

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Dedicated to the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Special Edition
2010

Lightning Scientific Arnis in Israel

**Master Jon Escudero
and
Neta Shermister**



FMA Digest

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The FMA Digest is published quarterly. Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts of the Philippines. Other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts and other related subjects.

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Publishers Desk

Kumusta

The FMA Digest met Master Jon Escudero in March of 2007, and the same month was honored to attend Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema Birthday Celebration, on March 18, 2007 at UP Diliman Vanguard, DMST Complex, where I also was fortunate in meeting Mrs. Patty L. Caballero the daughter of Grandmaster Lema.

Also while at the celebration the FMA Digest also met Neta Shermister which did a small demonstration of her skills and sometime after that her and Master Escudero departed for Israel, where Israel got a taste of Lightning Scientific Arnis.

In this Special Edition you will get to know Master Escudero and read about him and Neta in their promulgation and promotion of Lightning Scientific Arnis and the Filipino martial arts in Israel.

Master Jon Escudero is a very professional practitioner that has a positive attitude and a very magnetic personality.

So it is hoped you the reader will enjoy this Special Edition and see that the Filipino martial arts is spreading throughout the world.

Maraming Salamat Po

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A True Legend: Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema

Founder and Grandmaster of Lightning Scientific Arnis International

By Jon Escudero

We've all grown up on stories. Folk tales, fairy tales, anecdotes and legends were the way we learned to look at the world. There would be mystery, fantasy and magic. There would be heroes and villains and monsters to slay. Such is the world not ordinary.

In the world of martial arts there are many such stories. Of fantastic masters with amazing prowess, masters with abilities bordering on the supernatural, Masters with skills that have passed on into legend.

Mang Ben was such a man. I knew him as my teacher, my mentor, the Grandmaster. Many knew him the same way, Benjamin Luna Lema, Founder and Grandmaster of Lightning Scientific Arnis International, a tough man with a tough reputation as an Arnisador, also known among his peers as Ben Judo, the athlete who was an advocate of fitness.

That's the truth behind the legend. There are so many stories about him that with each retelling gets more fantastic. But ultimately the simplest truth behind it was that he was a good man.

He was an "Old School", gentleman who would not face people in un-pressed pants. He had an "air" of formality about him. His hair was never out of place and I've never really seen him break a sweat. He was nearly always in his "trademark" white long sleeved shirt even when teaching, and was never without his cap. He was definitely a "class-act", and a tough one to follow. He was a very exacting teacher

and would make you do things over and over and over again... if he liked you. He loved teaching. We strongly suspect that the martial arts, was the love of his life. He'd go out of his way for a student interested in the art. He went out of the way for us and for that, we are truly grateful.

But then again, at the end of the day, we'd see more of the person behind the stories. He loved to make jokes as well as make fun of us and he loved putting us on the spot. He loved food, and was very picky with what he ate. But when he did find something that agreed with him, it would be defeated very quickly. He was an adventurer and loved going places and seeing new things. He never seemed to stop learning.

And here we are now, his students, peers, friends and family, caretakers of his memory. Some say he's not perfect, but I disagree. I'd say he was the "Perfect Human Being". A man who was great despite his humanity. He may have his own faults, flaws and imperfections but then again don't we all?

It was the desire to preserve and protect the martial arts systems of their fathers that Grandmaster Ben Lema and his contemporaries banded together into a group. It combined the systems found in the towns of the island of Panay and other neighboring islands. They named it Lightning Scientific Arnis.

It is a complete system of fighting. It was always about



fighting, it is always about combat. It was always about tried and tested techniques used to survive. Lightning Scientific Arnis is practical with its definition of "Scientific." To Grandmaster Lema it simply meant that "he has tried it, and tested it, it works... therefore it is scientific".

Lightning Scientific Arnis is a system that is characterized by Power, speed and timing. What makes the quality of the power in the strike different is that it utilizes correct body mechanics to attain maximum power from the whole body's movement. Speed is achieved by economy of movement. Each movement is meant to be an attack. A defense is meant to gain a better position to counter attack and attack is meant to go through any defense.

It has in its repertoire is a wide range of weaponry from Solo Baston, Doble Baston, Baston y Daga, Espada y Daga, Knife, Weapon Disarming techniques and Empty-Hand techniques and is equally effective in the Largo, Media and Corto ranges. It combines the systems of Tercia, Ser-rada, Cadenilla and Espada y Daga

making it a well-balanced, well-rounded system.

Lightning emphasizes using a stick as a stick. Other systems will emphasize that the stick is a metaphor for a blade, and that it is just a substitute for the real weapon which is the sword. For the Lightning Scientific Arnis practitioner, the stick is a REAL weapon and makes full use of the qualities of the weapon. For us it is an impact weapon made to inflict blunt force trauma, pulverize tissue and crush bone. Blade techniques do exist in the system. These techniques are the same as the stick techniques with a shift in emphasis to reflect edge alignment for slashing, cutting and thrusting. Training with emphasis on the stick aspect and applying its qualities to the blade lend it the ability to convert a “crushing blow” into a “cleaving force”. So it isn’t solely about slashing at vital ligaments and sinews, but also about hacking through essential limbs.

These concepts make Lightning Scientific Arnis a formidable and versatile system by being able to address different combat situations. It has a standard repertoire of strikes in the largo range that is enhanced by combining them into a continuous flow called “cadenilla” that accelerates the speed of the weapon greatly enhancing its impact. The cadenilla also allows the fighter to rapidly change the direction of his strikes in response to his opponent’s reactions. This particular technique gives the fighter a set of attacks and counter-attacks that let him control the long distance between him and his opponent.

In the media and corto ranges, “tercia serrada” is the favored strategy. The Lightning

Scientific Arnis practitioner will want get in close to blind-side his opponent and get behind his opponent. This way all his opponents’ weapons are facing away from him and vulnerable targets are exposed. This is also combined with an aggressive barrage of multiple strikes rained down on his opponent effectively blanketing him. This is done by keeping him off balance and constantly jamming his weapon arm and impeding his movement by using close-quarter techniques that interfere with his timing and reactions, creating an opening for a finishing blow taking the attack to its logical conclusion.

But as systems go, each one has its particular specialization and for Lightning Scientific Arnis it is Espada y Daga Serrada. Other versions of this like Baston Daga or Baston Serrada, retain the same characteristics of jamming and stealing the beat. But what really makes it special is the unique coordination necessary to make the technique effective. This is because the weapon hand isn’t solely dominant. The “live” hand is just as aggressive and plays just as vital a role. Its use is primarily sense the movements of the opponent. At the corto range, the sense of sight isn’t a very effective means to discern your opponents’ intentions. Up close it is about feel. Up close it is about making split second decisions and reacting to things more “felt” than “seen.”

Lightning Scientific Arnis also has a substantial curriculum regarding weapon disarming and control techniques. A major characteristic of these techniques is that they twist the opponent into pretzel like shapes to control the opponent and snap them when

necessary. These included stick vs. stick techniques and empty hand vs. stick techniques.

Empty hand techniques are also an important part of the knowledge in LSAI. There are many punching, chopping, locking and breaking techniques in the system. Just like in the disarming and control techniques, they involve much trapping to set-up before launching a finishing blow.

Lightning Scientific Arnis saw action during WWII where it was taught to guerilla forces fighting the Japanese invaders. Civilians and members of Lightning Scientific Arnis were captured and executed for suspicion of rebellion. Only Grandmaster Lema and few others escape that fate and survived to fight on until the war’s end.

In 1945 - 1946, after the war, Lightning Scientific Arnis was brought to Guam where Grandmaster Lema taught it to American servicemen when he was stationed in Agana as Captain of The US Air Force Fire department there.

Upon his return to Manila in 1947, Lightning Scientific Arnis was taught at the Manila Police Department to supplement the Police officers hand-to-hand fighting. He also taught several notable celebrities and personalities.

In 1959, Lightning Scientific Arnis was registered at the Securities Exchange Commission as Lightning Scientific Arnis International with the assistance of Agripino Mayuga, Herman Licanto... At this time, Lightning Scientific Arnis International had become more than just a club. Lightning Scientific Arnis International now had the makings of an organization with several clubs

under each of Grandmaster Lema's top students.

In the span of time since then several clubs were formed all over the Philippines such as Roxas City in Capiz, Marikina City, Quezon City, Davao City, Cebu City

Lightning Scientific Arnis International has also spread abroad into the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia.

In addition to being a combat art, Lightning Scientific Arnis also participates in different Arnis sport formats like sparring and forms competitions.

Since the passing of Grandmaster Lema in 2001 LSAI has operated as a Federation of independent clubs headed by the recognized Masters and their students. It is governed through the cooperation of these Masters led by the Secretary General with the Grandmasters family in a Masters' Assembly. Benjamin Lema Jr. is recognized as the Grandmaster with Patty Jean Luna Lema Caballero as Deputy Grandmaster.



1st Masters Assembly



2nd Masters Assembly



Lema Cup 2009

We are his Legacy. LSAI is his Legacy. LSAI is his Family.

Master Jon Escudero

Master of Clubs: Lightning Scientific Arnis Israel

Academia Tercia Cerrada Cadenilla y Espada y daga (aka, sunday School) - Philippines



Jon Escudero was born in the city of Manila on August 26, 1975. From an early age Jon has always been interested in Martial arts. It doesn't come as much of a surprise since his father and grandfather have always been interested in sports. His grandfather also did amateur boxing fights in his youth. He blames his interest mostly on his dad who often took him to double features of kung-fu and ninja movies in downtown Manila. So naturally, these fantastic features took root in his brain and kick started his desire to learn martial arts. He clandestinely tried various Japanese and Korean Martial arts this school during his childhood and teens which were the ones mostly available then at that time.

The turning point for him was In College at the University of the Philippines he met his first Kung-fu teacher in 1994, Sifu Benito Khu, who steered him on a path of serious training and study. He trained in different forms of

Kung-fu with and without weapons. He was the first president of the U.P. Wushu Club that he and his classmates founded in 1995. He also studied some of the different Shaolin wushu forms as well as the different styles of Hsing-i, Bagua and Taichi chuan, Particularly Chenjiaguo Taijiquan which he still practices today.

In 1996, during a Martial Arts demonstration called the "School of Martial Arts" (SOMA) sponsored by one of the university fraternities, vari-



ous university sports and martial arts clubs, including the Wushu Club, performed demonstrations of martial arts. He saw a demonstration of arnis that changed his life performed by the Lema Scientific Kali Arnis Club - LESKAS led by Master Elmer Ybanez.

Greatly impressed by the demonstration that showed Filipino martial arts at a world class level, his interest and desire to

learn it grew. One of the reasons behind the interest is that it was the martial art of his country and that it embodied a fierceness and energy that took his breath away. He eventually joined this group to learn Lightning Scientific Arnis. Along with it this group also cross-trained in various other sports and martial arts like Muay Thai, Boxing, Wrestling and Jiu-jitsu. Though Master Elmer moved abroad a year earlier to the United States, this group trained daily in the different aspects of the art all the way until the passing of the system's Grandmaster and Founder, Benjamin Luna Lema. Grandmaster Lema was so impressed with this group that he took them under his tutelage, as well as training them every weekend for four years till his passing, earning them the name U.P. Boys.

Jon, along with others from the group, was privileged to accompany Grandmaster Lema to the Chungju World Martial arts festival in 2001 and 2003 where the best martial arts teams from all over the world were present to represent the martial arts of their



country in an event that fostered and promoted brotherhood through the martial arts.

In 2001 Grandmaster Lema awarded him the rank of Master making him the youngest in LSAI to hold this rank.

When Grandmaster Lema passed away in 2003, a profound loss was felt throughout the entire system. The university group continued on train people in LSAI in



their university group while awaiting Heir-apparent Master Elmer's return to the Philippines. Unfortunately Master Elmer passed away due to complications during the treatment of a rare form of cancer leaving the system without leadership.

With the support of the Lema Family, Jon starts his own group by the name Academia Tercia Cerrada Cadenilla y Espada y Daga, also known as FMA Sunday School. It started out as a group of people who wanted to learn martial arts but were only available on the weekends, particularly Sundays. He began his classes at the "Lagoon" of the University of the Philippines on Sundays and is still in operation and is still growing to this day due to the efforts of his senior students.

In 2005, with the cooperation of Professor Felipe Jocano, Jr., and the support of the Lema Family and his club, he organized

the First Masters Assembly whose intent was to bring together all the legitimate Masters and Black belts who were ever taught by Grandmaster Lema. It was the first time in a long while that these Masters and black belts were brought together since the Grandmaster's passing.

In the following Assemblies a council of these masters was established to discuss and decide upon policies and agenda for the organization. Grandmaster Lema's daughter, Patty-Jean Lema Caballero, Deputy Grandmaster attends the meetings. Famous actor and Modern Arnis Grandmaster Roland Dantes who also studied under Grandmaster Lema for a while also attended the

earlier assemblies and nominated Jon to the position of Secretary General for the whole organization which was appointed and affirmed by Deputy Grandmaster Patty and all present. This assembly has taken up its role in preserving and protecting the Legacy of Grandmaster Lema.

Academia became more established in the following years through participation in various events and activities and demonstrations involving people from all ages and walks of life. Academia was envisioned as a martial arts group that was open to people with the interest of learning martial arts in a friendly, family atmosphere.

He continued to pursue his studies in other martial arts alongside operating Sunday School. These include Hungar kung-fu with Sifu Alfonso Co, Capoeira with Master Kim and sport fencing with his old teammates. He also pursued certification in Refereeing

and Judging under ARNIS Philippines.

Jon Also facilitated and conducted edged and impact training for some military, law enforcement, security and rescue units in the Philippines with his knowledge of other martial arts combined with Filipino martial arts.

He also opened classes at Redcorner at the Hotel intercontinental, club 650 Libis Sports and Recreation Center and Movement Dance studio.

In 2006, he was contracted as Stunt director and fight scene choreographer for the movie "Super Noypi" where he was asked to train and develop the actors and actresses for their roles in the movie. His expertise was also sought for the direction of fan films, talks and demonstrations about fight choreography and stunt work.



Projects and Events

FMA Picnics - The picnic was the brainchild of Jon and a couple of people from the FMA Forum. It was a revival of a picnic that members of a martial arts thread on a popular forum had together a couple of years earlier. They wanted to create an atmosphere of

fun, brotherhood and camaraderie through the Filipino martial arts spirit. They also wanted to establish a venue where practitioners from different styles could share their knowledge regardless of style or rank. The picnic is co hosted by Jon, Torqui, Mon and Robbie of the FMA Forum website.

Lema Cup - One of the decisions of the Master's Assembly headed by Jon as Sec-Gen, was the revival of the "Lema" Cup. This was to be an annual internal competition to commemorate the Grandmaster's birthday among the different clubs that comprise LSAI.

In 2006 Jon was invited to become a member of the board of

Directors of the Philippine Council of Kali Escrima Arnis Masters, an entity whose goal was the recognition of the different Filipino Martial arts styles and systems of the Philippines and the Masters that comprise it through fellowship, brotherhood and nationalism. He is also a member of the World Arnis Sport Alliance whose goal is fellowship through competition.

In 2007, Jon was on the board of directors in charge of the demo team during the World Arnis Sport Alliance World Championship. He was also part of the team invited to Singapore to judge the Singapore Cup hosted Kilat Senjata.

Jon and Neta Shermister met at the 3rd World FMA Festival in Tagaytay in 2006 where he was invited to be a guest instructor at the event. Neta stayed on in the Philippines to pursue training in LSAI under the tutelage of Jon through which they developed a strong friendship which grew into a relationship and partnership in training and their lives together.

Jon and Neta opened Lightning Scientific Arnis Israel in 2008. Lightning Scientific Arnis Israel seeks to promote the Filipino Martial arts through classes, demonstrations, talks and other media events and to provide information and awareness about the Filipino culture.

Jon currently resides in Tel Aviv.



Lema Cup



World Arnis Sport Alliance World Championship



www.lesai.co.il

Master Jon Escudero

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Interview with Master Jon Escudero

By Christian Von Praun

May 21, 2009

Original interview found at: lightning-scientific-arnis.ma-blog.de

Jon Escudero moved to Israel from the Philippines in 2008. He is one of the last to learn directly under and be ranked by the late Grandmaster and Founder of the system, Benjamin Luna Lema, in the Philippines.

Jon holds a Master's rank in Lightning Scientific Arnis and has 13 years of experience in the system as well as experience in various martial arts such as: Kung Fu, Tai Chi, Jiu jitsu, Wrestling, Capoeira and more.

He is currently the Secretary General of Lightning Scientific Arnis International, the governing body of Lightning Scientific Arnis and is also on the Board of Directors of the Philippine Council of Kali, Escrima, Arnis Masters, which is an association composed of respected Masters and Grandmasters in the Filipino Martial Arts whose aim is to promote Brotherhood in the Filipino martial arts and preserve its Legacies.

Academia Tercia Cerrada Cadenilla y Espada y Daga is his club in the Philippines and is run by his students and abroad there is Lightning Scientific Arnis Israel in Tel-Aviv.



Cvp: *How did you come in contact with the Filipino martial arts in general and with Lightning Scientific Arnis specifically?*

Jon Escudero: While studying in the University of the Philippines I was Head of the University Wushu Club and we participated alongside the other martial arts clubs during a Martial art presentation hosted by one of the local fraternities. It was there that I saw a demonstration by a group who demonstrated Arnis. It was the LESKAS group founded by Grandmaster Elmer Ybanez. I was familiar with some of the other martial arts I've seen, as well as other Filipino martial arts, but it was their demonstration of speed, power and control that really impressed me. It was very exciting to see a Filipino martial art executed with the same class as other martial arts. I didn't join them immediately, I think it took a year or two before I went to my first session with them, but when I began training in it, I was hooked!

CVP: *Is there a special tactic or weapon Lightning Scientific Arnis is known for?*

Jon Escudero: Lightning Scientific Arnis is particular known for the combination of Espada Y Daga, or sword and dagger executed in Serrada.

CVP: *For our readers not familiar with Lightning Scientific Arnis, could you explain the training method Serrada?*

Jon Escudero: Ok, this could get a bit hairy. The term "Serrada" simply means "closed", being derived from the word "cerrado" in Spanish.

The way we use it is to connote the act or position of something being closed. We like using a DOOR and a BLANKET as a metaphor to explain the concept.

Without getting too technical you could say that Serrada is the act of closing your opponent's doors so that he can't get an opening, or slamming the door in your opponent's face. This involves the

act of controlling your opponent by intercepting, jamming or blindsiding your opponents' movement.

You can also think of it as throwing a blanket over your opponent where your strikes and "checks" jam, intercept and preempt your opponents attacks.

This is all generally done in the media and corto ranges where the support hand is effective.

What makes this technology effective is the combination of Serrada with a continuous barrage of powerful strikes at close range hence the description, "Tercia Cerrada Cadenilla y Espada y Daga"

Executing Espada y Daga in Serrada requires a high level of coordination because it essentially combines two weapons that were meant for different ranges which means the practitioner has to know when it is appropriate to use a sword and dagger repertoire and when it is more applicable to stick to solo baston in largo. What you don't want to happen is to chase after doing an "espada y



daga” technique when a basic largo smash is more appropriate.

The support hand, whether it holds a dagger or not, must be trained to attack the openings the baston makes as it hits its target. It must either; pierce, slash or push the opponent and break his balance or nail him to the ground as the baston re-chambers for a finishing strike. This involves usage of techniques like espada y daga, banda y band, krus tumba, rompida, otso to name a few.

Training these techniques balance out the dominance between the primary weapon hand and the support weapon hand. It also acquaints the practitioner with the possible repertoire for knife techniques and empty hand fighting.

CVP: *How is the system structured?*

Jon Escudero: Different Clubs in the Lightning Scientific Arnis

International Family may do things different from each other, but the structure is pretty simple. We have the Basic Fundamentals of Movement, Manner of Striking, Bigay-Tama Sets, Baston Serrada, Baston (Espada) y Daga Sets, an Empty Hand set

for disarming and takedowns.

Of course each club has its own training curriculum and each has their own focus, but in general the Lightning Scientific Arnis clubs work with the same material.

CVP: *Speaking about Bigay Tama, it sometimes reminds me of padwork in Muay Thai or Boxing. Can you compare Bigay Tama to good padwork; does it fulfill the same task?*

Jon Escudero: Bigay -Tama is a very interesting training tool unique to Lightning Scientific Arnis International.

Let’s start with its definition. The term directly translates to “to give a strike”. What it is, is a reactive/responsive and counter-attack drill versus random attack patterns used to teach the practitioner several different skills. It is used to help the practitioner

recognize angles of attack and how to counter-attack in “prescribed” patterns that seek the most direct and efficient line of attack. In the end these prescribed patterns are really just suggestions of how to fight in real life. But the patterns learned through the drills develop the attributes necessary to support the Lightning Scientific Arnis International fighting repertoire like good angling, fast response, good footwork and control of space as well as positioning, timing and resistance to impact and endurance.

Good Bigay -Tama revolves around Speed, Power and Accuracy. Even though Bigay-Tama sets are performed random and fast, the practitioner is able to defend and counter attack effectively through the correct interpretation of the incoming attacks and correct counter-attack.

Bigay -Tama has a broad range of repertoire both for the feeder and the receiver. It trains skills for the three ranges of Largo, Media and, Corto and weapon combinations like Solo Baston versus Solo Baston, Espada y Daga and Doble Baston and various combinations of each. It is a challenging exercise for the receiver as it replicates all the little phenomena experienced in actual combat. Contact, Impact, the adrenaline rush, a little confusion, a little danger, a little fear, and most especially the need to fight back.

It is also an interesting challenge for the feeder because with the receiver actively defending himself the feeder cannot lower his guard. He also must constantly coordinate his weapons through all his movements. Uncoordinated movements would result in a broken flow of attack and diminish the maximum attainable speed and



power. The feeder's repertoire is also tested as well as his control of space. Since he knows the extent of the receivers' repertoire he must be able to control and maneuver the receiver into the ideal positions for his attacks.

In the end practitioners have to remember that it is only a drill that and although it is a very good drill, that it is only a simulation of fight and not have any illusions.

CVP: *How do you spar in Lightning Scientific Arnis, is there a special format?*

Jon Escudero: Well, I don't know about "special" but we like the "live-stick" sparring, similar to Doce Pares format. Mostly because it is a format that teaches the player to dominate the opponent even at close contact, even when the player is getting hit, shoved, tripped - pretty much how it happens in real life. We also do a more flexible version of this that allows much more active involvement of the checking hand.

We also play a modified version of the padded stick style because it allows the player to work on finesse and accuracy. You have to be sharp and fast to get the points quick in padded stick. We modify the tournament style to allow for the checking hand since we favor Serrada.

CVP: *Could you explain a training method or exercise for gener-*

ating hitting power, distance and power?

Jon Escudero: Well, for my guys we isolate each of these attributes like speed, power, accuracy, in drills specific to each attribute escalating in intensity over a specific time period. We try to be scientific about it, meaning I do athletic progress charts just so that they can see their own improvement. I find that it motivates them to do better and gives them a sense of achievement. After improving some attributes I have them do skill drills that tie-in with the gained attributes that we test in sparring at the end of each month.

CVP: *Is there also self defense against Knife taught in the system and what do you personally think about that topic?*

Jon Escudero: Not specifically as "self defense", but the movements for dealing with knives are already taught through the stickwork. Most of the knife knowledge is embedded in the general Lightning Scientific Arnis technology.

CVP: *What about Knife vs. Knife?*

Jon Escudero: Knife fighting techniques in general come from the abecedario and Serrada sets. It's not set down in a specific way, but its movement is taught already early on in the Serrada drills.

CVP: *What are your plans for the future? How do you see the future of the Filipino martial arts?*

Jon Escudero: Right now my plans are simple. Teach whoever wants to learn from me.

I am now currently living in Tel-Aviv and have started LSAIsrael with Neta Shermister. We are busy strengthening the group, and with more training as well as sharing our knowledge of Lightning Scientific Arnis International and Filipino martial arts in general. I have been invited to conduct some workshop sessions in the UK, Germany and Slovenia and am busy working out the details for these trips. I also have a group back home in the Philippines that I go back to when I visit. So I am also preparing material for my next trip back.

I am really proud of the Filipino martial arts. It is something world class that I believe is worth international notice and acclaim. It's really great that Hollywood has finally picked up the Filipino martial arts and started using it in action movies. Filipino martial arts, has a bright future ahead. Many good styles as well as the hidden traditional arts are becoming more accessible and the arts exposure to the world is enriching it with new enthusiastic practitioners from all walks of life all over the world. So when I look at the big picture, there is something in the Filipino martial arts for everyone. So it's simply up to them to pick up a stick and give it a swing.

Two Years of Filipino Martial Arts in Isreal

Master Jon Escudero's Arnis club has celebrated two years and gave ranks, together with the Ambassador of the Philippines, while Arnis was legislated as the official sport of the Philippines.

On January 1st 2010, at Jon Esceudero's training hall on Pinkas St. Tel Aviv, a joint rank awarding ceremony and two year anniversary to the club were celebrated. The attendance were the members of the club, as well as her Excellency, the Ambassador Petronila Garcia, who graced the event with her attendance and helped Master Jon give out the certificates. Six members of the club got their rank certificates, after taking the written and practical exam last November.

The Philippine Ambassador attended the event and spoke in favor about the recent legislation that was passed making Arnis the official sport of the Philippines. Master Jon said that it is a progressive step towards a more comprehensive national identity and he is very happy for this choice.

Master Jon arrived to Israel exactly two years ago and since then has opened an Arnis club in Tel Aviv and also in Haifa. His class is rapidly growing and right now he is negotiating opening other groups in cities such as Petah Tikva, Nes Ziona and more.

The Club in Israel has been real busy in the last two years with numerous activities. Master Jon has been invited to conduct seminars in Israel and abroad, such as the "Commandments of Steel" seminar in the Negev desert and "Warrior Tribes" in Slovenia. Also he conducted a self defense seminar geared to Filipino workers who live in Israel, taught Arnis to Filipino children at the "Bata Batuta" program by the embassy, took part at the Philippines booth at the IDC's International day, demonstrated at the UN soldiers Christmas party at the Golan Heights, demonstrated at the Philippines fair in Haifa and participated in more demonstrations and events.

Master Jon says: "It is important for me to spread our heritage, we have a world class indigenous martial art of our own and we should be proud of it. I see it as my mission to share the art of our country to Israelis and Filipinos alike.

The First FMA Self Defense Seminar for Filipinos in Israel

On Saturday night, February 21, at 9pm, Filipinos from all over Israel came to "Venga" studio at Ben Yehuda St. to be part of Jon Escudero's self defense seminar and workshop. The seminar was dedicated to meeting the risks that the Filipinos encounter living and working in Israel.

Master Jon Escudero, a certified Arnis instructor from the Philippines who came to Israel last year with his Israeli girlfriend, was asked several times by Filipinos to start teaching the Filipino martial arts and especially self defense for the Filipinos living here. Master Jon interviewed Miriam Quasay and Dong - from the Philippine embassy, in order to get a better idea of the hazards Filipinos encounter living here. After gathering

all the information both from the embassy and from fellow kabayans, he sat down and composed a talk and a training methodology, specified for these cases.

The seminar was built to be composed of two parts:

First part - lecture on self defense and awareness.

Second part - drills and practical training.

The seminar was conducted with the participation of the Philippine Embassy staff in Israel. Her Excellency the ambassador Petronilia Garcia had graced the seminar with her presence all throughout the workshop. Her Excellency congratulated Master Jon on the attendance and the important work he is doing for

the Filipino community. "*In addition to being a useful skill, the Arnis Self Defense Seminar was also a good platform to showcase Filipino martial arts and Philippine culture. It teaches discipline and the importance of mental and physical fitness*" said the Ambassador.

Among the participants, Israeli guys from Master Jon's local Arnis group came to help out with the demonstration of techniques and partnering up with the Filipinos.

At the entrance while signing up, the participants received a copy of Focal, issue #153 which features Master Jon Escudero and his girlfriend Neta Shermister on the cover. In that issue they could find a lot of detail regarding Master



Jon, Filipino Martial Arts in the Philippines and Lightning Scientific Arnis International, the system that Master Jon teaches.

The seminar started with a one hour talk given by Master Jon. He discussed self defense concepts such as: What is self defense? When do you fight back? When do you run? What are the legalities of defending your self? What is the difference between fighting and

defending your self? How to keep awareness? What is considered harassment? More

The second part of the seminar was dedicated to actual training and learning of self defense techniques. Master Jon took every day basic activities, such as washing your face, hanging laundry, brushing your teeth etc... and showed the crowd how they can use these moves as self defense techniques. For example, the move we make while brushing our teeth can be an elbow side strike, stepping on an ipis can be stepping on someone's leg etc...

The practitioners partnered up and trained the moves Master Jon was teaching, how to block someone who is evading your personal space, how to strike him, how to get out of the way etc... at the end, the crowd split into two groups while each person got to be the attacker and the person being



attacked. Persons being attacked had to react fast while getting out of the way as quickly as possible, not turning their backs. This fast paced drill left every one in high spirits and ready for more.

As Elizabeth, one of the practitioners said: *"like for me I want to know more, I'm excited, it's interesting and as a foreign worker in Israel it's important for us to know how to defend our selves"*.

The seminar ended with the official group picture with the ambassador and the participants got chocolate cookies as they left to their homes.





Ambassador Garcia, embassy guests and participants

Bata-Batuta Learning Filipino Martial Arts in Israel

August 28, 2008

By Neta Shermister

On August 28, Twenty six children of Filipino-Israeli families participated in the third and last day of the Philippine Embassy's Bata-Batuta cultural project, at Benei Dan Street, Tel Aviv.

The embassy established this three day cultural awareness project in order to introduce the exceptionality of the Filipino culture to Filipino children from ages 7-12 that were born and raised in Israel. These children grew up away from their homeland and thus have little knowledge of their own culture. This project wished to teach them about their roots in order to comprehend their identity better. A whole lot of gratitude is in place for the Embassy personnel, families, household members and various volunteers, who gave up from their free time to help this project come to life.

During this three day "summer

program" the children were exposed to Philippine values, customs, tradition, songs, stories, dances, food, outdoor sports such as luksong tinik, tumbang preso and the indigenous martial art. The idea behind it is to introduce the children to their culture and history in a playful, fun and educational manner.

The last day started with Mr. Arnold Eligado and his wife Luisa who taught the children, some native Filipino songs, such as: paa, tuhod, balikat, ulo and more.

The second part of the day was dedicated to introducing the children with their country's unique Filipino Martial Art. Master Jon Escudero was invited by Her Excellency, the Ambassador to teach the Children and introduce



them to their heritage of the Filipino Martial Arts. Master Jon is a certified master in the system of Lightning Scientific Arnis International; he received his master's rank from his direct teacher, the late Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema. Master Jon came to Israel from the Philippines early this year, with his girlfriend, Neta and opened a group of LSAI in Israel. Neta and Master Jon are always happy to help the embassy with their important projects.

Having taught a lot of

children in the Philippines, such as summer classes in the Miriam College Child Development Center, classes of “Arnis for kids” and workshops and seminars as alternative classes in different high schools, Master Jon had an excellent time sharing his knowledge with the children. He started the activity indoors, where he gave the children names of several countries and the children had to state which martial arts came from these countries. The children had a bit of a problem when he asked what martial art does the Philippines have... At this point the children went outdoors with their parents and embassy members to get familiarized with the art of their land.

The children were each given an Arnis stick (padded sticks for the younger children), Master Jon, with the help of Ms. Neta Shermister and his student Mr. Angelo Garcia helped with teaching the children how to properly use their stick, how to



Master Jon Escudero presenting Arnis to the children

hold it correctly and what are the possible movements and basic strikes in Arnis. Before the water break, the children had to combine the strikes they had learned with moving and walking forward and backward while striking. The last part of the class was dedicated to a form (“kata”/”anyo”) in which Master Jon taught the children a prescribed set of moves that the children had to memorize and perform. The children were divided into three groups: A group led by Master Jon, a group led by Ms. Neta and a group led by Mr. Angelo. They had to prepare the form within their group and present it to

the other students at the end of the session. The children did wonderfully well and got much applause from everyone around.

At the end of the session, Master Jon demonstrated some advanced, high speed techniques, with the help of Ms. Neta and Mr. Angelo. Having high energies, the children continued to several outdoor games, such as

pabitin, in which they won lots of candies they rightfully earned.

The day was concluded with certificates of participation to 26 children who attended all the three days of the Bata-Batuta project. Her Excellency Ambassador Petronila P. Garcia, Vice Consul Mr. Thaddeus T. Hamoy and Cultural Officer Chester Diaz had also awarded certificates of appreciation to the volunteers for their contribution to the success of the project. The day ended with eating tasty turon and many happy smiles, children and adults alike.

Teaching the children



Master Jon Escudero



Neta Shermister



Angelo Garcia

A short speech given by Ambassador Petronila Garcia

at the Opening of the Commandments of Steel 11 in 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I am delighted to be with you here today and to be part of this event that will give you a glimpse of Arnis, the national sport of the Philippines.

Arnis, also known as Kali or Eskrima, is a martial art that is uniquely Filipino. Some of you may have seen Arnis being employed using a single stick, double sticks, a blade or knife, or even with empty hands.

Historians are still debating how it all began in the Philippines, but it is clear that even before our country entered the Modern Age, Arnis was already alive and well in our islands.

Filipinos have always been a peace-loving people. However, with more than seven thousand and one hundred islands in our country, neighboring empires, and people from all corners of the world passing through our islands, tribal wars, invasions and defenses were inevitable. And this all happened before Spain discovered the Philippines in 1521.

Arnis may be old, but today it is also modern and systematic. It is inspiring to see the growth of so many Arnis schools around the world, and to see that today, Filipinos are no longer the only ones practicing it, as you very well know.

I wish you all well in this seminar. I hope that as you learn more about Arnis, you will also gain more insight into our history and culture as Filipinos.

Mabuhay Tayong Lahat



**L-R: Borut Kincl, Jon Escudero, Ambassador Garcia, Guy Raphaeli, David Hartman, Sydney Helgath)
May 7, 2010**

The Warrior Tribes Gathering 2010

By Angelo Victor Garcia

October 12, 2010

Slovenia. A beautiful country I had read so much about after hearing what a wonderful time my instructor had. It was always among the top ranking places I wanted to visit. It was with much anticipation that I found myself on a plane flying to Slovenia this year to take part in the Warrior Tribes Gathering - a massive martial arts seminar alongside over a hundred martial artists coming from different styles. Among the styles represented in this great event was Lightning Scientific Arnis.

Before I go on about the seminar, I should probably introduce myself and share my experience in Filipino martial arts. My name is Angelo Garcia and I have been studying Lightning Scientific Arnis since May 2008 under Master Jon Escudero in Tel Aviv, Israel.

What brought me to Slovenia and what brings me to martial arts events is simply my love for Filipino martial arts and martial arts in general. Having done Lightning Scientific Arnis for a couple

of years I was always curious about other martial arts styles, not just the Filipino martial arts. What kind of techniques do they like to use? What stances do they favor? Which angles do they like to step around?

All of these questions arose in my mind whenever I encountered the name of one style or another. But even though there is a lot of information available on the web and other sources of media, it was usually not enough to satisfy my curiosity.

The Warrior Tribes Gathering was hosted by Borut Kincl of Ryukyu Kempo Slovenia and took place in Tolmin, Slovenia. Although I go to martial arts seminars regularly, this one is the seminar that is still in my recent memory. Martial artists from all over Europe and a handful of representatives from Israel and the United States assembled in a massive training hall just outside of town. From the get go a whole range of techniques and weapons



were taught by different instructors throughout the duration of the seminar - knife fighting, stick fighting, grappling, empty hand techniques and even dulo-dulo. Each of the instructors was allotted time in the seminar to share how their style deals with an opponent. Being that this article is about my experience as a Lightning Scientific Arnis practitioner at this seminar, I will discuss what was demonstrated from our system.

One of the core Lightning Scientific Arnis principles presented by my instructor at the gathering was Serrada. There are three aspects of Serrada in Lightning Scientific Arnis. First, is the Serrada stance with the weapon across the body allowing you to defend against oncoming strikes.



The second aspect is blindsiding your opponent by moving off of the centerline in order to get their back and launch a barrage of strikes. And lastly, is to attack or intercept your opponent thereby denying them the opportunity to go on the offensive. These principles were presented through the use of the dulo-dulo and sticks. Each of the techniques that he taught emphasized intercepting and jamming the opponent's movement while simultaneously cramming into their space. The assumption of these techniques is that if you are able to jam your opponent's attack before they strike, then you are able to stop their forward movement thereby them to defend.

In addition to the seri-

ous training that goes on at seminars, a great deal of the fun comes from making new friends and simply hanging out with people. In fact, these seminars are also great opportunities to meet and chat with the different instructors who represented their respective styles - you might learn something entirely new. The seminars I have attended have always involved hours upon hours of training and were a great deal of fun during and even after training. The Warrior Tribes Gathering was no different.

For me, it was a lot of fun learning techniques from the different styles at this seminar while also taking part in sharing mine.



Angelo Garcia, Master Escudero,
and Neta Shermister

And this is true about all gatherings I have been to. Each seminar I have attended has always been a memorable experience and I urge all martial artists to seize the opportunity to train with people you share a common interest with.

HAVE STICK, WILL TRAVEL

By Jon Escudero

March 29 - April 14, 2010

2010 has proven to be a busy year with many new developments and changes. Every year brings something new, something different, something challenging. Almost 3 years ago it was moving to Israel, establishing a club, making contacts, doing demonstrations, creating a foundation to build on. Neta can tell you that it's not an easy job of advertising, educating and informing people about the Filipino martial arts here since it isn't a mainstream, popular martial art. And since my Hebrew at the moment is still at the "survival" level, she has the task of speaking to many people and coordinating things.

Participating in the local annual FMA/Knife seminar called the Commandments of Steel as well as the Warrior Tribes Camp in Slovenia have kept us very busy on top of opening classes in different cities in Israel.

This year though was special. This year we went to the "States." I don't know exactly why, but it seems that doing a seminar in the US is some sort of benchmark. Some sort of indicator that you are making progress. Some sort of goal that has been reached.

I look at it a bit differently. One of the reasons I do what I do is that I enjoy travelling. I enjoy new places, new experiences, meeting new people, exchanging knowledge and ideas. I find it very rewarding to share and pass on ideas to new practitioners as well as enrich my own experience

through interaction and conversation with others. And each new place, each new experience only serves to interest me even more.

Of course I was very curious about what a seminar in the United States would be like I only saw these things on the internet or on DVDs brought back from the States. So I wanted to see if I was up to the task.



Avi Nardia, Neta, and Jon Escudero
Rochester, NY.

So towards the end of March we made our way to Rochester NY. Technically it's upstate NY, north of the city and we were hosted By Avi Nardia of KAPAP who is a great guy. We first met Avi at the Warrior Tribes Camp in Slovenia last year and as the months passed we developed a friendship with him professionally and personally. Our initial plan for the states was to start off with Seattle but when Avi found out that we were US-bound, he openly invited us to Rochester to maybe do a seminar if we could fit it in. So we did.

We arrived along with

spring, the air was still chilly and the plants were still in their beds. Avi picked us up at the airport. We had to deal with some lost baggage issues which eventually got sorted out, but all in all, it wasn't a big deal in the end. As it was the Jewish holiday of Passover we joined Avi and his family in a community celebration.

Rochester was an interesting town with a laid back feel. It seemed like there was no rush for anything. At least, that was the impression I got. Or was it just because it was so cold! We also met up with John Ingalina who graciously provided the venue. Avi's student Eric hosted us at his place where he has two adorable dogs of a breed I don't really remember.

The seminar itself was attended by some of Avi's friends and students and some people in the local Filipino martial arts scene there, notably Douglas Marcaida, a great guy, kababayan and martial artist. Last time I saw him was years... maybe could it be 8 years ago back in Manila when Jun Deleon did a seminar on Kali de Leon.

We did a four hour seminar on some key points of Lightning Scientific Arnis like blindsiding and blanketing and exiting to the Serrada position. We worked on aspects that carry over from stickwork to the knife work. For me it was satisfying to see LSA being propagated in the US again.

Of course it wasn't all work. Avi took us to Niagara Falls. It's a pretty amazing sight, seeing water fall into a gorge. You don't

see that kind of thing in Israel; he also took us around Rochester to meet some of his friends. We visited the Police/Fireman/Rescue Academy at Rochester which is an amazing training facility. All the training grounds, equipment and technology for developing much needed skills in a high risk profession.

Rochester has this nice small town feel, everything seem to be within fifteen minutes drive. We seemed to always run into someone Avi knew so all-in-all, we had a very good experience going around with Avi. So our thanks go to Avi, Frances and Isshai for showing us around the neighborhood and see you again soon.

Seattle, WA.

Visiting the Seattle LESKAS group was one of the primary reasons for the trip. The group was Founded by Elmer Ybanez when he moved to the US from the Philippines. All I wanted was to meet his students. Elmer passed away in 2003 and the Seattle guys have been on their own since then. I been in communication with them for quite a while but this would be the first time I'd meet them in the flesh. Bob Park met us at the Airport, might as well call him Big Bob. I've seen them on the videos and they looked big. Yup, no camera tricks there, these guys are huge.

I came to a funny realization about going to the US... particularly about Seattle. We went to Seattle to eat... ASIAN food! Finally, some decent Chinese Cuisine, Korean Cuisine, Thai Food. Asian stores everywhere, and guess what! "Filipino food". I don't know about you guys but I find it hilarious.

Yup, Seattle is wet, always.



Seminar attendees and friends at Rochester, New York



LESKAS group Seattle, Washington

People said the weather there gets people depressed, I dun no, living in a semi-arid country for two years sort of made me appreciate the wetness of it.

Ethel Padua, Elmer's niece, was instrumental in making all the arrangements for our seminar, advertising, communicating, arranging the venue and contacting everyone, so that how I got to meet the rest of the Seattle crew. It was nice to meet the guys who I only saw in the videos. Ryan, Chris, Brooks, Allan, Rick and the other Rick, they also have some new people like Mike and Natasha, so

it's great to see that they are moving forward.

At the 2 day seminar we conducted we covered much material from solo baston to bolo to knife. It was lots of fun and a great turnout combined with hard training and lot of sweating. We were also visited by Myrlino Hufana of Hufana Martial Arts. I met him several years before when he visited the Philippines with his team for a tournament. One of the perk of doing what I do is talking to people in the same field, sharing experiences and cooperating with each other. Filipino martial arts,



Jon and Neta with the LESKAS group and Mariebelle Ybanez

is just like any other martial art when it comes to politics. We are all fed up with it. We had dinner with Mariebelle Ybanez, Elmer's widow. It's a bit of an awkward moment meeting someone related to a person who is looked upon as an inspiration. But in the end it was very nice and charming to meet this very proper lady.

We visited Bruce Lee's grave. It's such a simple reminder for a person such as him who went out and made his mark on the world, gifted talented and a visionary. His real legacy is his life's work as continues by his students. A man who went against norms and restrictions, he went out to do his own expression. He was one of those who recognized the merits of cross-training and studying movement. He was also one of the first to recognize the value of Filipino martial arts to the point of including it in one of his movies. Insights like that transcend boundaries and generations are an inspiration to young martial artists like me.

We also went down to the Fish market! A very entertaining place especially those flying fish

men... the guys who toss fish around. But for me it was this nice little carinderia that had ... adobo! They owners were third generation Pinoys whose grandparent immigrated to Seattle. It was like the turo-turos back home. So it was great to get a taste of something familiar. We also dropped by the local SOG Knife manufacturer. As a Filipino martial arts practitioner, I have the default love for knives and all things sharp. This is my idea of shopping.

As much fun as we had we had to keep going so when we left, saying goodbye to Bob's dogs was a sad affair. We pushed on to Texas.

Houston, TX.

Houston, we have landed. Robert Mont far of Excel Martial Arts Center met us at the Airport. He's a Karateka and a student of Leo Quilaton of the then K3 Leskas group. He owns and runs Excel Martial Arts Center that provides lessons in Karate, Arnis and Won Hop Kwen Do. It's an interesting place with a very family atmosphere. It's really nice to see other Pinoys who push forward and promote Filipino martial arts. He's got a great bunch of people like Rocky and John who help him out and such. He also took



Seminar attendees and friends at Houston, Texas



Dan Baretto's Kajukembo group

us to meet up with Dan Barreto of Kajukembo Houston. He was giving self defense lessons to a few kids and it was nice to see the next generation getting interested.

On seminar day we covered some bolo, knife and some hand-to-hand work. We worked the concepts as they translated through the different ranges, how a change in weapon and a shift in the distance can change your attack and defense options. The seminar was a little taste of everything in the repertoire of LSA, lots of hard work and good sweating that night.

Too bad we couldn't stay long as we had one more stop to make.

Los Angeles, CA.

We were met at the airport by Edwin Ybanez and his wife Aida. Ed is Elmer's brother who also trained under Mang Ben in the Philippines. They were gracious enough to host us for our stay as well as for our seminar. And for that, and Tita Aida great meals, we are grateful. On tight schedule, we immediately went the ongoing Sakura Festival in the city. We were met by Phil Mauricio and by Arnold Noche and Joe Tan of Tapado who was one of the organizers of the martial arts booth at the festival. It's a great feeling reuniting with other practitioners of the Filipino martial arts. During the seminar we also got to reunite with two of my former students who moved to the US. It was a pleasure to work with my guys again.

I guess I should mention our failed visit to the Inosanto Academy. It's kinda funny since we were flying blind and just decided to see if it was open, "Wrong day, and time", maybe next time. We did meet up though with Bill

Aranda, one of Ed and Elmer's friends and we had a great chat about some historical aspects and issues in the Filipino martial arts in the Philippines and in the US. We met up with another kababayan and Filipino martial arts Guro, Roger Agbulos, of ASTIG Combatives and Aikido Sensei Lee Lavi and their families. They are also both friends of Avi so it was a great chance to connect with talented and impressive people. We also had an amazing demonstration of Aikido from Lee and her husband Eli. We saw a



Gathering at Guro Roger's Residence

great demonstration of grace and strength that was very inspiring.

The trip of course wasn't all work, after all this was our first trip to the US. So we did a little sight-seeing, had dinner-out and a show with friends... oh yeah, and Disneyland.



Gathering and training at Ybanez Residence



LA Cherry Blossom Festival with Arnold Noche (left) Joe Tan (right)

HAVE STICK, WILL TRAVEL

RETURNS FOR A SECOND VISIT

By Jon Escudero
September 22 - October 9 2010

This second trip really came as a surprise to us. For a while, after the first trip, we were wondering when a second trip would be possible. Mostly because it feels like we just recently finished the first one, but anyway, time flies when you are having fun.

This years' trip had trip had less stops since we had less days than the first one. And we rearranged things a bit.

This time we went to Seattle first. Other than the seminar we went around and visited other martial arts gyms of friends of ours. We also spent a lot of time training several hours every day. The experience for me is always fresh. Talking, training, sharing experiences, these are things that make the journey feel like it's worth more than the destination. And as usual... in the US... we eat Asian Food!

Bob Park and the Seattle LESKAS group are doing a great

job in promoting LSAI and LESKAS in Seattle. It's very reassuring that the club started by Maestro Elmer Ybanez is doing well and getting stronger and that their efforts are bringing in new practitioners to the Filipino martial arts.



MKG Seattle





Yes we went to Hollywood, walked the “walk”, did Universal Studios, viewed the HOLLYWOOD sign but that was nothing compared to meeting the man!

I have to hand it to him. He’s pretty amazing. And not entirely what I expected. I sort of expected a massive presence but instead I felt a more relaxed and vigorous to him, he sort of felt like the favorite uncle (the good kind). He was very cool and welcoming and told us stories and showed us pictures (on his I-Phone) of the different generations of Grandmasters and Masters who lived and came to California. There is a lot of history in this man and it’s a great shame that some people will go out of their way to discredit him or put him down. He has a lot of energy and vigor that he still teaches at 74! He was very inspirational for young people like me and it was an honor and pleasure to meet him.

Once again we visited old friends; we stayed with Sensei Lee and her family. She also hosted our seminar at her Aikido Dojo.



Master Escudero and Neta met Dan Inosanto



Eli, Sensei Lee, Master Escudero, Neta, Rosie and Roger Agbulos



We met some old friends and met some new ones at the seminar, little by little we are spreading the word the LSAI is promoting seminars abroad. Manong Ed Ybanez was there to show his support and it was great meeting up with Roger Agbulos and his wife Rosie and thanks to Victor Gendrano and Bill Aranda for their help and support as well.

I learned a new thing too on this particular part of the trip. Its something that I kind of took for granted. Its something you kind of overlook or

forget when you are all caught up in the work of travelling, teaching and promoting. Harmony. My own personal harmony. Sensei Lee's Dojo has a peace and harmony of spirit to it that you become aware of all the white noise in your life. It's a lesson that needs to be experienced to be learned. Arigato.



with and work together with in the future.

The Rochester seminar was held at Sensei John Ingalina's Dojo. Thanks again. Jack from PTK was there once again and it was great to see old faces again. Meeting brothers in the Filipino martial arts abroad makes it feel like you haven't left home.

We had a midnight dinner with Tim Hartman of Modern Arnis. He's one of the Datus without the Bahag. We had a great chat about Arnis back in the Philippines as well as in the US. There's so much to talk about but there wasn't enough time. I'm very curious about how Grandmaster Remy Presas was when he was promoting Arnis in the US. He's a great guy, we must talk more.

All in all it was an eventful trip. I had so much fun teaching but looking back at it, I learned a lot as well. So again many thanks to the people we've met may our paths cross again. A toast to our hosts Bob, Lee and Eli, Eric, Avi, our best wishes and may; we meet again on our next trip.

I want to end this by quoting Avi. I like this quote because it's a great reminder that there is always more to be learned, "sometimes teacher...always student".

We didnt stay in LA long as we had one more stop to make. We headed off to Rocester NY to meet up with Sensei Avi Nardia of KAPAP (is raeli martial art - krav panima al panim). He was in the middle of conducting his seminar for the new Leaders of KAPAP.

He has an amazing bunch of people around him from all over the world. There is an amazing energy of Brotherhood and cooperation among his crew. They are such a great group of multi-skilled individuals without egos. They are a pleasure to hang out





FMA Sunday School

every Sunday morning at the Charter Donors Garden in UP Diliman, Quezon City, hence the name “Sunday School.”

This small group grew as people would invite friends and family members and other individuals with their own motivation and reasons for learning martial arts. The open atmosphere of the group where everyone is welcome and the feeling of family is one of the core ideals of this group. Other members come from Master Jon’s other classes like at the former Red Corner Gym at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati, Club 650 Libis, Movement Dance Studio in San Juan and his other private classes.

This group is composed of students, young professionals and young families who like learning

a martial art closer to our roots as Filipinos. Academia practices Lightning Scientific Arnis of Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema in conjunction with Master Elmer Ybanez’s LESKAS.

Academia’s full name, “Academia Tercia Serrada Cadenilla y Espada y Daga,” actually comes from the name of the style as it was practiced pre-World War 2.

Though Master Jon is currently in residence in Israel, Academia is still going strong with direction from current group leaders, Brando Marasigan, Mike Libunao and Jeff Lualhati who have authorization to represent him in the Philippines. Academia has direct links to LSA Israel, Lightning Scientific Arnis International and LESKAS. The relationship between Academia and LSA Israel is a special one as both organizations share the same Chief Instructor. “Lightning Scientific Arnis is a formidable martial art and represents the legacy of Grandmaster Ben Lema”.

Academia is our way of preserving and promoting and hopefully enriching this legacy with individuals and families who enjoy training together and at the same time immersing themselves in a rich cultural heritage that is our martial inheritance.

Academia Tercia Cerrada Cadenilla y Espada y Daga, more fondly known as FMA Sunday School, was formalized in 2004 to teach Lightning Scientific Arnis. The group is headed by Master Instructor Jon Escudero. Academia originally started out as a bunch of friends who wanted to learn the “Filipino” martial art of Arnis as well as have fun together in a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere. The group would gather together



Academia 2009



Academia 2010

How Jon's Lightning Arnis Made Me a New Man

By Perry Stern

Forgive me for the cliché of a headline but that's about as accurate as it gets.

First, some background: I was born in the 1982 as the youngest son of three siblings in a more or less normal family. Looking back I can remember my parents always told us to strive for more and yet kept the pressure low as to let us make our own choices.

We are not a "sporty" family. We were all blessed with the "skinny gene" as I was a scrawny kid as well and we usually avoided working out for whatever reasons that can be debatable. My 1st experience in martial arts dates back to when I was 6 years old. My parents, in the attempt to find me new activities, enrolled me to the local kids Judo gym to try and see if I'd take a fancy to it. I did not.

Being as an already non-popular kid, I found these settings to be too much for me.

I couldn't stand the other kids picking on me and the competitive nature of the class made me want to run for cover. It's not until recent years that I realized the teacher was picking on me as well.

There's a lot to be said for the lack of regulations back in the 80's but that is a different subject.

After spending weeks of hiding from my parents before classes and refusing to go my parents finally gave up and that was the end of my promising Judo career.

In the following years I've avoided trying any kind of martial arts for fear of going through the same process again and except for the occasional trial lesson here and there I've given it up completely.

In retrospect I am not proud of that but it's easier to see nowadays.

.....
I first came across the Filipino martial arts in an online video clip showing the use of knives. After contemplating the subject for a while I decided that my new year's resolution after finishing my studies and getting married is to find a sport I can enjoy.

Since I find gyms to be boring I decided to pursue my interest in blade weapons.

While trying to research some information about Arnis I accidentally reached Neta Shermister's phone. Neta, calmly and patiently, listened to my many questions and replied to them all as many as they were.

Arriving at a trial lesson I couldn't help but be surprised by what I encountered. When I first met Jon I couldn't help noticing he was unlike any other teacher I have met. There was a calm, relaxed air to him and I couldn't help feel he is easy to trust.

Here is this young fellow, peppy as an energizer bunny with certain "geekiness" in his words.

I soon learned Jon surrounds himself with people and students of the same kind. A happy bunch of mostly native English speaking, fun loving, friendly and helpful students who were all treated as friends as much as pupils. The obvious lack of aggressive competitiveness made fitting in very easy and eventually formed a long lasting friendship spanning the entire group.

Jon's teachings reached me



in a way few teachers (of different subjects) could. He is patient, easy to understand and easily fits the drills to every student's needs. He is also easy to follow, fun to listen to and yet keeps you on your toes when you get to crunch time.

Today, two years later, I find I am a new man. I am in more in shape. I feel happier and more confident. I finally got to build up some muscle tone and I've vastly improved my stamina, dexterity, speed, agility, coordination and even the use of my left weaker hand. At this point in life I cannot see myself ever not training in general or giving up on Jon's schooling in the future.

So thank you, Jon, for making me the person I am today. For being a teacher, an educator, a leader and most of all - a friend.

And thank you, Neta, for bringing this wonder of a mentor to us.

Pugay to you both,
Perry



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