

Philippine Martial Arts

3rd Arizona FMA Gathering

Digest

Mini Issue



"The Gathering of Locals"

March 29, 2009
Papago Park
Phoenix, Arizona



Punong Guro Steven Dowd
Arnis Balite
Guro Mike Casto
Sikol
Guro John Jacobo
Kali Ilustrisimo

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FMA Digest Archives

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this digest are those of the authors or instructors being interviewed and are not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

We solicit comments and/or suggestions. Articles are also welcome.

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

First let me say it was a privilege and an honor to be able to be at the 3rd Arizona FMA Gathering, let alone being able to teach some Arnis Balite to the practitioners there.

I want to thank Michael and Faith Butz who overall put the event together, (of course with some assistance from Scott Abbott, Russell Mackler, and Ben Belmares). A very hospitable environment, with everyone being friendly, eager to gain knowledge, and a spirit that is remarkably ultimate in the Filipino martial arts; a real brotherhood that is really beyond words.

The practitioners and their families were supportive and really it seemed that all were just one family getting together and promoting the Filipino martial arts. The “Pot Luck” lunch was great and no one went or could go hungry.

Mike Casto and John Jacobo both very talented and professional martial artists shared their arts, moving among the practitioners to ensure all understand and could realize that everything being taught was truly a part of the Filipino martial arts and could be adapted in their arsenal of knowledge and physical application.

The FMA Digest highly recommends that when another Gathering comes around make it a point to attend and be a part of this event, you would most definitely benefit and have an event to remember for years to come, eager for the next event to come around to attend again.

And if you are an instructor of the Filipino martial arts and have the opportunity to teach, standby to have a group of attentive eager practitioners ready to absorb the knowledge that you put forth.

Maraming Salamat Po



Michael and Faith Butz
Thank You for the Opportunity.



www.ftma-az.com

AZ - FMA Friendship Gathering

March 29, 2009

Papago Park, Phoenix, Arizona

Not too far off the heels of the last gathering, the 3rd AZ FMA Friendship Gathering was held on March 29, 2009. Like the first two, this event was held at Papago Park, located next to the Phoenix Zoo. In keeping with the tradition of the gathering, instructors from different systems were invited to display their respective styles.

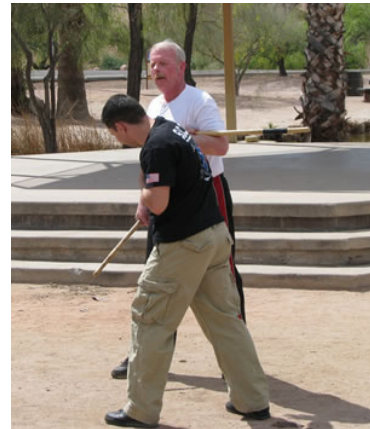
Steven Dowd of Arnis Balite (www.arnisbalite.com), **Mike Casto** of Sikal (www.impactacademy.com) and **John Jacobo** of Kali Ilustrisimo (www.swacom.com) provided the training for the day.



Most of the attendees were current Filipino martial arts practitioners and although the principles behind many Filipino martial arts are the same, the gathering gave them an opportunity to see different expressions of those principles and experience a completely different combat style. Other attendees took the chance to try out the Filipino martial arts for the very first time.



Steven Dowd was the first to teach. He focused on how to limit an opponent's power and using angles to maneuver in close to capture the opponent's weapon, then encouraged the participants to counter with their own personal style of attack. Later he ran everyone through a flow drill-type of exercise that used angles, hooking rather than grabbing and maneuvering to a point to where the opponent would be at a disadvantage. Steven explained, "... the opponent must react and counter likewise... having a continuous situation that constantly changes with each maneuver."



Punong Guro Dowd points out not to grab, but block and hook the opponents arm.

Punong Guro Dowd works with the participants.



Lunch was next. Since it was potluck-style, everyone contributed a little something. Scott Abbott of American Black Tiger System and Inayan Eskrima, one of the gathering's original contributors, took control of the grill. He kept the hot foods hot and served up hot dogs, polish sausage and hot links. Other items included chicken adobo, fried chicken, pizza, kalbi ribs, different salads, pancit, desserts and, most importantly, rice!



Mike Casto resumed the training when lunch was finished. He taught stick locks “because I have (a) found them very effective and (b) I love locks in general. Also, I felt it was a good compliment to what Steve and John were teaching.” He explained that as taught in Sikal, very few fights end at largo range because the only targets available are the weapon and the weapon hand/arm. Fights can end in medio but if they don't, they end



up corto quickly. In corto range, striking is the default option but locks and chokes become very effective tools and can end a fight very quickly.



Guru Casto and Master Jacobo having some fun.

After a short break and a group photo, John Jacobo took his turn. This was actually his second appearance as he was one of the gathering's original contributors and taught at the first event. John showed efficient defenses with both stick and sword as it applies to weapon hand position and controlling of range. He introduced three methods of defense



individually; sumbra, sungkit and circular then chained them into a "flow drill". He then covered some edge weapons training placing special emphasis on defense over use. For John, the focus was "... to capture the attention of the age diversity among those who attended by stressing principles over technique."



Guro Jacobo works with the participants.



Participants enjoying the knowledge and training during the sessions.



Special thanks go to:

Scott Abbott - (www.blacktigersystem.com) for donating a majority of the park reservation fee.

Russell Mackler - for his help in finding a location that would accept a reservation.

Ben Belmares - for assisting all three instructors during their teaching time.

Mike Casto - for attending the event only three days after moving to Arizona from Kentucky.

Steven Dowd - for attending the event at his own expense returning from a month-long trip to the Philippines.



List of attendees:

Faith Brennan
Cody Brennan
Eric Szeto
Sam Buot
Menchie Buot
Ryan Buot
Christian Jacobo
Kevin Alca
Jason Abbott
John Abbott
Scott Abbott
Ted Rabino
Sara Rabino
Arielle Rabino
J "Tiny" Sowell
Jacqui Sowell
Nataja Sowell
Nyia Sowell
Tea Sowell

Chy Sowell
Sandra Sowell
Ramon Quema
Angel Quema
Steve Frerichs
Tom Sylvester
Aaron Alvarez
Ed Ong
Sammy Valencia
Gary Polacca
Monib Ahmed
Arthur Crisostoma
Chris Loomis
Corey Benefield
Russell Mackler
Jonathan Chang
Roger Garcia
Vanessa Garcia
Santoi Hill

Mack Hill
Auburnie Hill
Sa'iida Adu'Elohiym
Kimberly Sowell- Adu'Elohiym
Natalie Regennitter
Addison Regennitter
Macey Peters
Rachel Mount
Brianna Mount
Kevin Fackler
Aycia Blomgren
Timothea Belmares
Ben Belmares
Amanda Vasquez
Greg McGuffey
Eric McCoy
Hector Torres
Rochelle Torres
Seth McLaws

As of this writing, there is no scheduled date for the next AZ FMA Gathering. Due to conflicting schedules, Jon Ward of Inayan Eskrima was unable to attend this gathering. However, he has expressed interest in attending and teaching at the next event.

For more information and updates:

Visit www.ftma-az.com or Contact Michael Butz at MichaelB@ftma-az.com



John Jacobo, Michael and Faith Butz, Steven Dowd, and Mike Castro

Learn about what went on during the 1st and 2nd Arizona FMA Gathering.

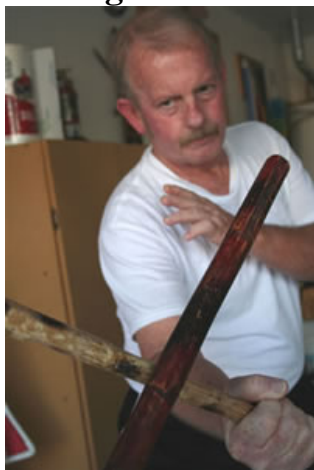


Ted Rabino, Sam Buot and John Jacobo



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Punong Guro Steven Dowd



Steven Dowd started his training in Kuntaw while in the US Navy while stationed aboard various ships and a special detachment that was assigned to Subic Bay Naval Station, Philippines. In 1974 he was transferred to San Maguel Communication Station, Philippines, located in San Antonio Zambales as Armed Forces Police for the town and Military Security Police for the Naval Communication Station.

Here he continued his training in Kuntaw and through a friend started his training with Master Fred Zabala in TRACMA (Trovador Ramos Consolidated Martial Arts). He trained privately in both arts most of the time.

It was also during this time that Steven met Pundador Manuel Aguillon and commenced his training in Arnis Balite, however at the time he just called it Arnis, and upon his first passing away it was known as Aguillon Arnis and then once the family had him inherit and represent the family in promoting the art with the family's permission it was changed to what it is known now as Arnis Balite.



In 1977, while he was at the Correction Facility, at Subic Bay Naval Station in Olangapo City. Steven was training at the main school of Kuntaw under Grandmaster Carlito Lanada.

Also another note is that while stationed at the Naval Correctional Facility Steven would travel to San Antonio, Zambales to continue his training with Pundador Aguillon. He was an instructor upon leaving. It also must be noted that Pundador did not have rankings, belts, or certificates. He would just tell you that you had permission to teach his art. The only thing Steven has written is a letter from his son and daughters, that he is the representative for their family's art.

Steven teaches the Kuntaw that he originally learned from Grandmaster Lanada in the 70's.

As of today living in Fallon, Nevada, Steven teaches at the Park & Recreational Center for the county and city, teaching children and teenagers Kuntaw, he also teach Women and Senior Self-Awareness - Self Defense classes and teaches Arnis Balite at his home.



Guro's of Arnis Balite, Guro Ross Farrow on Punong Guro Dowds right and Guro Clint "Dusty" Rhodes on my left.



Guru Dua/Lakan Dalawa: Mike Casto



Guru Mike has over 30 years of training/experience in the martial arts with nearly 15 focused on the arts of the Philippines and Indonesia. He has worked security and as a bouncer and has applied his training in those jobs. He has taught people from every walk of life; civilians, law enforcement and military - including people from SWAT teams, Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces and Marine Recon. He has taught classes, private lessons, workshops and seminars all over the U.S., in Canada, Europe and Asia.

Guru Mike has instructor rank in:

- Sikal - Guru Dua/Lakan Dalawa (2nd Level Instructor)
- Shen Chuan - 2nd Degree Black Belt & Certified Instructor
- Cacoy Doce Pares - 6th Degree Black Belt (Master)

Guru Mike began his martial arts journey in 1978 when he started training in Tae Kwon Do. He was a 7th Gup when his instructor had to quit teaching to pursue her career.

Guru Mike then began training in Okinawan, Goju-Ryu Karate and had attained a 5th Kyu when his parents pulled him from the class so he'd have more time to devote to homework. He was out of formal study for several years but continued to train and spar with friends were still involved in the martial arts.

In 1993 he returned to Okinawan, Goju-Ryu and started at white belt again. He had again worked his way up to 5th Kyu when he met Guru Ken Pannell at Asian Fighting Arts in Dayton, Ohio.

He has trained intensively under Guru Ken in the system of Sikal since February 1995 and earned his full instructorship in Sikal in September 1999. He still regularly visits Guru Ken to continue his training in Sikal.

Sikal is an eclectic blend of elements from various Filipino and Indonesian martial arts. The knife fighting of the Filipino martial arts is recognized worldwide as some of the best blade work in the world. Filipino martial arts are also known for their stick work. Less known, though, are the Filipino empty hands.

Filipino boxing, called "Pangamot" (among other things) uses elbows, knees, forearms, shins, shoulders and head butts for striking. It also uses principles of controlling the opponent from Filipino grappling (commonly known as "Dumog").

From Indonesian Pentjak Silat Sikal draws a deep understanding of balance disruption and footwork for sweeps and takedowns. In Sikal we feel that the Filipino training makes us "hand technicians." Our hands become very adept at attacking and defending with and without weapons. The Silat training makes us "foot technicians." Our feet become very good at knowing where our opponent's feet are and how best to take them out from under him.



The Sikal hybrid uses the strengths of each art to form a complete and well-rounded fighting system which will make the practitioner comfortable and competent in all ranges of combat with or without weapons. The weapons concepts are also applied to improvised weapons so a water bottle can be used in the same manner as a short stick; an ink pen can be utilized in the same manner as a knife. Modifications have to be made for length and attributes but the same concepts apply. A Sikal practitioner sees everything as a potential weapon, shield or distraction and when an inanimate weapon isn't available the practitioner is fully capable of using his or her natural weapons and taking the fight to the opponent.

While Sikal is Guru Mike's core he also draws from Shen Chuan, Cacoy Doce Pares and Kuntao Silat de Thouars. He is a student of Professor Joe R. Lansdale, founder of Shen Chuan (a system which focuses on self defense and specializes in fluid striking, balance disruption and joint locks). He is personally ranked in Cacoy Doce Pares by Grandmaster Cacoy Canete and studied with Willem "Uncle" Bill de Thouars, founder of Kuntao Silat de Thouars, for 8 years.

Guro John Jacobo



Recalling his father's introduction to Arnis de Mano, John decided to pursue the Warrior Arts of the Philippines. Martial Arts seem to run in the family. In 1991, he started training in Pananandata with Guro Robert L. Rivera. Guro Rivera was a senior student of Professor Amante Marinas, Founder of this long range system of stick-fighting. Once again John took immediate interest in the combat and contact aspects of training in what was referred to as unarmored largo mano play. This involved a 31" rattan stick referred to as the "yantok". The rules were simple, no protection was allowed and strikes were limited to the weapon hand and arm. During a sparring demonstration at a Philippine festival, John was accidentally struck in the head, a target off-limits and for obvious reasons. It was not until the bout ended that many including him, took notice of the golf ball size knot he sustained on the forehead. The reality of weapons use and sparring was a true eye opener.

In the coming year John participated in the 1st New York Full Contact Stickfighting Tournament sponsored by Guro Doug Pierre (of Modern Arnis) taking 1st place in the middle-weight division. In 1992, John tested his skill during a Dog Brothers seminar conducted by Guro Marc Denny in Boston. There were little rules and no weight divisions. John recalls his first opponent being twice his weight and height. Although a bit intimidating, John maintained his composure and sense of confidence through the



belief that the weapon is a great equalizer. Stickfighting was quickly becoming an obsession as John continued to seek out any opportunity and any venue for this combat sport which lead him to befriend Peter Potenciano, “Big” John Marquez, Gary Gabisan and many others from the Philippine Integrated Martial Arts Academy (PIMA) in Elizabeth, NJ. This was home to many WEKAF (World Eskrima, Kali, Arnis Federation) Champions taught by Master Arnulfo “Dong” Cuesta of the Doce Pares Multi-System. Unfortunately, the distance of the school was not feasible leaving John to look further for an instructor.

His search ended in 1994 when he met Master Reynaldo S. Galang of Bakbakan International. The Organization was established in the Philippines back in 1968. Bakbakan (meaning “to fight”) is an almost fraternity like group of martial arts peers devoted to promoting the arts through full-contact training. Kali Ilustrisimo was the weapon system of choice that was adopted by the organization. Not only was Master Galang a charter member of Bakbakan, he was a senior disciple of



John Jacobo and Rey Galang

revered Grandmaster Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo. Tatang known to many is one of the most respected Eskrimadors in the Philippines. Unlike other Filipino martial arts systems, Kali(s) Ilustrisimo is based first and foremost on edge weapons specifically the use of the sword. Realizing the opportunity to learn a combat tested art, John delved into the training and brotherhood.

In 1995, under Master Galang’s



John Jacobo with Doce Pares WEKAF Champions encouragement, John was fortunate to meet and train with Master Christopher Ricketts in the Philippines. “Topher” known to many is not only the founder of Bakbakan, he was a 1st generation student of Tatang alongside Tony Diego (current Grandmaster of the Ilustrisimo system) and Yuli Romo (Grandmaster of Bahd-Zubu). Topher was also a reputable fighter and boxing trainer. Sparring both weapons and empty-hands was almost immediate upon their first meeting, one that lasted 5 hours. Sparring is the typical Bakbakan way of welcoming visitors. And oddly enough, a trait John greatly admired.



Master Topher Ricketts and son Guro Bruce

In 1996, John competed in a tournament called Lionheart's 1st Full-Contact Stick-fighting Tournament. This was the first tournament to mirror the infamous "Dog Brothers" approach of stick-fighting where combatants were allowed to utilize a blend of both weapons and empty-hand skills. Fighting in the advanced division, John found himself on the receiving end of an inexperienced referee and somewhat political judging. Although he won his first bout on the cards, John was displeased at the referee's attempt to influence the judging. And because of this, decided to bow out and give the win to his opponent who eventually won the advanced division. This was a true testament to John's integrity. Recognized for his sportsmanship, he was given a gift from Tuhon Bill McGrath of Pekiti-Tirsia.



John Jacobo announced (raising hand), winning his 1st bout

John's openness and passion of these indigenous fighting arts from the Philippines led to several opportunities to train personally or through seminars with some of the most influential figures in the Filipino martial arts today.

This list includes (in alphabetical order):

- *Gat Puno Abon Baet (Garimot Arnis)*
- *Master Sam Buot (Balintawak Eskrima)*
- *Grandmaster Cacoy Canete (Doce Pares)*
- *Grandmaster Dionisio Canete (Doce Pares Multi System)*
- *Master Arnulfo "Dong" Cuesta (Doce Pares Multi System)*
- *Guro Marc "Crafty Dog" Denny (Dog Brothers Martial Arts)*
- *Grand Tuhon Leo T. Gaje (Pekiti-Tirsia)*
- *Master Amante P. Marinas (Marinas Pananandata)*
- *The late Grandmaster Remy Presas (Modern Arnis)*
- *Guro Robert Rivera (Pananandata)*
- *The late Punong Guro Edgar Sulite (Lameco Eskrima)*
- *Grandmaster Bobby Taboada (Balintawak Eskrima)*

John's approach to teaching and training methodologies is pursuant to his philosophy of combat and practical self-defense. And it is this mentality that has been instrumental to both his personal development as well as his students.

Aside from the Filipino martial arts, John has cross-trained in a variety of other areas that include Jujitsu, Muay Thai, Reality Based Self Defense, WWII Hand-to-Hand Combat and Catch-As-Catch-Can Wrestling with some of the most reputable instructors in their fields.

Now residing in Arizona with his family, John continues to promote both Kali Ilustrisimo under the watchful eye of Master Topher as well as various aspects of Bakbakan Kali, as developed by Master Galang. He is still a proponent of combat



sport stick-fighting and hopes to coordinate with fellow area practitioners to host an FMA tournament.

For those interested in personal protection, a “force-on-force” training environment is also available and focuses on hand-to-hand, edge and impact weaponry for real world use. Rooted in the Filipino martial arts, students will appreciate the “less than traditional” approach, learning efficiency and most importantly functionality. Students will not only develop their physical skills set but enhance their mental skill set as well.

John has released 2 instructional dvd's, "The Combat Principles of DeCuerdas" and "Dos Manos Methods". A third release is slated for release in the near future. It will be entitled, "Defense Methods - Edge Weapon Awareness & Readiness". The presentation is devoted to no-nonsense edge weapon defense rooted in the Filipino Martial arts.

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For information regarding training, Email: **bakbakan@aol.com**

"Why did you attend and teach at the gathering?"



"I moved to Arizona from the East Coast at the end of 2007. The host of the event, Mike Butz was a local practitioner who I corresponded with on a FMA forum. He mentioned his plans of hosting a local event and I as a newcomer (to Arizona), it was an opportunity to contribute something I am very passionate about plus meet fellow practitioners and enthusiasts. I took part in the 1st Gathering but due to an ankle injury was unable to provide my instruction comfortably. Fortunately, I was invited back for this 3rd event and given a chance to redeem myself, so to speak *grin*"



"I attended the gathering because it provided me with a good opportunity to network with other Filipino martial arts practitioners/instructors in the area. I taught because I love teaching and was invited to do so."



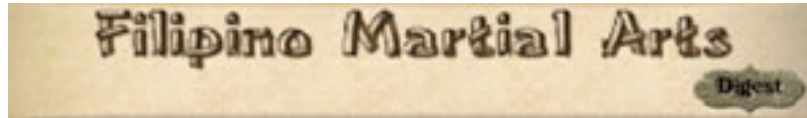
"I attended and taught at the Arizona Gathering for it is a way to share the art I teach, which is Arnis Balite, Meeting new people and sharing the Filipino martial arts. It was good to see and talk with Master John Jacobo since it has been a few years since seeing him and finally getting to meet Master Mike Castro since never meeting him but communicating with him since 1996. Also wanted to be a part of the Arizona Gathering for it is a great event promoting the Filipino martial arts."



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