

# Philippine Martial Arts



Brotherhood  
of

Digest

Mini Issue  
2009

Grandmasters & Masters

Lowell High School

March 29, 2009

San Francisco, CA.



*Grandmaster Robert Castro*

*Eskabo Dain*

*Guro Roger Agbulos*

*Lameco*

*Master Joe Tan*

*Modified Tapado*

*Grandmaster Nene Gaabucayan*

*Balintawak International*

*Grandmaster Max Pallen*

*Senkotiras*

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Mike Giron

Emil Bautista

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**Lowell High School**

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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

This event was for sure another one of Grandmaster Robert Castro's spectacular get-togethers. Known in the past for putting together talented practitioners to share their arts, this is no exception. With a line-up of Grandmaster Pallen, Grandmaster Nene Gaabucayan, Master Joe Tan, and Guro Roger Agbulos and then adding the following practitioners, Grandmaster Mike Giron, Master Carlito Bonjoc, and Grandmaster Emil Bautista from KAJUKENBO demonstrating their arts. This was a wide variety of talent to share with anyone interested in adding to their arsenal of knowledge.

Sounded like the opening of the seminar was memorable with Eskabo Daan taking the floor to the beat of the drums with a demonstration, and then Grandmaster Castro continuing with a demonstration of his skills, then without a missed beat continued with the seminar welcoming the practitioners and explaining in detail how one can take the Filipino martial arts and use it to better themselves and bond the different Filipino martial arts and show camaraderie, unification, and brotherhood.

Written by Rick Mitchell, who gives his accounting of the event as he experienced it from arriving to departing, with just a little addition from the practitioners themselves, added a little more in-depth perspective to what they were teaching. And then of course a few comments from the instructors themselves.

Yes this was a very good event. And as I know Grandmaster Castro another is being thought of at the moment to top this one. Let's wait and see what he comes up with next, and be sure to not miss it.

**Maraming Salamat Po**

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GRAND MASTER NENE GAABUCAYAN – NIRO BALHITAMAX NILO  
MASTER JOE TAN – MODIFIED TAPANGO  
GURO ROGER AGBULOS – LANGKO ESKRIMA  
DEMONSTRATIONS BY ESKABO DAAN & ORIGINAL GIRON ESKRIMA

SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2009 at CORNELL HIGH SCHOOL  
1101 EUCALYPTUS Dr., San Francisco, CA 94132  
10:00am – 5:00pm  
\$30.00 pre-registration by 3:30 PM and \$40.00 at the door

Contact: Grand Master Robert Castro at 415-472-9208 or  
G.G. Anthony Smith, Sr. at 415-308-7197  
email for pre-registration form at eskaboo.sp@gmail.com

## **Brotherhood of Grandmasters & Masters**

March 29, 2009  
Lowell High School  
San Francisco, CA.

### **On the Road to Brotherhood Within the Filipino Martial Arts**

By Rick Mitchell

**FMA Digest:** This is a personal account of Rick Mitchell with event instructors sections added.

**Grandmaster Robert Castro:** Eskabo Daan

**Guro Roger Agbulos:** Lameco

**Grandmaster Emil Bautista:** Nor. Cal. KAJUKENBO - Demonstration

**Grandmaster Mike Giron:** OGE - Demonstration

**Master Joe Tan:** Modified Tapado

**Grandmaster Nene Gaabucayan:** Balintawak International

**Master Carlito Bonjoc:** Mata sa Bagyo

**Grandmaster Max Pallen:** Senkotiros

### **March 28, 2009 - Early Evening**

The warm, setting sun shined upon us as our minivan cruised across the San Francisco Bay Bridge. It was a welcome site. San Francisco weather had been forecasted as cold and rainy. We must have brought the warm weather with us from our home in Los Angeles! Soon we were driving through narrow, winding streets in San Francisco's Excelsior District and then pulled up in front of a series of older looking row houses.

All five of us exited the vehicle and stretched our bodies. Among us were Balintawak Eskrima Grandmaster Nonato "Nene" Gaabucayan (Founder of NNG Balintawak International and the youngest Grandmasters of the Balintawak style from Cebu) and Modified Tapado Master Joe Tan, as well as Lancelot Bausley, Lovejoy Pirante and Rick Mitchell (myself). Stepping out onto the sidewalk from one of the row of houses was Eskabo Daan Grandmaster Robert Castro, our gracious host, who warmly greeted us and generously offered to accommodate us at his home. Grandmaster Castro was the organizer of and coordinator for an event in which we would participate the following day: The Brotherhood of Grandmasters and Masters Filipino martial arts Seminar.



## March 29, 2009 - Mid Morning

After a good night's sleep, our group piled into the minivan and drove through the streets in the southern part of San Francisco to the event held at Lowell High School gymnasium. When we arrived, we were pleased to find a very good turn-out of about 160 participants in attendance.

Eskabo Daan started the seminar with a bang! With the drums sounding the beginning of the seminar, hearts pounding and feet moving to the rhythm of the Congo drums, Eskabo took to the floor in full force, setting the bar and pace for the day!



Grandmaster Castro then performed some take downs with Punong Guro Joseph Bautista, showing the versatility of Eskabo's transitions from weapons to empty hands. Showing how to do techniques with Espada y Daga with speed and precision, discussing how one can apply locks and disarms at anytime you desire, depending on what you decide to do. Grandmaster Castro welcomed everybody to the event, talking to the audience and explaining in detail how one can take the Filipino martial arts and use it to better themselves and bond the different Filipino martial arts and show camaraderie, unification, and brotherhood.



The first instructor was Guro Roger Agbulos who was representing the late Grandmaster Edgar Sulite's LAMECO Eskrima System. Guro Roger Agbulos described LAMECO principles and theory while demonstrating some fluid striking and footwork movements. He then, demonstrated the sparking swords with his partner. After that he showed give and take striking and blocking drills with single stick and let the students try them out.

Immediately following Guro Agbulos session, there was a demonstration by the Northern California Kajukenbo Association, headed by Master Emil Bautista. Grandmaster Bautista performed microphone duty and emceed for his students, instructors in their own right; Sifu Ray Bitagon a 5th degree under Grandmaster Bautista for the past 13 years. Sibak B. J. Villalon started Kajukenbo when he was 6 years old and earned his black belt in 2002 at the age of 17. Sibak Brandon Bitagon and Sibak Nathan Alvarez both student black belts started with Grandmaster when they were very young



and earned their black belts in 2005 and 2006 respectively, while Sisuk Jerrid Alvarez, having also started at a young age will be going up for his black belt within the next 2 years. Grandmaster Bautista will not make anyone a black belt until they are at least 17 or 18 years old.

They started out their demonstration with basic grab and punch techniques learned at the school and used to demonstrate various self-defense skills such as punches, kicks, blocks and strikes. They moved on to stick and knife take-away techniques where their advanced skills and knowledge were brought to the fore by using their knowledge of pinpointing targets. While they showed this Grandmaster Bautista explained the finer points of locating targets and stressed their importance. Lastly they demonstrated their ability to finish off an opponent by taking him down and showing off their groundwork skills, which, along with groin techniques, are an important part of the Kajukenbo style. It looked as though the crowd understood and appreciated the importance of groin shots when finishing up an opponent, one who had every intention of hurting you or possibly your family.

Another demonstration was presented by Grandmaster Mike Giron, head of Original Giron Escrima system and son of the late Grandmaster Leo Giron. Grandmaster Giron's group teamed up with Chief Guro Lawrence Motta's of Bay Area Bahala Na group and together they demonstrated drills and techniques from the Bahala Na style.



After that, Master Joe Tan, assisted by Lancelot Bausley, gave a demonstration of the Modified Tapado, a style of arnis which emphasizes the use of the long stick. Master Tan first explained that Modified Tapado was introduced in the Filipino martial arts gathering in San Francisco. Master Jose Valencia Tan with the assistance of Lancelot (FMA practitioner) performed a demonstration.



Introducing some applicable disarming techniques (long stick style)

Master Tan emphasized that Tapado is a simple art of Long Stickfighting which originated and was founded on the island of Negros Occidental, Philippines. The Founder was the late Grandmaster Nono Mamar. Currently, this unique system is run by two Organizations: Modified Tapado International Founded by Grandmaster Mike Vasquez and the Original Tapado Long Stickfighting Association of the Philippines under the leadership of Grandmaster Bebing Lobrido.

The seminar primarily dealt with the basic principles and concepts. As explained, it is more important to narrate and enumerate the specific reasons for the two important strikes that govern the overall power of Tapado. Simplicity is what this system is all about. To "Finish" the job early is what Tapado means as translated from local dialect.

There are no dancing or fancy movements in this art but just raw overpowering strikes. Stances, stick handling, footworks, various hands and body movements were also discussed and demonstrated. Important principles of Controlling the Center Line, Continuing or Sustaining Pressures (Pigar), Salta or bouncing of the sticks, Interceptions and Turcido (twisting) were also explained and sampled.



Explaining the overpowering strikes used in Tapado

He then invited a volunteer to attack him with a stick about four feet in length that he handed them. Using a two handed grip, the attacker swung his stick at Master Tan, who knocked the strike down with such force that the attacker felt a sharp vibration and shock in his hands that radiated through his arms and body. At that instant the attacker's defenses were temporarily shut down. Master Tan took the opportunity and followed up with a counter strike, as the

demonstration continued, both Master Tan's and the attacker's sticks began cracking and splitting apart. Through this experience, the attacker gained a newfound respect for the power of Tapado! Master Tan finished up his demo by showing how to easily move in close on an opponent and use the long stick to execute simple locking and disarming techniques.



Master Tan demonstration Center Line Control

**Note:** Due to the lack of availability of long sticks, only very few participants and volunteers were able to experience the numbing and paralyzing power of Tapado strikes.

*(Interesting note: Master Joe also trained in the Vinas Style of arnis while in his hometown of Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. Coincidentally, he was also neighbors with the late Modern Arnis Grand Master Remy Presas also trained with Vinas. During the '60s, Remy gave Master Joe the honor to draw the original diagrams contained in his first book, Modern Arnis: Philippine Stick Fighting.)*

The demonstrations continued with Grandmaster Lito Concepcion and his group, who gave a twenty minute presentation of Kombatan Arnis.



Grandmaster Castro introduces Grandmaster Gaabucayan

Next, it was Grandmaster Gaabucayan's Balintawak Group's turn to demonstrate. Grandmaster Gaabucayan created a new demonstration that he was excited to display before the public. First, he took a volunteer from the audience. Grandmaster Gaabucayan handed him a lightweight rattan stick and told him to try to crack a coconut hanging on a string that was attached to the end of a stick that Lancelot held in front of him. We told the audience that the coconut is about as hard as a human skull. The guy took a big wind-up, forcefully swung at the coconut and busted it apart.

Then, Lancelot and I stood about eight feet apart facing each other and each held up a stick with a coconut hanging from the end of it. Grandmaster Gaabucayan crouched into a fighting stance between us and Master Joe stood in front of him holding up a stick with a lemon dangling from the end of it. Grandmaster Gaabucayan announced that in a swift succession of blows, he was going to break open the two coconuts using no wind-up - only short, flick-of-the-wrist power - and then slice the lemon in half using his rattan stick. He snapped a backhand strike to his right and cleanly broke in half the coconut that Lancelot was holding. However, when he snapped his stick and hit the coconut I was holding, it didn't break apart - it only made a tiny crack in it. (That's one hard coconut!) So he smacked the coconut once again and this time a big crack opened up and coconut juice started leaking out of it. I grabbed the coconut in both hands and tilted my head back and let the coconut juice pour into my mouth. As I did that, Grandmaster Gaabucayan shuffled forward and swung his stick horizontally at





the lemon slicing it perfectly in half. Only the top half of the lemon and the stem still remained dangling at the end of the string! The purpose of this demonstration was to prove that anytime during fast moving, close-quarter sparring, a skillful fighter is capable of generating tremendous speed, precision and power even from a very short distance and with no wind-up.

While coconut juice was being mopped from the hardwood gymnasium floor, we took a one hour break for lunch. Martial artists of different styles enjoyed mingling with one another as they ate delicious Filipino food that included barbequed ribs, chicken, rice and salad.



After lunch, Grandmaster Gaabucayan once again hit center stage and used me as his partner. He showed how you can strike so that the end of your stick travels around your opponent's block and hits your intended target. To clearly show the application of the strike, he did his famous reaction test. He told a volunteer that he would try to strike them ten separate times on their upper arm. If they can block at least one of his strikes, they win the challenge. Grandmaster Gaabucayan held his stick in a back hand side

ready position and struck at the volunteer's forehand side ten times and they weren't able to block even one strike, even though they knew the strike was about to come at them. Then he struck ten times at the back hand side and the same thing happened. Although their stick didn't have to travel very far, they couldn't block it. The strike was just so imperceptibly fast that in the volunteer's mind it didn't even register that Grandmaster Gaabucayan's stick had just moved until it was too late. This skill requires the body to be totally relaxed and the use of non-telegraph - you must give no warning signs or indications that your body is going to move.

Grandmaster Gaabucayan showed the quick and direct defense and counter movements and also the "Grouping System." The Grouping System was developed by Attorney Jose Villasin as a means to categorize various drills that the Great Grand Master Anciong Bacon used to teach students various important aspects of stick fighting. There are five main groups in the grouping system. Group one is Lifting and Clearing. Group Two is Lifting and Clearing with Head Movement. Group Three trains the student in body flexibility necessary for avoiding thrusts or pokes with the tip of the stick. Group Four is preparation for speed and reflex - it develops the student's ability to defend against fast blows aimed at different parts of the body. And Group Five is defending against punches or kicks while in a stick fighting motion.

Besides the groupings, he also showed sweeping, disarming, butting and pushing and pulling techniques. But the skill he taught to the students was the flicking exercise. He showed them how to do a solid block for either a forehand or backhand strike and then follow up with counter strike using a flick of the wrist. In addition, Grandmaster Gaabucayan showed them the secret of how they can swing their stick and strike around their opponent's block and easily hit their intended target: by turning their wrist at the last instant before contact is made. Everyone seemed to be very enthusiastic about learning that.

Then after Grandmaster Gaabucayan's presentation, a special demonstration and seminar was presented by Master Carlito Bonjoc. Master Bonjoc., who is handicapped and confined to a wheelchair, gave an extraordinary demonstration. He displayed a great deal of confidence and control as he convincingly executed solid blocking, disarming, locking and takedown techniques.







Last, but not least, Grandmaster Max Pallen took the floor. He discussed stick fighting strategy and theory of the Sinkotiros Style, which was quite interesting. He also demonstrated a wide variety of stick, knife and empty hand striking, locking, throwing, disarming and sparring techniques.

There were a lot of Grandmaster, Masters and teachers of different styles who culminated together, all under one roof for a day of brotherhood and sharing of knowledge, skills, stories, thoughts and ideas. There was Carlos Valdez representing the late Ralph Castro's Kenpo Karate in attendance. Also, from Vallejo, California, Ver Villasin, son of the late Balintawak Grandmaster, Attorney Jose Villasin, briefly introduced himself and made an announcement about his upcoming Villasin Balintawak Eskrima seminar.



The event concluded and we returned to Grandmaster Castro's house, ate leftovers from lunch and tasty chicken adobo that his lovely wife Angela made for everybody, chatted for a little while, took photos and then said our goodbyes.

Then I and the others in my group piled back into the minivan and drove back home that evening with many good thoughts and feelings. As we passed back over the Bay Bridge, I reflected on our short adventure that weekend. I also reminisced about the time when, in December of 2007, I drove up to San Francisco with Grandmaster Bobby Taboada, Founder of the Balintawak Cuentada System who is based in Charlotte, North Carolina, and also with Grandmaster Gaabucayan and Master Tan for the Brotherhood of Filipino Martial Arts Masters held at the same location. On that trip and on this recent

one, we had a good time, made some new friends, and renewed old friendships. That's the way it should be because we are all part of the Filipino (and other) martial arts family. May the Brotherhood live on!

**Note:** Grandmaster Castro was on the microphone off and on all day during the seminar, introducing everyone at their allotted time, giving all the Grandmaster 's a special plug for their style and presence while adding charm and personality to each introduction to all the Grandmaster 's and Masters. The last part of the seminar, Grandmaster Castro told everyone there that for the last hour of the seminar that could wonder anywhere and have all the Grandmaster 's sign the certificates which were handed out to all that came and ask questions if any to all that taught and demonstrate that day. All in all it was awesome day, a day to remember.

Grandmaster Castro had around 30 of his students demonstrate and run the day's event.

Professor Carlos Valdez is from Grandmaster Rick Alemany's school of Kempo Karate. Who also has studied with Grandmaster Castro for the last 4 years. Professor Valdez was the one who introduced Grandmaster Castro to Grandmaster Alemany and created KATA 20.



Grandmaster Concepcion



Grandmaster Giron



Master Bonjoc



Grandmaster Pallen



Grandmaster Castro kickin' back



**Some Final Comments:**

**Grandmaster Emil Bautista:** Grandmaster Bautista and his instructors thank Grandmaster Castro for inviting them to be a part of the days' festivities and allowing them show a small part of their Kajukenbo empty hand techniques.

**Master Joe Tan:** This propagation was made possible thru the invitation and persuasion of the organizer Grandmaster Robert Castro of Eskabo Daan who successfully put together the various Filipino martial arts Grandmasters and Masters of varied styles to highlight the Filipino Martial Arts.

**Grandmaster Mike Giron:** It was great to see so many distinguished Escrimadors under one roof presenting and sharing a multitude of Filipino martial arts styles. Thanks to Eskabo Productions for bringing together another great Filipino martial arts showcase to Northern California.

When I was asked to provide a demonstration at this event I knew that it had to be dynamic, entertaining as well as informative. I contacted Chief Guro Lawrence Motta of Bay Area Bahala Na, in Martinez, CA. and asked him if he would join us, Original Giron Escrima system in doing a joint Demonstration at Lowell High School in San Francisco. He agreed and he played a major role in organizing the demonstration. A first, in Bahala Na history!

Two camps, Bahala Na Original Giron Escrima and Bay Area Bahala Na got together to unite and provide a demonstration to be remembered. We got great reviews and acknowledgements. Thanks again Eskabo Productions and Grandmaster Robert Castro for maintaining their mission of "Filipino martial arts Unity without Egos" which allowed this Bahala Na unification to happen.

**Grandmaster Robert Castro:** I would like to give special thanks to Manny Mellendez, Manager of Tiger Claw for their contribution and booth. Also special thanks to Brady Brazil for his booth and for showcasing Filipino artifacts and history of the Philippines, and his contribution.

Also I would like to give thanks to Professor Jay Dizon, Professor Harold Short, Professor Carlos Valdez, Master Fredyboy Dizon Master Joseph Camins for the snap shots of the seminar, student Brendon Hamilton for the DVD of the seminar and a very special thanks to Senior Guro Anthony Martin, Punong Guro Joseph Bautista, Punong Guro Tony Solano for a great lunch and especially Master Ray Cordova and daughter Janet Cordova and Lowell students, for without their help the event would not have been a success! Please forgive Grandmaster Castro, if he did not mention your name. You are all in my heart!

**Instructors and Demonstrators:**

**Grandmaster Robert Castro:** Eskabo Daan - [www.eskabodaan.org](http://www.eskabodaan.org)

**Guro Roger Agbulos:** Lameco - [www.astiglameco.com](http://www.astiglameco.com)

**Grandmaster Emil Bautista:** Nor. Cal. KAJUKENBO - [www.norcalheadquartersksdi.50megs.com](http://www.norcalheadquartersksdi.50megs.com)

**Grandmaster Mike Giron:** Original Giron Escrima Federation - [www.originalgironescrima.com](http://www.originalgironescrima.com)

**Master Joe Tan:** Modified Tapado - [mastertapadoarnis.com](http://mastertapadoarnis.com)

**Grandmaster Nene Gaabucayan:** Balintawak International

**Master Carlito Bonjoc:** Mata sa Bagyo - [www.bagyo.net](http://www.bagyo.net)

**Grandmaster Max Pallen:** Senkotiros [www.senkotiros.org](http://www.senkotiros.org) [www.senkotirosphilippines.com](http://www.senkotirosphilippines.com)



[www.eskabodaan.org](http://www.eskabodaan.org)



[mastertapadoarnis.com](http://mastertapadoarnis.com)



[www.originalgironescrima.com](http://www.originalgironescrima.com)



[www.astiglameco.com](http://www.astiglameco.com)



[www.senkotiros.org](http://www.senkotiros.org)  
[www.senkotirosphilippines.com](http://www.senkotirosphilippines.com)

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[www.bagyo.net](http://www.bagyo.net)



### **Lowell High School**

Lowell High School, a public magnet school in San Francisco, is the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi in the continental United States.

### **Philosophy**

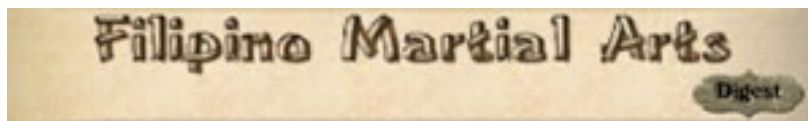
Underlying Lowell's philosophy of education is the resolve that the young people of San Francisco continue to enjoy their traditional option of attending a college preparatory public high school. The emphasis requires an

instructional program that promotes sound intellectual and aesthetic values while providing opportunities for self-discipline and individual decision-making.

Lowell endeavors to create a just and equitable society where individual responsibilities are clearly defined and personal rights guaranteed. It endorses the concept of an integrated school where cultural and social diversity enrich the lives of all students.



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