

Obviously, it is desirable to have equipment and facilities set up for training. However, there is always a way to train, practice, and improve oneself, regardless of how little space or equipment is available, once one has had a thorough grounding in the fundamentals. Like the furtherance of intellectual education via reading (which is a lifetime pursuit and requires no special facilities), the furtherance of one's physical education — on one's own anywhere, anyplace — is necessary; and it is easily possible using the knowledge gained in a good course of instruction in close combat and self-defense.

9. The study encourages independence, self-reliance, courage, and resolve — and, just as proper intellectual education enables one to succeed in ANY lifetime pursuit by providing the intellectual skills and tools that are required to think, and to make informed choices, so does this excellent physical education enable one to succeed in ANY undertaking by providing the physical confidence, “guts”, strength, and tenacity that forms and nurtures the requisite character demanded for real world success in anything.

10. The study teaches the student an enormous amount about the human body, about psychology, about the law regarding self-defense, and about the martial virtues of warriors throughout the ages. It cultivates safe and lifesaving habits with modern weapons, and when properly taught instructs the individual in the moral and proper use of FORCE. It produces a fully educated GENTLEMAN WARRIOR.

Whether the reader agrees with us or not, we feel that we've at least raised an interesting point for him to reflect upon. The body is no less important than the mind; and since each requires education in order to live a full, rich, and balanced life, we suggest that serious consideration of what, precisely, physical — no less than intellectual — education ought properly to consist of is important.

Bradley J. Steiner

Proper Protective Distancing

Correct distancing is a matter that is always addressed in the classical/traditional martial arts. Unfortunately, actual practice of this aspect of dealing with an adversary comes — in the classical/traditional approaches — from sparring and from competitive matches; both unrelated to close combat and/or the requirements of actual self-defense encounters. When you train to “square off” with an opponent, to “get set”, to “ready yourself in a stance”, etc., and to anticipate that your adversary will either strike or grapple in a conventional (or at least in a restricted and regulated) manner you are not duplicating the kind of DISTANCING TRAINING that the real world requires, should you need to actually defend yourself.

First of all, forget about “fighting stances”. These are for agreed-upon matches (or mutual combat — neither one of which is related to that which a self-defense or close combat practitioner concerns himself with). In the real world you will either be **AWARE** of an attacker’s approach prior to his onslaught, or you will not be aware. If you aware, go to a ready position and if/when the first indication of aggression manifests, **PREEMPT!** If you are not aware, you’ll simply be reacting via the best counterattacking actions of which you are capable. (There is a third possibility for military and intelligence people: You may be **ATTACKING THE OTHER GUY**. If this is the case, then take him by surprise — if at all possible from behind — and finish the job. Do not walk up in front of him and get into some ridiculous stance!).

In any case, you will advance your development and readiness to deal with real violence from a troublemaker who makes his approach apparent, by applying the following **INVIOLATE RULE**:

Whenever you face anyone who you do not know, personally, off angle yourself (into a “relaxed-ready” position), and maintain a distance from that person that is no closer than **OUTSIDE ARM’S LENGTH**.

What the assumption of that distance does is insure that, when and if this unknown individual initiates an attack, he will need to step forward toward you in order to reach you. This make a genuine “surprise attack” from him (assuming that you are in an **ALERT MENTAL STATE**) virtually impossible. The most skilled individual in the world must still be able to reach you, before he can harm you. And the fact that you have distanced yourself outside the range of his reach insures that his **FORWARD STEP** will telegraph his intention.

Question: “Suppose the individual merely intends to step closer to me, and nothing more? Might I not be making a tragic error of judgment if I attacked him as he moved?”

Answer: Indeed, you would be making a terrible error by attacking a non-aggressive individual. However, doing so is easily avoided, and you ought never have such a problem. Just **STEP BACK** if the step toward you is apparently non aggressive. **REESTABLISH** the outside-arm’s-length distance. Politely say, “Sir, please step back,” if you wish, as you yourself move. That gesture and statement is neither provocative nor offensive, and will do all that is necessary without incurring any possibility of “misapplied aggression”. A person whose intention is not aggression will keep his distance.

By maintaining this out-of-reach distance you will enjoy another advantage, should the individual whom you face decide to attack you. His attack and your preemptive reaction will bring about a **COLLISION EFFECT**, and add whatever weight and momentum your attacker generates toward you, to whatever power and momentum your preemptive action directs toward him.

Violent offenders, generally speaking, will not attempt to attack if they do not feel that their onslaught will be effective, if they feel that they will be hurt, and if they have no assurance that they will be able to get away before the police arrive. Since the impression conveyed by a person who remains steadfastly distanced, alert, and not readily approachable is **NOT** that this person is susceptible to a surprise attack, assuming a proper off-angled ready position and holding to the right distance might discourage some attacks, to begin with. This of course is what we would most hope

for, but we cannot expect it in all cases.

Correct understanding of the principle, and unwavering use of the strategy of employing **PROPER DISTANCING** will go a long way toward assisting you in both avoidance and in being prepared for preemption, should avoidance be impossible.

One final thing: Whenever you are approached by two or more individuals who you do not know personally, **STEP TO THE OUTSIDE OF THE PAIR/GROUP** and assume your relaxed ready position facing the closest person. Keep your distance relative to him, outside arm's reach.

Yelling

We have written a rather extensive article on this subject, which appears on our other site: www.seattlecombatives.com. We would urge you to read it, heed it, and not forget its message. Coming to an understanding of how yelling positively affects a fighting man's effectiveness, and the **CORRECT** — as opposed to the “popularly taught” — relation between yelling and “kiai” should be understood by all serious students of close combat and self-defense.

For right now we wish simply to make the point that a piercing shout can be an enormously effective aid in a self-defense emergency. Like the physical action that it is intended to bolster, augment, and assist in shocking the enemy into a state of momentary bewilderment, the yell that you employ in a confrontation should seem to come out of nowhere.

We have observed “experts” demonstrate defense skills by facing a partner who is playing the role of the attacker, and then shout — as they assume a

fighting stance. Foolish. Not the way to use yells in close combat.

The purpose of yelling is not to **WARN** your enemy, and to **ANNOUNCE** your preparedness to do battle.

Ideally, a bloodcurdling, sharp, explosive yell should coincide with a surprise attack that immediately inflicts serious injury. When a troublemaker, bully, tough guy, or other variant of **PUNK** anticipates “easy pickings” and without warning fingers are plunged into his eyes as he hears a piercing scream (or his leg is broken, or his throat is crushed, or his sternum is punched, etc.) then the overwhelming shock — mental and physical — will almost certainly render him utterly helpless to prevent whatever followup, finishing actions you may wish to employ.

Use yelling that way.

When you preempt, **YELL**. The proper way to yell is by shouting in a loud, barking shriek. A brief shriek. The kind of sudden screaming yell that, accompanied by as grotesque a grimace and facial snarl as you can muster, almost “hits” your enemy’s consciousness like a physical blow. This should be done **AS YOU TAKE HIM BY SURPRISE AND ATTACK WITH WHATEVER ACTION YOU ELECT TO EMPLOY**. The combined physical and mental shock of this dual assault will cause anyone to freeze momentarily. Now get busy with followup. There is more to understand about this matter of shouting in close combat, and so we refer you to www.seattlecombatives.com. What we’ve just given you is an encapsulated lesson in how to do it correctly.

And by the way, this is not synonymous with “kiai”.

Bare Knuckle Boxing And Punching In Hand-To-Hand Combat

Using the clenched fist either as a primary weapon or as a natural weapon with which to attack the facial/head area is **WRONG** for close combat and self-defense. Those who, correctly noting the deficiencies in the sport of Western boxing insofar as self-defense is concerned, have gravitated to the older (rougher and tougher) “bare knuckle boxing”, thinking that this will give them a “boxing system for the street” are misinformed.

The old bare knuckle boxers were tough as nails, and yes, their method of boxing was superior for self-defense to the modern boxing we are accustomed to seeing today. However, the fact that bare knuckle boxing is superior to modern boxing for personal combat by no means demonstrates that bare knuckle boxing is a viable method of combat training, per se. Using a garden hose to attempt to put out a house fire makes more sense than relying on filling, refilling, and repeatedly tossing buckets of water on the fire. **BUT NEITHER APPROACH MAKES MUCH REAL SENSE AS A MEANS OF BATTLING A HOUSE FIRE.**

Bare knuckle boxers use their clenched fists for normal-fist punching. This is a serious mistake for self-defense or hand-to-hand combat. It is as much a mistake for the bare knuckle boxer as it is for the karate student, since other much more effective and reliable natural weapon hand blows have been proven beyond question to be infinitely better choices for close combat. (We must state here, for the overly sensitive, that we are in no shape, manner, or form deriding bare knuckle boxing, per se. We are speaking only of how this sport stacks up **FOR REAL COMBAT.**)

To be a true fist fighter who stands any reasonable chance of stopping a

dangerous physical assailant, you must be **REAL GOOD**, an expert, or at least a strong, fit, boxer-in-training with conditioned fists.

Our advice: Waste no time training in bare knuckle boxing if you wish to be able to handle dangerous, real world attackers. You'll only be getting sidetracked, and you'll be confusing yourself by training to strike with your **FISTS** to targets that you should be training to strike with open hands. In the stress and heat of a real emergency you want your extended fingers to jab into your attacker's eyes, your heel of hand to blast him in the jaw, and your hand-edge to chop at his carotid artery — or throat! Polish kicks to the testicles and side kicks to the knees. Never mind any kind of sporting stuff.

One excellent thing about boxers — bare knuckle boxers and the modern variety — is that the manner in which they hit (**NOT** the weapons, but the **MANNER** in which those weapons are trained to generate blows) is far superior to the manner in which the classical/traditional karate/kung fu/taekwondo/ju-jitsu man learns to hit. Learn this now:

Do not use the full turn “corkscrew” type punch, ever — and **NEVER, EVER** “counterbalance” (.e. withdraw your opposite fist with equal speed and power to your hip, while delivering the punch)!

Corkscrewing results in two problems when employed:

1. The punching arm “wings out” as the punch goes forward, and
2. The wrist twists, and this **WEAKENS** the critical support required from the wrist when the fist connects with the target. (You can prove this to yourself by standing in front of a heavy bag and driving your most

powerful corkscrew punch into the bag. Then try a vertical (palm-in) fist punch. Much stronger.

When punching in an actual hand-to-hand battle, restrict the fist blow (either straight, palm-in, or uppercut, palm up) to the sternum, solar plexus, liver, spleen, testicles, or kidney. That's it. Never punch to the torso area (too muscular, heavy, and well protected) or the facial/head area (bony contact surface can fracture fingers and hand bones). One minor, rare exception might be a quick fist jab or thrust to the nose, applied simply as a distraction, paving the way for "heavier guns".

Hit like a BOXER hits. No counterbalancing! Counterbalancing actually DETRACTS from the power of your blow. Here's proof — and I offer it directly from the various karate systems:

When training their blows IN THE AIR karate students easily and naturally employ counterbalancing. The smart snap of the gi, the sharp, neat, upright posture, and the smooth symmetry of delivery, looks great. However, notice that you'll never see any karate man counterbalance when breaking objects. Why? Because when breaking he must have full, unrestrained, total POWER — power that smashes through (not merely connect "on") the target. Intuitively, a karate man will hit by employing body movement similar to that which a boxer employs. He turns his body into the blow (whether a punch, heel of hand, edge of hand, elbow or whatever).

On a televised "Fight Science" Show comparisons were made between the power delivery of a taekwondo man, a kung fu man, and a boxer. The taekwondo man was built like Mr. Universe, and was an absolutely excellent performer of the taekwondo art. He was fast, lithe, strong, and

technically expert. However, despite the boxer's being perhaps fifteen or more years older, and apparently not in any kind of condition resembling the taekwondoist's (or the kung fu man's) **IT WAS THE BOXER WHOSE PUNCH REGISTERED THE HARDEST HIT OF ANYONE'S!**

Don't fight with your clenched fists, per se. Use them sparingly, as we have instructed. But do use your body's natural weapons in the fluid, natural, logically powerful and well-coordinated manner that a boxer uses when he punches. Perhaps boxing lacks the "mystery" and the "intrigue" that appeals to many who gravitate to the martial arts. But boxing teaches practical, fast, natural, and **EFFECTIVE** use of the body for proper delivery of blows when attacking a human adversary.

If you can find a copy of Jack Dempsey's classic, **CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHTING**, buy it and study it. This was our source for learning the "falling step" that we teach in our System. Dempsey was one of the greatest boxers in the sport's history, in our Country. You will learn more about how to deliver all of the hand and arm blows of hand-to-hand combat and self-defense by studying the principles of hitting as taught in Western boxing than you will by training in classical/traditional karate. Just remember as you begin to apply these principles: Use of the fists per se is strictly limited insofar as actual close combat is concerned.

If your purpose is to become and to remain combat ready then understand clearly that — whether of the modern gloved or of the older "bare knuckle" variety — boxing per se is **NOT** an adequate or even a recommended skill. Its methods of hitting are superb — but those methods must be applied to and with proven, combat-viable blows, not with clenched fist punches.

Clenched fist punching is for the competitive and for the classical practitioner. Make no mistake about it. And pay no attention to any “bare knuckle fad”. Stick with open hand chops, heel of the hand blows, edge of the fist blows, elbow smashes, fingertips thrusts and gouges, and low area kicks. Just learn to employ those devastating actions the way a boxer employs his punches; and you’ll be well prepared for any emergency!

Will Unarmed Martial Arts Ability Eliminate The Need For Weapons?

We are tempted to say, “Are you crazy, or simply joking?” whenever someone asks this question. Then, we remind ourself that this individual does not possess in-depth knowledge of interpersonal violence, because if he really understood what real world violence is all about, then he wouldn’t be seriously seeking an answer to such an outrageous question. So we respond calmly and respectfully.

Absolutely not! There is no way in the world that unarmed combat skills will ever “eliminate” the crucial role that weapons play — and that modern weapons must have — in any authentic study of close combat and practical personal defense.

A lot of people do not want to hear this. They live in a fantasy world where, because, for example, they do not like knives or guns, the martial arts should eliminate the need for such “gross” or “vulgar” tools of personal survival. “A civilized man,” these misinformed individuals often believe, “should have no need of a gun or a knife, or of any other lethal weapon. One studies martial arts in order to be able to stop violence, not in order to be able to top the level of violence that criminals present to us!”

Sorry . . . but that idea is pure CRAP.

Martial arts should, it is true, be taught for self-protection, and never in order to harm, terrorize, bully, or in any sense take advantage of others who pose no threat and who undertake no violent act, themselves. But that certainly does not mean that, when and if you are ever attacked, you shouldn't react with the most savage and viciously merciless actions open to you at the time — INCLUDING recourse to weapons.

Using a weapon on an unarmed felon who attacks with what appears (at least at first) to be bare hands is no more unfair than a physician's employment of an antibiotic that is drastically more powerful than the infectious disease germs that he intends it to destroy. No victim "owes" fairness or consideration or mercy to a predatory monster.

Spontaneity: The Essence Of Effective Skill In Self-Defense

Checking our dictionary (we are using the dictionary that is included with the applications on our computer's software), we find the following to be the definition of SPONTANEOUS:

“performed or occurring as a result of a sudden inner impulse or inclination and without premeditation or external stimulus: the audience broke into spontaneous applause / a spontaneous display of affection”

-and-

“(of a person) having an open, natural, and uninhibited manner.”

There is more listed but that will suffice for our purpose, now.

Naturally, our use of the term “spontaneous” is very specifically in relation to the use of techniques and tactics in close combat and personal, physical self-defense. What spontaneous would mean then is **THE ABILITY TO PERFORM SUITABLY APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL COMBAT/DEFENSIVE ACTIONS, UNDER COMBAT CONDITIONS, AS A RESULT OF A GUIDING INNER IMPULSE OR INCLINATION, WITHOUT PREMEDITATION OR EXTERNAL STIMULUS.**

We will assume that most readers would agree with us that this is certainly necessary if fighting skills are to be acquired in a way that will permit them to be applied in the real world, under actual conditions of combat stress, and in the throes of the astonishment that inevitably accompanies a sudden attack. The big question is:

“HOW IS THIS NECESSARY ABILITY TO BE ACHIEVED; AND ONCE IT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, HOW CAN IT BE (HOPEFULLY) IMPROVED ON AN ONGOING BASIS UNTIL ONE HAS ATTAINED THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF CAPABILITY WITH IT THAT HE PERSONALLY CAN ACHIEVE, AND HOW MAY THAT LEVEL OF SPONTANEITY BE RETAINED THROUGHOUT THE INDIVIDUAL COMBAT STUDENT’S LIFETIME?”

We would say that four words name that which one must strive for in one’s pursuit of spontaneous personal combat abilities: **NATURALNESS, SPEED, SIMPLICITY, and ATTACK MINDEDNESS.**

After studying and researching the subject for quite some time, we have arrived at the conclusion that without those four essential elements, no skills repertoire could possibly be developed to a high degree of spontaneous applicability in and for REAL combat.

Let's take these elements one at a time:

1. Naturalness

Techniques that fly in the face of that which we observe to naturally occur when a human being is immersed in close combat, actually demand training and development that “goes against the grain” so to speak. For example:

- Any techniques that demand fixed, rigid stances and positions before a movement can be applied,
- Any techniques that require clear knowledge of that which the attacker intends to do, or awareness of the precise position of the attacker (or of where his hands are placed, etc.), before one's “defense” begins, are practically useless,
- Any techniques that demand preparatory limbering or warming up before they can be applied,
- Any techniques that are mechanically difficult to remember,
- Any techniques that include steps that are not completely necessary and relevant to taking out the assailant,

ARE ALL WORTHLESS. THEY ALL INHIBIT SPONTANEOUS

REACTION TO ATTACK.

Techniques of close combat and self-defense need to be of a kind that the body does not require special exercises, limbering actions, warmups, or conditioning to perform. Nor should it be necessary for any kind of special clothing to be worn so as to facilitate the action. Everything should be natural and easily rendered, once learned, by any physically normal person of average (or even below-average) strength and agility. (NOTE: This in no way is intended to suggest that physical training, strength-building, and the cultivation of athletic acumen is unnecessary or undesirable, for the serious, long-term student! Quite to the contrary! However, if combat and defense techniques are truly practical, realistic, and genuinely effective, they will certainly be learnable and doable by individuals who possess limited physical prowess).

2. Speed

Speedy application of any combat action is always necessary to insure its success. This is because combat is, per se, an emergency situation. Attackers and violent enemies do not move in slowly and take their time when they initiate aggression. Neither can the defender afford such luxury when he reacts to such a predicament. By training in skills that facilitate speed (due to their simplicity and naturalness), and by constantly striving to increase and to improve speed, one will greatly enhance one's spontaneous capacity for dealing with violence.

Techniques that:

- Are acrobatic,
- Are flashy and spectacular,

- That entail movements that might just as well be omitted,
- Require elaborate conditioning and flexibility before they can be done,
- Aim to too high a degree of specificity (ie learning 1,000 specific “defenses” against 1,000 specific attacks) cannot be applied quickly enough because too much evaluation must be done before going into action with them,

ARE ALL WORTHLESS. THEY ALL INHIBIT SPONTANEOUS REACTION TO ATTACK.

3. Simplicity

Whether we are speaking of a handgun, fighting knife, bludgeoning weapon, or unarmed technique — SIMPLER is always better, for practical application. Consider:

— The simple mechanism of the Colt 1911-A1 .45 automatic pistol has made it, nearly 100 years after its invention, superior to just about every other “fighting handgun” in the world. It remains the choice of experts, particularly for military type missions.

— The simple design of the Fairbairn-Sykes Commando Knife has made it the basic model and pattern to be followed in all fighting stilettos, to this day. (Contrast this with the ridiculous “fighting knife with brass knuckles” that presented almost as great a danger to the user as to the individual against whom it is being used! The F&S is SIMPLE; the more complex “brass knuckle knife” is . . . no longer used!

— The basic no-frills, simple hardwood baton (for police), and the unadorned hardwood (or blackthorn) walking stick (for private citizens), remains the most effective and practical choice as a striking implement for self-defense. The ridiculous “expandable batons” and the (even more ridiculous!) side-handled batons, are disdained by all who understand real fighting.

— The basic low side kick to the knee remains the finest all-round kick for practical close combat and self-defense applications. High kicks, spinning kicks, jumping and “flying” kicks are utter NONSENSE for real world use in hand-to-hand combat.

And so on.

By wasting no time and energy on that which is needlessly complex and elaborate, you will be cultivating skills that contribute to immediate, spontaneous application in emergencies.

4. Attack mindedness

Perhaps nothing is more important than THIS if spontaneity is to be developed and employed by the student of close combat. The reason is that when you focus on **ATTACKING YOUR ATTACKER** (as we first pointed out in the 1960’s) you need only concern yourself with that which you can do — right now! — and you are free to **GO!** once it becomes clear to you that you must take action.

Learning correct, simple, destructive, and practically adaptable attack methods makes spontaneity easy. No need to see anything more than that an assailant has begun to move on you aggressively. Then, do what comes naturally. And the same thing applies to counterattacks (“self-defense”

techniques). If the counterattacks are simple and adaptable then there is no impediment to explosive retaliatory action once you realize that you've been taken off guard. So long as you remain conscious and mobile, you simple **ATTACK** with whatever moves remain possible for you to execute, given the situation in which you find yourself.

It is this **MENTAL FOCUS ALWAYS ON ATTACKING (AS OPPOSED TO BEING DEFENSIVE)** that keeps you primed to move spontaneously and immediately. You are, being attack minded, always prepared to go on the offensive with whatever you can do, to neutralize a foe. No blocks, no conscious deliberation, no hesitation, no trying to “catch up” with an enemy who lands blow after blow while you wait to be defensive. You just **ATTACK**. That enables you to be fast — and it insures spontaneity.

Now here are some suggestions that will enable you to orient your own training in the direction of cultivating that all-important spontaneity:

a) Stick with war-proven, as opposed to contest-proven, techniques. Contests allow for lengthier and slower moving “battles”. A single bout may last minutes, and there are often numerous bouts in a match. An actual encounter should not last longer than 30 seconds! To end a battle speedily, only crippling, vicious actions will do; actions that are, properly, banned in all sports. Non-telegraphed eye attacks, throat smashes, knee-breaking kicks, knees to the testicles, elbow and open hand chopping or heel-of-hand blows, etc. — delivered without warning and without restraint end encounters fast. And such skills require no restraint or complexity of movement. Their mastery leads to the ability to apply them spontaneously.

b) Strive endlessly to boil down your skills repertoire to the actions that fit

you best, drawn from the best, proven techniques. Over time you will want to be exposed to as many effective techniques as possible — but that is only so that you can select your own best techniques from among them. As you mature with training and experience and self-knowledge you will discover that you have literally acquired your own, personal “system”; and because you have sensibly chosen what that system contains based upon your unique requirements and abilities, you will be able to render your movements naturally and spontaneously in any crisis.

c) Practice your techniques incessantly. There is no such thing as too much practice. Never mind what you think you “know”; the critical thing is what you can DO! And that which you are truly able to do, thanks to a lot of practice, you will be able to do spontaneously.

d) Train and condition your body, and harden your natural weapons. The resultant confidence that this will give you in your ability to apply what you know with authority and devastating force, will encourage your spontaneous capacity to go into action when the need arises.

e) Think ATTACK. As we explained earlier, this leads automatically to enhanced spontaneity in your retaliatory capabilities, and in your preemptive skills.

f) Don't practice sporting/competitive methods. These are certainly all right if you wish to be a competitor, but the style, tactics, and mode of conduct in all sporting venues inhibits that spontaneous, vicious, surprise action intended to knock out, maim, or kill.

g) As you train, practice, and explore new skills, always ask yourself: “Is there a simpler way?” Simplicity facilitates spontaneity.

Before we close this discussion on spontaneity let us point out one final thing in regard to the importance of acquiring the attribute. All of us age and all of us lose a degree of physical speed, as we get into our 70's, 80's, and — if we are lucky — beyond. Once acquired, the ability to respond to violence with spontaneity and with zero contemplation or interference of any kind at the conscious level, makes us optimally fast, and with good skills thoroughly mastered, it is quite possible for a man in his advanced years to be literally faster into action with a decisive move than a much younger attacker. Examples of this are the late Charlie Nelson (one of our personal teachers), and the late heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Dempsey. Charlie dropped a youthful assailant who attacked him in his School when he was in his mid-70's! The punk who attacked Charlie was about 20. Dempsey decked two street scumbags (who were in their teens!), when he (Dempsey) was in his 80's. The two pieces of garbage never knew what hit them!

Spontaneous attack takes the enemy off his guard. And, as Fairbairn pointed out, taking the enemy by surprise is half the battle won!

We hope we've given you a good nudge in the right direction, here.

Short-Term Courses

Our top Black Belt, Prof. Mark Bryans, has been enjoying considerable success teaching his excellent short-term courses in practical defense skills. Some people simply do not have the interest to pursue protracted training, or they live quite a distance from the kind of school that teaches what they need, and so they must visit from out of town (sometimes out of

country) and take an encapsulated program. Then, they return home and continue to practice and develop the skills that they have been taught in the short course.

We have always offered intensive short-term private lesson programs to people who wish to learn self-defense but cannot enroll for our formal, ongoing program and belt rankings.

Either myself or Mark Bryans can provide extremely effective, practical training for you and for your family (if they are interested), regardless of where you live. If you can make a trip of several days to a week's duration to either Prescott, Arizona (Prof. Bryans' School), or to Seattle, Washington (our School), we can provide within the span of several to 20 hours of intensive private lessons far more, and far more practical, instruction, than you're ever going to get in a school oriented toward either classical martial arts or sporting competition — even if you train there for years.

We do not say the above as a boast or as a sales pitch. Our training courses are in high demand, and we are simply making a suggestion that might be of help to some of our site's visitors who are looking for serious, authentic, all-practical close combat and self-defense training. If you are serious, so are we. Contact either of us, and we'll be delighted to explain more and to work with you in arranging for your instruction.

“How Long Is The Course?”

Most particularly today, when everything is “instant” and when the typical adult's attention span approximates that which had normally been found in two year olds fifty years ago, people want things NOW. Thus, the idea of

training steadily for long periods of time in almost anything appears to be, for the typical individual in modern society, foreboding.

Traditionally, the martial arts were studies undertaken for years. And during those years it was understood not only that daily training was required, but that **ARDUOUS** and **GRUELING** daily training was required. It was further understood that **THE COURSE NEVER ENDED — THAT TRAINING WAS A LIFETIME ENDEAVOR**. The number of people today who would understand (let alone accept and embrace!) such a lifestyle change may be regarded as miniscule. Okay.

Modern approaches to practical self-defense **HAVE**, to be sure, condensed tremendously the time factor in regard to “how long it takes to become adept at self-defense”. And, in our opinion, the skills taught in the modern systems (i.e. the so-called “WWII methods” and those, like American Combato, that owe their lineage largely to the WWII attitudes, skills, techniques and methods) are **SUPERIOR** to the classical/traditional ways. The practicalizing by Western (as opposed to the traditional Eastern) combat masters, has eliminated much of the archaic and the “flowery” stuff, and boiled close combat methodology down to hardcore, nitty-gritty **REAL, EFFECTIVE, USABLE, NO-NONSENSE DOCTRINE**.

But the modern methods are still **MARTIAL ARTS**, and anyone desiring to become an expert must expect to spend years acquiring the skills, the mental conditioning, the physical development, and the tactical/technical know-how.

Let’s say that, speaking only about the System which we know best, our own: It certainly takes a lot less time to become able to defend yourself when you study with us; but you’re looking at years of hard training and

discipline if your objective is a Black Belt. AND, if you succeed in attaining a first degree Black Belt, we take the classical/traditional view: i.e. “NOW YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN SERIOUS TRAINING!” Frankly, we have found that the worst and least genuinely expert people are those who, having achieved First Degree Black Belt, feel that they have “arrived”, and have “completed” their studies. We have more respect for someone who begins training and drops out before reaching Yellow Belt (the first promotion in our System) than we have for someone who trains to First Black, and then drops out. The confession of SHALLOW MOTIVE (i.e. of “wanting the black belt”) having been the reason for going to Black Belt is, in our view, shamefully obvious in such cases.

People might quit training early on because they don't like it, because it is not what they personally want, or — frankly (and USUALLY) — because they are weak, lazy, and unwilling to DO that which will give them what they say they WANT. They just “want it”. Okay, scratch another weakling. But the person whose idea that “getting a black belt” is the all important and final objective in training in ANY martial art, is a sad case, indeed. He is also one of the worst people to learn anything from. As a person of superficial character such an individual has little to really teach, save surface movements, and a seriously lacking personal value system.

FOR ANYONE WHO IS SERIOUS, THE “COURSE” NEVER ENDS!
Development of skills, mindset, knowledge, and technical/tactical abilities is a LIFETIME PURSUIT.

But that's not for everybody. And that need not be regarded as necessary for becoming well able to defend yourself.

Most people simply want to be able to “defend themselves”. They have no

pretenses of becoming experts, and will frankly acknowledge this up front, when enrolling. Their needs will be met when they have developed self-defense ability and acquired the tactical know-how to live and function more securely in a dangerous world. Fine.

It is normal, proper, and quite understandable that this majority of enrollees will ask how long it will likely take before they have attained their objective. With the understanding, then, that we are now speaking ONLY of basic, reliable self-defense abilities and mindset, let us try to answer the question that many ask: “How long is the course?” — or perhaps more properly: “How long will it be before I can defend myself?”

Here is our honest answer:

No one can say with certainty that anyone (even the highest level master of any art) can defend himself in all cases and in every instance, with success. Combat is chaotic and self-defense emergencies are unpredictable. So we must QUALIFY our answer.

If we assume a student of between 20 and 60 years of age, with statistically average strength, intelligence and courage, and with a reasonably serious commitment to learning how to take care of himself, we are fairly confident in saying that after four to six months of regular training that student . . .

- Will be able to defend himself against most individual assailants who are unarmed, and who he (the student) can see coming, or who has made an initial approach before attacking.
- Will stand a good chance of successfully defending himself against most

kinds of unskillful attacks from behind.

- Will stand a good chance of defending against, and escaping, two or three unarmed attackers whose attack does not catch him by surprise, from behind.
- May — depending upon his dedication to practice and how closely he has paid attention to the tactical indoctrination — be able to defend himself against a variety of weapon threats and attacks.

Anyone who has trained seriously for a year or more should possess, on average, an excellent general ability to protect himself in most difficult or dangerous situations (always allowing for that which we said earlier, and which applies even to experts).

We define “serious training” and a “serious commitment to training” as: Attending an average of three weekly group classes, and devoting a minimum of 20 minutes every day to individual practice, at home. This group class and individual practice to be enhanced by private lessons, taken every two-three weeks. Additionally, we expect that the student will make persistent efforts to adjust his mindset in accordance with that which is made clear to him at every Class and in all private lessons is absolutely necessary, and to remember and apply the tactics and elements of personal security and defense that we enumerate incessantly throughout the program.

An individual who takes private lessons only (out-of-towner, person with an unusual schedule, etc.) should expect to spend a MINIMUM of ten solid hours working hard and seriously on the contents of every one-hour private lesson that he has taken. Twenty hours is better. Between ten and

20 hours of private lessons is normally sufficient to cover the basics of personal defense for the person whose goals are limited simply to fundamental confidence and ability, and who is not looking for expert level proficiency.

We appreciate that many who read this monthly Newsletter, and who visit this and our other web site, are not students of our System, and may be training in methods and systems quite different than ours. Or they may be endeavoring to teach themselves. Thus we wish to make it clear that our brief presentation now offers only the most general idea of “how long it takes”, and we’d hope to leave readers with this final — and realistic — thought:

Self-defense is a dangerous and very risky undertaking. It is not a sport. No one can guarantee success, and there is no way to predict and establish precisely that which is or may be required in all cases, in order to defeat enemy aggression. We (Mark Bryans and ourself) have had instances of persons being able to defend themselves successfully — and **DOING SO** — after only one or two lessons; but that is not to be “expected”. The wisest attitude to take is that one will strive mightily to learn all that one is able to learn, and build all of the knowledge, skill, and personal physical prowess one is able to build. Then, if avoidance of trouble is impossible, and if one finds that one must defend oneself or a loved one, one will, as William E. Fairbairn put it in his Classic **GET TOUGH!**: Give every effort he can muster.

We hope that we’ve injected some measure of realism into our readers’ thinking. We honestly cannot apologize for avoiding the ridiculous claims, outrageous “guarantees”, and absurd assurances that a regrettable majority of “instructors” continue to purvey. Good luck.

Use Of The Umbrella

With the Fall now here, and with cool, rainy weather becoming prevalent in many cities, it is not uncommon for individuals to carry an umbrella with them when they go shopping or go to work. That umbrella can be a terrific weapon!

Forget the collapsable umbrellas. Purchase a standard umbrella with a normally stout shaft. In a crisis it could save your life.

When, in the late 1960's and early 70's we held classes in New York, we used to teach the females to sharpen the metal tip of their umbrellas so as to enable them to employ it as a kind of bayonet, in a crisis. (One of our lady students speared a subway mugger in the throat with her umbrella and — happily — left him lying on the floor choking and bleeding, as she made her escape.) While sharpening the metal tip of the umbrella is still a good idea, we advise against it, today, and we personally would not do it. Too much possibility of legal trouble. The standard, unaltered, metal-tipped umbrella will do!

Use the umbrella by taking a strong, secure grip with both hands — each approximately six inches from each end of the umbrella. One hand faces one way, the other faces in the opposite direction. Do not grip the umbrella with both hands facing the same way, and forget about using the thing as a “club”. You couldn't hurt an elderly, senile college professor by “clubbing” him with an umbrella!

Use the umbrella as you would a bayonet or spear. Thrust it powerfully and viciously — without warning — directly at your attacker's throat. You

should not aim for the mouth or for the eye, as doing so is more likely to result in a miss. **AIM FOR THE THROAT.** If you miss the throat, you'll likely hit the eye or mouth — and that's just fine.

If the umbrella is seized, head butt the attacker in the face, knee him in the groin, or stomp on his shinbone and instep. Once free, **SPEAR HIM!**

Obviously, this is a dangerous action and should be utilized only to save yourself from serious injury in a dangerous situation.

Note: Fairbairn's excellent wartime book for women (i.e. **HANDS OFF!**) illustrates his basic commando stick technique, using an umbrella. We have described a technique that exploits the most effective part of how Fairbairn advocated the umbrella should be employed.

That brings this month's **SWORD & PEN** to a close. Please go to www.seattlecombatives.com for additional material and what we sincerely hope you'll find to be helpful reading!

We hope that you'll tell others about these sites, and help us spread the truth about the subjects of close combat, personal defense, individual protection, and security.

Until November, then! Stay combat ready.

Yours in defense,

Prof. Bradley J. Steiner

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