

Filipino Martial Arts

Modern Arnis a Family Institution

Digest

Special Edition
2008

Known as the Mother of Modern Arnis

Mary Jane Presas Seletarla

Rose Presas

Remy P. Presas Jr.

Mary Ann P. Presas

Demetrio Jose P. Presas

Marta Teresita Presas Butler



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Contents

From the Publishers Desk

Mother of Modern Arnis

Interview with Rosemary

Mary Jane Presas Seletaria

Mary Ann Presas

Remy Presas Jr.

Maria Teresita Presas Butler

Demetrio Presas

My First Lesson in the Filipino Martial Arts

Modern Arnis: Coming to America

Meeting Remy Presas

Arnis: Classical vs. Modern

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

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

Grandmaster Remy Presas was a respected and established Filipino martial artist when he left the Philippines and came to America in quest for the dream that so many come to America for. He started with nothing outside the Philippines and through the years built the art of Modern Arnis to where it is a common and respected name throughout the world in Filipino martial art circles.

However, something that many do not realize is the woman behind the man as in so many cases, this lady and mother to his children Rosemary Presas is also known as the “Mother of Modern Arnis.” Basically raising the children; Mary Jane, Mary Ann, Remy Jr., Maria, and Demetrio. It would be years before the children would have the opportunity to join their father in the United States, and sadly Rosemary would never have the opportunity to reunite with her husband and the father of her children.

In this Special Edition, that is about the mother of modern arnis and the children of Grandmaster Remy Presas. You will read about their thoughts and experiences. Also Grandmaster Max Pallen, who assisted Grandmaster Remy Presas to come to America and Professor Leo Fong who was a friend both in the Philippines and in the United States both were friends and assisted Grandmaster Presas in his future and know Grandmaster Presas family.

Carlomagno Seletaria the son of Mary Jane and grandson of Grandmaster Presas also tells of his experiences in Filipino martial arts and expresses his thoughts on the subject.

It has been a long and hard road for the family of Grandmaster Presas, and today the family still stands strong in their beliefs. And has been, and is constantly trying to unify the Modern Arnis their father brought forth. But there are many throughout the world; that just use the name of Modern Arnis to further themselves and ignore the family.

So it is hoped that you the reader will learn, understand, and come to recognize that the art of Modern Arnis was not given to anyone outside the family, but still is with the family and that they only want to ensure that the proper respect and skills continue into the future.

Maraming Salamat Po



The Presas Family 1974

L-R: Demetrio Presas, Mary Ann Presas, Rosemary Presas, Jose Presas, Remy Presas Sr., Remy Presas Jr., Mary Jane Presas, Maria Presas

Mother of Modern Arnis

By Buboy Bilon



Before the martial law was proclaimed in September 1972, various foreign martial arts were making a major ingress to the archipelago. Japanese: Karate, Korean: Tae Kwon Do, Chinese: Kung Fu, to name a few, captured the hearts of many Filipino Martial Arts practitioners. Many soon noticed that its own Martial Art, its Indigenous Filipino Martial Art, Arnis, was already taking a backseat in the Martial Arts Scene. Many were about to give up, others preferred to shut up. But not Grandmaster Remy Presas or the Professor, as others would call him.

Grandmaster Remy Presas revolutionized the thought of all the Arnis Masters nationwide. He asserted that nothing else should dominate the Filipino hearts except anything Filipino as well. And according to the Professor, Arnis is not just one of them. It is the ONE!

Soon enough, he was traveling all over the world, promoting the Filipino Art of Stick Fighting. From country to country, state to state, island to island. Remy Presas eventually became a household name, and Modern Arnis, became the yardstick of all Arnis system.

Many insisted that perhaps, if he still lives, he would still be doing the same thing. After all, Arnis was his life; it was all he ever cared for. The name Remy Presas is already synonymous to Arnis. His great success is one for the books.

But certainly, just as everyone adores him, many would still insist that, there must somebody responsible for his uphill climb. After all, no man is an island No man was, no man will ever be. And like they say behind every success of a man, is a woman. And the Professor, undoubtedly, is no exception to the rule.



Rosemary Presas

brain, the inspiration. The Mother of Modern Arnis Mrs. Rosemary Presas!

Born in December 27, 1939, in the peaceful city of Bacolod, Negros Occidental, the sugar capital of the archipelago, Inday was Ms. Rosemary Lopez Pascual.



Professor Remy and his wife Rose - 1967

Before he reunited with God on August 28, 2001 in Canada, he was extremely ill. He was in great pain! During those times, he was not getting any medications, and perhaps he never needed to. He was calling out one name, just one name, "Inday". The only thing he ever needed was to see her. The woman he first fell in love with. The woman he married. The one whose dreams he chased were all dedicated to. The one who shaped him up, the one who helped him got there, the one who was left behind, the one who suffered, but remained silent, only to come out in oblivion, in his death. So she could finish what together, they have started. That one is the

Rosemary was an instant hit in younger years being constantly drafted as a basketball team muse, in every part of the island. Wherever she goes, so go the boys.

In West Negros High School at 16, she was a famous band majorette, what with her stunning beauty and excellent ability to twirl the baton with either her left or right hand, or both at a time. Surely, every man would get captivated. That's why when Remy Presas first saw her, he had a friend introduced them to each other. From then on, Remy became the self-appointed personal bodyguard of Rosemary. Remy was working as a gym instructor aside from practicing judo, jujitsu, karate and bodybuilding. They would soon tie the knot in July 27, 1961. Rosemary was 18 then.

Rosemary went on to finish her studies, Bachelor of Science in Education, major in High School Education and History, Bachelor of Arts major in Political Science and a Master of Arts in Guidance Counseling. Remy started training Arnis with his father and uncle. It was during their first year that they started to shape up a dream of making it big in the martial arts business. But he did not know how to get started.

And just as every Filipino mother is a light to every home, Rosemary taught Remy how to get started, she showed him the way. After Remy returned from series of trips to other islands expanding his Arnis repertoire from renowned masters that time, Rosemary started her thing.

Rosemary made innovations in every training pattern he amassed. She drafted a module of training that is to become the present generation's widely accepted syllabus. Every time he learns something, she would change it. In fact, everything he learned, she modified it. From two sticks to single stick, the short stick, to the long and short combination, to the empty hand drills. Rosemary would give those names, every technique, every step and every pattern, from one strike to another, one step to the next, the blocks, and the counters. Everything! She insisted that the old ways must be changed.

In order to encourage more practitioners, more people to get involved with the then already dying art, she created for him to teach and propagate Modern Arnis! The Professor took it from there. And he took it all the way to the top! Now the whole world knows, the Professor is Modern Arnis. And Modern Arnis is the Professor!

But his contemporaries here would insist that even at the beginning, the Professor was never at a loss for praises for his wife! The way she moved him, the manner she supported him. The Filipino Martial Arts community and the Philippine archipelago likewise, acknowledge the contributions made by the "Mother" to the success of the "Professor".

In fact, even the Philippine government, did not fail to acknowledge Mrs. Rosemary Presas for what has become of Modern Arnis.

Little did everyone knew, it was Mrs. Presas, who orchestrated the idea of sending Arnis instructors to Japan to conduct exhibition in the 1978 Osaka International Trade Fair. Mrs. Presas was a very good "broker" having successfully sold the idea of learning Arnis to various Military units, governmental bureaus and private institutions. Among those that responded to her call are the Composite Military Police training in Camp Aguinaldo, the Philippine Coast Guard in Manila, Military Police in Sangley Point in Cavite, the Philippine Navy – BNS, Mobil Patrol of the Western Police District, DECS (Department of Education, Culture & Sports) seminars in schools nationwide, Castillejos National High School, Central Luzon State University, Ifugao State University, Teachers Camp in Baguio City.

In fact, just recently, PTA (Philippine Tourism Authority) & PIGSSAI (Philippine Indigenous Games & Sports Savers Association, Inc.) has given her the Certificate of Recognition for Valuable Contribution to the Propagation of Modern Arnis. It was given in December 2005, in front of an overflowing crowd at the Rizal Park, witnessed by Arnis Masters, locally and internationally.

Mrs. Rosemary Presas, the Mother of Modern Arnis.

Interview with Rosemary Presas

Patrick Armijo

Note: While Rosemary Presas was visiting her children in the United States, staying with her son Dr. Remy Presas Jr. Mr. Pat Armijo was fortunate to be able to conduct an interview with her over the phone.



Pat: *This is the first time we've spoken.*

Rose: Yes.

Pat: *How are you? How long are you going to visit?*

Rose: I just arrived in the United States two days ago, to visit my children. I am here for about two weeks. I have my own business in the Philippines and have to get back to it.

Pat: *I wish you would stay longer. It would be nice to see you and meet you and get to know you.*

Rose: I wish, I could, “*laughs*” You know, lots of arnis players who went to the Philippines wanted to have a picture with me but I refused. Modern Arnis belongs to the family. It doesn't belong to all these “*want to be guys*”.

There are now many Grandmasters of Modern Arnis and they just came out after the Grandmaster died. They are mayabang, “*yeah mayabang,*” “*laughs*” My son Remy is one of the best Modern Arnis players. It is in his blood. You know, Remy P. Presas is the eldest son of the Grandmaster and Modern Arnis is rightfully his. Other people are trying to take it and trying to say they deserve this and they deserve that. You know, these people don't have humility in martial arts.

Some people who don't know the whole story are ignorant and they believe those fake Grandmasters who only want money, not the legacy. They only want money and fame. They only want to ride on the coattails of Grandmaster Remy. When he was alive, we used to call him the Professor. Now that he's gone we call him Grandmaster. Well let me tell you the woman behind the Grandmaster, the Co-Founder of Modern Arnis is still alive

Pat: *Did you read the Special Edition that we did? Were you able to read that one?*

Rose: I don't read. “*laughs*” Only those genuine practitioners know who I am to Remy Presas.

Pat: *Who do you consider the genuine practitioners in the Philippines right now?*

Rose: In the Philippines right now? Nobody, they are all now men and former students. They pretended to be loyal and they have turned their back on my son Remy and to Professor Remy Presas. That is why I accept nobody except my son as the leader of Modern Arnis. They think the legacy must go on. Maybe there are some of the few but I am disappointed in most of them.

You know without Rosemary Presas there would be no Modern Arnis. I helped make Modern Arnis. I was the woman behind Remy. I am the one who wrote the book and who guided the grandmaster of Modern Arnis.

Pat: *Because you were a teacher?*

Rose: I was the one who called it Modern Arnis and advised Remy the Grandmaster, that we should call it Modern Arnis. Because of the politics and different events, now there are lots of Modern Arnis experts. There are experts all over the place.

Pat: *What about some of the original people like Rodel Dagooc?*

Rose: Rodel was once my helper. He was one of my instructors. He was OK; but, for me the greatest is my son, Remy P. Presas, because the blood of the Grandmaster flows through his body. Rodel is OK.

Pat: *How about Roland Dantes?*

Rose: He's good. He's like a brother to me. He's good in talking.

Pat: *Who else? Who else do you like?*

Rose: I don't like people who have betrayed Remy Presas. Yes, because I'm the only person who knew my husband and my son. They should help my son because he's the only living legend in Modern Arnis. My son is a gentleman.

They made "paninira" to my son. Is that how they honor the Grandmaster? (Paninira in Tagalog means destroy ones character/reputation). I'm sure Remy Presas, in the other world, would not be very happy to see those people who have betrayed him. He gave them, honors, fame, and glory, but now they refuse to recognize my son. That's why I'm willing to be interviewed by you now.

Pat: *We want to get information out to people so they can learn the truth.*

Rose: The truth is I am the woman behind Modern Arnis. I am still the living woman who was there from the beginning. I am the wife of my husband. I have five children by him and I am still married to him in the Philippines. Under the Philippine law, there is no divorce.

Pat: *That's what my wife says. "Smiles"*

Rose: Yeah under the Philippine law there is no divorce and my husband is a Filipino natural born Filipino no matter how many times he gets divorced from me oh no its not valid.

Pat: *It has been said that you have been the business end behind your husband. What was the perspective you had on Modern Arnis in promoting the art?*

Rose: A long time ago Remy Presas my husband was only practicing arnis or escrima. At that time he was practicing judo, jujitsu, karate, wrestling, and boxing. I told him why don't you combine all the martial arts that you know and then improve them in your arnis. We should call that modern because it is a compilation of different martial arts and since it is modern we called it Modern Arnis I encouraged him to call it Modern Arnis.

Pat: *Professor Remy had a Shotokan background who did he get his karate training from?*

Rose: He trained with the late Dr. Lengzon. Dr. Lengzon learned arnis from Remy. They exchanged talents and then he got his judo lessons from the Japanese Founder, I forgot his name (Jiguro Kano). He even got lessons in kung fu from the kung fu Master Leo Fong.

Pat: *How about Max Pallen? Do you remember him?*

Rose: Yes I know him. He's a friend of Remy and they go together. Remy helped him promote his martial art Senkotiros. Max Pallen is still alive. I met him two years ago. He's in San Leandro, CA now.

Pat: *How about Dean Stockwell do you know him?*

Rose: Yes he was a frequent guest in the Philippines they were together with Remy during the filming of "The Pacific Connection". Remy taught Roland Dantes, Dean Stockwell, Gilbert Roland and Nancy Kwan. He taught all of them at the time because he was the martial art director of the film "The Pacific Connection".

Pat: *Can you please tell us about General Febian Ver and is that why Professor Remy Presas left the Philippines?*

Rose: Yes formerly the men of general Ver. He formed an arnis he was a student of Modern Arnis, Recardo Mascardo he was my, in my dialect, compadre. He's a buddy of Remy.

You know what he did he organized a tournament using Remy and printed tickets with triplicates and they only showed one number to Remy and Remy got mad and then they got separated because of money. After that they went to general Ver to practice arnis. They wanted to liquidate Remy because they wanted Remy to join them, he can't do it because he's the Founder and Master. Why should he be under former students of him. A friend of Remy who was the secretary of tourism advisor of the country helped Remy to get out of the country. I don't know what would have happened to his life if Remy would have stayed. Remy never came back to us because he was afraid for his life.

Those people around here who are splinter groups of Modern Arnis used Remy and told him not to be homesick there are lots of women here in America and lots of casinos. They would go together and then Remy forgot us; but, I have no regrets only a few and only god knows what will happen. They gave us another life. This surprises me but I'm telling the truth, just ask questions I'm willing to answer. You know there are lots of writers in the United States. They write me but I never answer why should I do that? I will only talk to a nice guy like you because I know you help my son.

Pat: *We have heard some stories about Professor Remy's desire to prove his fighting skills could you please tell us about his sparring matches or challenges?*

Rose: I don't remember because we were apart. There are lots of organizations in the Philippines. They would come over to challenge Remy, and Remy would say come over to America because he couldn't go to the Philippines.

He had many challenges in the Philippines. A long time ago, a group of martial arts members, in arnis, came to our gym and they challenged Remy. Remy would say "first defeat my instructor then you can challenge me". It would be like lighting. It would be very fast. He fights wild. "But if we fight, he loses to me. ...she laughs."

Pat: *I understand you were helpful getting Grandmaster Remy a teaching position at the college?*

Rose: You know I'm sad to say. Remy could not speak English, at that time. I was the one that did all the communication and all the talking. I tutored him, do this, do that, I taught him a lot. I was the one who interpreted the literature. I was the one that wrote all of his books and now some are claiming it is theirs... Roland Dantes and all the original Modern Arnis practitioners know how I helped and suffered a lot for Remy's martial arts.

Pat: *In Professor Remy's first book there was an artist in there that did some drawings. Was Joe Tan the artist who did the illustrations in the book?*

Rose: It was Joe Tan. He's a cartoonist. He's a good friend of ours. I think in the book the last page in the acknowledgements, you can find his name there. I think he's the one. Yes the Modern Arnis book published in the Philippines covers those names. Joe Tan was a good friend of Remy.

Pat: *Can you please name the students that you know of that were dedicated to Grandmaster Remy?*

Rose: Roland Dantes, Vic Sanchez, Rodel Dagooc when Remy was alive it was ok. Now they have their own Organizations.

Pat: Jerry Rave? Is it different from Jerry Dela Cruz?

Rose: Yes it's Jerry Dela Cruz.

Pat: And who's Jerry Ray?

Rose: Jerry Ray I don't know. I can't remember anymore there were lots. When Remy left us I don't know his friends here anymore. What I know is I heard Kelly Worden I think he's a very die hard friend of Remy.

Arnis in the Philippines now is booming because it is a martial art with or without weapons and now you can fight your opponent. It's because of Remy Presas innovation before you can use stick to fight now you can fight empty hand with self defense.

Pat: *What can you say about all the people that say they represent Modern Arnis. Are they truly dedicated to the promotion of Modern Arnis? What would you like to see from them in their promotion of Modern Arnis?*

Rose: I think number one, many of them, want to be famous and they want to be rich. They want to be known throughout the world but, they cannot compete with Remy Presas in promoting Modern Arnis. What we got is tears and I did not get any honor. I was left behind when in truth I was the woman behind the Founder.

I gave people rank and recognition to people in the Philippines because Remy was not around. I had my own Organization which I continued with Remy's work because I didn't want Modern Arnis to die in the Philippines; so, I continued Remy's crusade in my country. If I did not continue it, Arnis might be dead in my country and might have only survived in America. There have been lots of sacrifices because of Modern Arnis.

Dr. Remy Presas Jr. comes on the line.

Remy Jr: Hello Pat. What do you want to do? Do you have any plans to make some kind of an article?

Pat: I do. I do.

Remy Jr: *So, what is your wish?*

Pat: I just want talk to her and have a recording of her. I asked some questions so that it will directly come from her mouth. I asked a couple of questions that are from the very beginning when people got involved and how it got started.

I liked what she had to say. She is very loyal to you and supportive. I asked who you do you like in Modern Arnis... *"Nobody, just my son... They laugh"*.

Remy Jr: Yeah because what happened, it was, I guess it was a huge mistake for them to re-introduce to the world of being the first generation of Modern Arnis. It went over to their head you know; and that's good because they were there. They started Modern Arnis from the very beginning; but when my dad left they moved to a different system. Just like some moved to other styles and when papa died, he wanted to get the "Grandmastership" of Modern Arnis from the family, at the funeral. The family refused... no this is not yours why would you want to get this?

Right after the funeral of my dad, Rodel, Jerry, Vic Sanchez, Roland Dantes and myself were there and we were discussing about the Grandmastership and all of a sudden someone said openly *"Why don't you have me as the Grandmaster?"* And I just looked to Rodel and to Jerry and said *"What are you talking about?"* And the person said, *"I am one of the first students of Modern Arnis"* and I said, *"I don't think your the first one because Rodel and Jerry came ahead of you,"* and I told them, *"that the only way you can be the Grandmaster is if you should come from within the family; and since your not part of the family I don't think you can become Grandmaster of Modern Arnis"*. You can make your own but you cannot claim something that's not there for you. So you know these are people that came out after my dad passed away, and that's ok.

Pat: *Did you show your mom the Special Edition that we made?*

Remy Jr: She hasn't seen it yet but I'll open it up so she can see it. But even though seen it or not its better for her not to see it, it is better for her to discuss the topic and discuss your questions.

Pat: I just want her to be proud of what we did.

Remy Jr: Yeah she is. I was telling her that Pat is really a good man and he's helping me and she said "I'll talk to him".

While the FMAdigest was in the Philippines recently, it had the opportunity to meet and talk with Rosemary Presas. Since, Mr. Pat Armijo conducted an interview with Rosemary Presas the FMAdigest only asked a couple questions.

FMAdigest: *Can you just say a few words about your children, oldest to youngest?*

Rosemary Presas: Yes would be happy to and brief.

1. **MaryJane:** wanted her to pay more attention on education but she learned and trained for the knowledge to defend herself. Father taught her how to handle stick and play Modern Arnis at an early age.
2. **MaryAnn:** She has the blood of Arnis, loved to train in Arnis rather than go to school and was always going with her father abroad to help promote Modern Arnis. She did finish school as an X-ray technologist.
3. **Remy Jr.:** Since his elementary and high school days he was teaching. Spending many hours with his father. I told him that he would not become rich and famous in Arnis, but found that I was wrong for his father did become rich and famous with his art of Modern Arnis.
4. **Maria Teresita:** A good player of Arnis
5. **Demetrio:** A good player of Arnis

When their father left them they began to forget some of the Arnis and I told them to give priority to their education, because knowledge is power.

FMAdigest: Mr. Pat Armijo and I would like to thank you for talking to us about the Grandmaster, yourself and your children. It has been a pleasure and an honor.



Mary Jane Presas - Seletaria

By Carlomagno Seletaria

She harbored resentment for all those years since her father left them. Life was especially hard for them, and as a custom in Filipino culture, the eldest child usually had to sacrifice many opportunities for their younger siblings. Such was the case for Mary Jane Presas Seletaria. While growing up, she was a natural scholar, but she often had to settle for less because her mother could not afford higher graduate education for her. She tells me she could have been a medical doctor, an area which sparked her collegiate and intellectual interest, if only she could afford it. Nevertheless, she still managed to graduate Magna Cum Laude in B.S. Chemistry.

My grandmother, Rosemary Presas, used to brag how she singlehandedly raised her children, until my grandfather, Grandmaster Remy Amador Presas, took them to the United States that led all of us here. The first to come was Mary Jane, and soon after she was followed by then 13 year-old Demetrio Presas. But life was not easy for them as immigrants in the United States. In fact it was especially hard. They had to start from scratch. They stayed at their father's relative who hardly cared about them as long as they pay their rent on time. She tells me how she thought her father was going to help her and Demetrio financially in the United States, or at least until she found a job, an assumption which proved frustratingly wrong. She was lucky if they see their father twice a year. Remy's absence from her life gave her unresolved feelings of resentment towards him, and lead her to question why he failed to be a father throughout her life.

Nearly thirty years have passed since Remy left the Philippines for the United States, leaving his wife and five children. In the year 2001, on a cloudy July afternoon in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, Mary Jane came face to face with the man she called "Papi." in his death bed. She tells me how she remembers her in father in her youth as that of a family man, a man who loved her dearly and in a very special way, because she was his first born. She is mystified to the reasons why he left them in the first place. She tells me how she always remembered her father as somewhat of a superhuman, built like an ox and strong as a bull, with forearms that could put Hercules to shame. Alas, when they have met again for the last time in their lives, the strong, invincible persona she has always remembered had turned to the grim reality of a terminally ill, bed-ridden, dying old man.



Mary Jane with her son Carlomagno Seletaria, while playing Modern Arnis.

But while his flesh was weak and his mind was deteriorating, his spirit was fighting to live and his soul was crying out to see Rosemary and Mary Jane, to seek forgiveness for all those years he had been absent from the ones he had once loved the most, where he failed as a husband and most importantly, as a father. While he no longer possessed the fullness of his mental faculties, his heart could tell who was who, and even at a distance with his terrible, losing eyesight, he knew that Mary Jane was there in the room. He could no



Mary Jane Presas-Seletaria with her father, Remy Amador Presas, in Victoria, Canada during the last days of his life

longer hide his emotions behind the steel armor of his pride. Indeed he was at the final pages of his storybook, and this perhaps was his weakest and most vulnerable moment. He closed his eyes in shame and held back his tears in front of his first born when, in his deep *Ilonggo* accent, he uttered those words he had been wanting to tell her all his life, “I love you, Mary Jane.” Adding, “I’m sorry, please forgive me.”

With a heartfelt embrace and tears on both sides, it was as if the past had come full circle. With tears on her eyes like I’ve never seen before, she replied, “I love you too, Papi.” To her, this was a moment she had been waiting for almost thirty years. I was there in that room and I was happy for him. I felt that at last he had realized the price he had to pay for a life spent on pursuing his passion, a life he gave up his family for. He loved the Filipino martial arts, and dedicated his whole life to the propagation of Modern Arnis to the world, but unfortunately he paid the ultimate price. Two weeks later, in Victoria Canada, he passed away.

Mary Jane Presas married Elpidio Seletaria Jr., who is a 6th Degree Sikaran Black Belt Lakan Isa (1st Degree) Modern Arnis

Elpidio Seletaria Jr. holds a 6th Degree (Sikaran) Black Belt and Lakan Isa (1st Degree Black Belt) in Modern Arnis. He started studying different kinds of martial arts, such as Karate, Kung Fu, Judo, Boxing, and the use of Balisong (butterfly knife) and nunchaku, when he was 15 years old in the Philippines. He earned his black belt in Shotokan Karate when he was 19 and became an instructor in Pecate Karate Club, Quiapo, Manila, of Florentino Pecate Sr. and Florentino "Boy" Pecate Jr. Pecate Karate Club was affiliated with the Kapatirang Sikaran ng Pilipinas (Karate Brotherhood of the Philippines). He was also a member of the SOS Daredevils from 1973 to 1975 as a movie stuntman and appeared in several pictures. He joined the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and became the chief defensive tactics instructor of the defunct Military Police Brigade, AFP. He studied Modern Arnis under Rodel Dagooc and the late Willie Annang, two of the original students of the late Grandmaster Remy A. Presas. He migrated to the USA after retiring from the AFP. Currently, he is a law enforcement officer by profession, a Deputy Sheriff, Sheriff's Department, City and County of San Francisco, California, USA.



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Mataas na Guro Mary Ann Presas

By MARPPPIO Administration



Mary Ann P. Presas is the second daughter of the late Grandmaster Remy A. Presas. She is the Arnis prodigy of the Presas women. Childhood memories of rigorous "sinawali" drills and repetitive practice of "anyo" in their gym in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines, instilled within her a great love for the art of Modern Arnis. Her training officially started at an early age of seven, but as far as she could remember, her father Grandmaster Remy A. Presas, had been conditioning her since she was four. He would accompany her in all his training sessions, exhibitions, and seminars local and abroad since their settling in Manila until he left for the United States. She assisted her father in all his endeavors, even appearing in all three of her father's Modern Arnis books.



In 1972 and 1974, Mary Ann Presas, together with her father, Grandmaster Remy A. Presas and other expert arnisadors went to Osaka, Japan to represent the Philippines' Department of Tourism at the International Trade Fair, where she performed several Modern Arnis exhibitions. In 1974, the Japanese government was impressed with her skills and

conferred her, a special award. Mary Ann receiving the award was televised nationally in Japan. The same year, she accompanied her father to the First International Martial Arts competition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

When Grandmaster Remy A. Presas left for the United States, Mary Ann, her brother Remy Jr., their mother Rosemary, the rest of the family, and the first generation of Modern Arnis instructors, continued to teach and spread Modern Arnis in the Philippines, holding numerous seminars in various universities and military camps, while they continued to maintain their gym (NAKO/MAFP) in Manila.

In addition to her father's training, she complemented her knowledge in martial arts by having independently studied Karate, Fencing, Kendo, and Judo. Mary Ann Presas holds black belts in Karate and Judo.

She worked her way through school earning Degrees in X-Ray Technology and Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Punong Guro Mary Ann loves to practice and give lessons in Modern Arnis while maintaining her full time job in the housing industry and at the same time, attend to her small retail business.



On right: Grandmaster Remy Presas and Mary Ann Presas



Dr. Remy Presas Jr.



Living in Quiapo, Manila and before Grandmaster Presas left for the United States, promulgating Modern Arnis at the school when other instructors were not around Grandmaster Presas would work out with his son Remy Jr., certain things he would practice with Remy Jr. that he did not with others. Grandmaster Presas had thoughts that if he showed everything to others he would be challenged later on. So there were things that were kept to himself or were shared only with family.

Even though Remy Jr. was young he was in actuality the first student of Modern Arnis, and the first black belt. Often Grandmaster Presas would wake Remy Jr. from sleeping at night saying, "I want to try something."

When Remy Presas Jr was in the 5th grade, his father Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr. left the Philippines on the invitation of Grandmaster Max Pallen of Senkotiros. The school still open, Remy Jr. would train with Jerry Dela Cruz, and then once Jerry Dela Cruz moved away, Rosemary Presas the wife of Grandmaster Presas would have Remy Jr. work out with Rodel Dagooc. However during this time martial arts was secondary and academics in the family was primary, this, the rule of Rosemary Presas. But even though dedicated to his schooling Remy Jr. would continue to train.

It was in 2001 that Dr. Remy Presas Jr. finally fully dedicated himself to teaching the art of Modern Arnis. During his father's final days, he and his father spoke and Grandmaster Presas wanted his son to continue the leadership in promoting the family art of Modern Arnis.



Father of Modern Arnis

Remy Presas, considered the father of modern arnis, teaches son Remy Jr. the rudiments of the sport which he said is closest to his heart next to his family while the rest of his brood looks on. From left Mary Ann, 12, Demetrio Jose 2, Mrs. Rosemary Presas and Maria Teresa, 9. Not in photo is May Jane, 14.

FMAdigest talks with Dr. Remy Presas Jr.

FMAdigest: *Do you know your uncles style of Kombatan?*

Dr. Presas: First of all people would think that I would know my uncles style of Kombatan, but this is untrue, in fact I will admit that I am more or less clueless because I have only studied Modern Arnis with my father and dedicated myself to Modern Arnis. I

was forbidden by my father to study other Filipino Martial Arts; He wanted me to follow our very own family style...



#1Mary Ann Presas, #2Rodel Dagooc, #3Roland Dantes, #4Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr.,
#5Roberto Presas, and #6young Dr. Remy Presas Jr.

FMAdigest: *What do you think about some practitioners that claim to be Senior Master or Master of Modern Arnis that have not really studied the art to its fullest and have not been fully dedicated to Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Dr. Remy Presas “laughs,” Some have left my uncle Grandmaster Ernesto Presas or other styles of Filipino martial arts and have asked me to join Modern Arnis and they have been welcomed, and now they call themselves Senior Masters or Masters. They are not really considered by the family as either, since the family has not granted the rank and them not being able to demonstrate the art to that degree. The family just will not promote anybody unless they can demonstrate the knowledge of the art. To really ensure the rank, the best thing to do is have the family verify and recognize the practitioners’ abilities in demonstrating and promoting Modern Arnis. Others; when the Founder of an art passes away some pass the art off as if they are long time practitioners and etc, to promote themselves and their businesses. The true art is always with the family and is recognized by the family. As was said by my father and I also echo these words, “let me give you a stick, swing it and let me tell you how good you are.”

Senior Masters from the Philippines promoted by my father to the rank of Lakan Walo (Lakan 8) these are the first generation instructors of modern arnis way back in the early 1970’s. In order of seniority they are masters are: Jerry Dela Cruz, Rodel Dagooc, Roland Dantes, and Vicente Sanchez. Roland Dantes and the senior masters were instrumental in encouraging us to carry on the family art of Modern Arnis. I would like to point out, that other than these four Senior Masters, there were no other people promoted to Lakan 8, by my dad in modern arnis. However, three years after my dad’s passing, there were two more promotions to Lakan 8 in 2004. One was Dr. Wilfredo Matias and the other was Kelly S Worden.

In the context of the family, we the children could not promote anyone to Lakan 8 because only my dad gave out Lakan 8. Ask the consent of the Co-Founder and Co-inventor of Modern Arnis, our mother, Rosemary Pascual Presas. She signed and made into effect the promotion of Wilfredo Matias and Kelly S. Worden to Lakan 8. Other than the four Senior Masters promoted by my dad and the two endorsed by the family no other modern arnis practitioners in the world have been promoted to or above Lakan 8, in Modern Arnis.

FMAdigest: *What about the title of Datu?*

Remy Presas: The title of Datu refers to a chieftain or tribal leader. The rank of Datu was given by my dad to certain Modern Arnis practitioners to designate them as leaders in Modern Arnis in their respective geographical areas. The rank of Datu in Modern Arnis is equivalent to Lakan Anim (Lakan 6).

FMAdigest: *Do you think someone else should or could be the Grandmaster of Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: No I do not think so, first blood is priority (family), then one must be fully dedicated to the art, not letting other arts interfere, and also one must be dedicated enough that continuous practice and study of the art is dominate.

FMAdigest: *What would you say is the over all philosophy of Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Practice and perfect what you have learned. Modern Arnis is a progressive style, once a practitioner has the basics. Once given the 'A,' progress to the 'B', once given the 'B,' progress to the 'C'. Continue the progression, the name "Modern Arnis" is the theory behind the art. Always progressing to be modern, adding to the basics of the system. If a practitioner does not do this or cannot, then they are not really promoting the art correctly.

FMAdigest: *What can you say about the memory of your father as concerned to others?*

Dr. Presas: Show and give respect to Grandmaster Remy Presas Sr. the Founder of Modern Arnis, but also respect the family.

FMAdigest: *What would you like everyone to know in general, about Modern Arnis?*

Dr. Presas: Practice what you have learned, give proper recognition to the Founder and the art, and you will enhance and promote the art in the correct spirit. For those who only promote the art for themselves and their businesses, are recognized by the family and will be remembered for the type of person they truly are. The future will show their short comings. Support the wishes of the family.

Dr. Remy Presas has continued on as his father wished, adding and teaching the art so it will progress with the future. Some examples are introducing the palm



Dr. Remy Presas Jr.
with FMAdigest
Publisher Steven Dowd

stick/Dulo-Dulo into the art in the US, for it was not truly taught in the US. Grandmaster Presas was not a big admirer or did not really promote the using of the daga, and sometimes even discouraged it. But Dr. Presas is bringing his fathers teaching of the daga out in his teachings and teaching it to the advance stages.

Dr. Remy has also been studying some of his fathers' videos which were not put out to the public, and shows how the art of Modern Arnis was going to progress. Using these teaching from his father has helped modify and update the art.

A final note: Rosemary Presas and Dr. Remy Presas are putting together a book on Modern Arnis that will show the art of Modern Arnis updated and at another stage in its development for the future.

Dr. Remy Presas
1169 Market St. # 249
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 703-0434

Maria Teresita Presas Butler



Maria Teresita Presas Butler is residing in Manila, Philippines. She does not really practice the art at this time, but takes care of her family.



Demetrio Jose P. Presas

By MARPPPIO Administration



Demetrio Jose P. Presas is the second son of the late Grand Master Remy A. Presas. He is considered to be the Modern Arnis Marvel in the Presas family. Having had a precocious upbringing in the warrior arts, Demetrio showed great intuitive skill and fondness in the art of Modern Arnis early in his childhood. According to his elder brother Remy Jr., he was already swinging the cane ever since he could stand. Demetrio still retains vivid memories of what seemed to be infinite sets of hand-to-hand fighting and austere disciplined martial arts sessions under his father and some of his father's finest students.

It was then that Demetrio received extensive training of what was soon to be known as the First Generation of Modern Arnis consisting of his elder brother and sister, and his father's instructors. As what was in the Presas family, Demetrio was accompanied throughout all the seminars and basically grew up learning the art and developed great love for Modern Arnis. In 1986, 1987, and 1999, Demetrio caught up with his father, and reminisced some of their memorable moments, and received refresher training from his father on numerous techniques.

Demetrio Jose Presas served under the First Battalion Night Marines/Walking Dead Unit Battalion from Camp Pendleton, San Diego, CA in 1990 as a small arms and heavy weapons specialist. In 1991, he participated in Desert Shield, Desert Storm and the evacuation of the US Base in the Philippines when Mt. Pinatubo erupted.

In adjunct to his martial arts background, Demetrio Jose Presas labored very hard to receive a good education in life. In 1989, Demetrio Presas received a Certificate of Completion and Award for Most Outstanding Student in Industrial Electronics in Manila, Philippines. In 1992, he completed a certificate in Business Management Program from Central Texas University, USA. In 1993, he received an Associate in Art, major in Child Development from San Francisco, California USA. In 1995, he was awarded Most Outstanding Role Model of the Year from the Filipino Education Center, where he taught as a Computer Lab Instructor and Playground Coordinator.

Currently, Mataas na Guro Demetrio performs in exhibitions and conducts seminars in Modern Arnis (emphasis on hand to hand combat / mano-mano techniques) while maintaining a full time job in the hotel business. He is married and has a two-year old daughter, who shows interest in modern arnis at her early age.





Grandmaster Remy Amador Presas, with his five children.
(L-R) Remy Jr., Mary Ann, Maria, Mary Jane and Demetrio
During his last days in Victoria, Canada.

My First Lesson in the Filipino Martial Arts

By Carlomagno Seletaria

3rd Degree (Lakan Tatlo) Modern Arnis Black Belt

1st Degree Sikaran Black Belt

It was one fine Sunday morning on a beautiful clear tropic sky when my dad first took me to Manila's historic Luneta Park. I was around the age of four, and little did I know that I would be introduced to an art form that would end up to be a lifelong passion of mine. As we were walking the park I was fascinated at the sight of some groups of people wearing white and red clothing with belts of different colors, moving in unison. They were performing feats of athleticism, delivering flying



kicks and spinning backhands. A group of them also seemed to be fighting each other with pairs of patterned rattan sticks, weaving endless, fluid strikes that left me enthralled. As my curiosity grew I asked my dad, “What are they doing?” My dad replied, “Those guys in white are doing what is called a kata, and those guys in red are doing what is called sinawali.”



Carlomagno with his dad, Elpidio Seletaria Jr.

I was surprised when my dad introduced me to their instructors. He knew them, and they kindly reintroduced my dad to me as one of their finest instructors. I was left in a state of absorption when they started sparring. They were throwing lightning-fast kicks and blocked each other with such efficiency that it reminded me of the many kung fu movies I’ve seen on television. On our drive back home to Quiapo, Manila, I thought about a group of rough and tough street kids in my neighborhood who were fond of bullying my friends. I

knew that soon I had to learn to defend myself. So I asked my dad to teach me martial arts so I could learn to defend myself should the occasion arise.

At first I wanted to learn to fight with the sticks, because it all seemed so cool and intimidating. Unfortunately my dad was hesitant to teach me stating, “You’re too young and immature to learn the sticks, knowing you and your naughty behavior you might go around hitting everyone once you learned it!” Much as it was to my dismay, he was true about every single word, adding, “If you really want to learn martial arts, I will teach you Sikaran first, what you saw in the park, our version of Karate, but first you must learn discipline.” And so I was excited, but I did not know what discipline was.

Little did I know that discipline meant serious business and hard work, my dad started teaching me the fundamentals of Sikaran, or as it was called, the “Filipino art of Kick Fighting.” The art borrows certain elements from traditional kick fighting, Shotokan Karate, and the Filipino weapon arts. We went to Luneta Park on a regular basis where my dad taught me my martial arts lessons. While other kids were having fun playing with their dogs and flying their kites, I had to stay focused as my dad drilled me with fundamentals of blocking and punching.

It was frustrating because I did not expect it to be so rigorous. In my mind, I was expecting other techniques, like flying kicks and stomping side kicks, as I saw in the movies and on that first fateful day in the park. I was eager to learn much more than the fundamentals, so I grew frustrated at my Dad because it seemed to me that he was so slow in teaching me new techniques I could use in a fight.



Carlomagno Seletaria with
Sikaran Supremo Meliton C. Geronimo

And so the time came when the neighborhood bullies decided to jump on me, and I soon had to defend myself. It wasn't the first fight I had been in, but instead of hitting the guy like I was used to, I decided to put to use what my dad taught me. Unfortunately, it came unnatural to me, and I focused too much on how perfect a punch was supposed to be as it had been in practice, instead of just trusting my instincts and going with the flow of combat. In the end I got beaten up, and I came home complaining to my dad. I told him, "Dad, that stuff you've been teaching me doesn't work! I got pounded up!" He replied, "Son, I'm glad to know you're all right, but the reason I didn't teach you all the good stuff is because you haven't learned your first and most important lesson yet, discipline! And I'm sorry if you got some beating today, but at least now you will learn the price of lack of discipline." Disappointed as I was, his words rang echoes in my head, and soon afterwards I decided to take the martial arts and self-control much more seriously.



Carlomagno Seletaria with his grandfather, Grandmaster Remy Amador Presas at Victoria, Canada during the last few days of the Grandmaster's life.

Modern Arnis: Coming to America

By Max Pallen

The first thought that comes to mind in describing Grandmaster Remy Presas, is that, he is the most generous person I had privilege of knowing. He genuinely shared his many years of Modern Arnis expertise with those that seek to learn the deeper aspects of the Filipino martial art.

As a freshman in University of Nueva Caceres in the Philippines, my father thought that it would help me to develop a more prosperous future by coming to America in 1959. It was in the middle of 60's that I thought I should go back to the Philippines to research the Filipino marital art that my grandfather had exposed me to as a child. In 1968 and 1972, my search for an arnis teacher in Bicol was unsuccessful. When I came back to the Philippines in 1973, my cousin took me to several places in Manila to visit martial arts schools that were teaching Philippine martial art. On one late afternoon, I remember in the heart of the commercial area in Manila, the Quiapo district, my cousin took me to the NAKO club, a school on the 2nd floor of a building, where there were people that blocked the stairway. There I met Grandmaster Remy Presas, his wife Rosemary, daughter Mary Ann, son Remy Jr. and other members of the family. I met Grandmaster Presas that afternoon and discussed my interest of learning Arnis. We both decided that I was going to start training the following day.

Everyday I would train with him, one on one, at his gymnasium in Quiapo or sometimes at the old Intramuros church, ruins from WW II, which was located in Malate,

Manila. After several days of working out, we would visit his friends and he would introduce me to them; like Mr. Antonio Mendoza, a writer and also a Wing Chun instructor, his physical education teachers, his students of Modern Arnis at various Colleges and Universities in Manila and the former Mr. Philippines, Rolly Pintoy, now known as Rolando Dantes, a famous movie action star in the Philippines. I also had the opportunity to appear with Grandmaster Presas in the very popular national Television program, "J.Q. Quirino" in 1973 demonstrating the famous live blade-to-blade free sparring.

Since I had arnis experience with my grandfather and being already an experience certified Kenpo Instructor, it was easy for me to adapt Grandmaster Presas style of Modern Arnis. After four to five weeks of training, I was ready to come home to U.S.A. It was the most satisfying and productive experience I ever had in my life. It was the missing link to my goals in martial arts.



Grandmaster Remy Presas was a very charismatic person, spectacular performer, proficient practitioner of his art and an inspirational teacher. But before I left, we spent the whole day at the Intramuros church ruin taking pictures of us for the Modern Arnis book that was in the process of being published. I was impressed with his skills, as well as his friendly nature and his family-oriented personality. I left the Philippines with his blessing, his certificate of "Lakan Isa," as well as a title of Modern Arnis California Commissioner. My last word was, *"yes, I will help you come to America"*.

Motivated and inspired by Grandmaster Presas and my exposure of Modern Arnis, I began a Modern Arnis program in Oakland, California at my Kenpo-based martial arts school. I introduced Modern Arnis to all my black belts instructors.

After a while, I began teaching Modern Arnis to all my advanced students. In 1974, all my Kenpo instructors graduated the special instructor program that I initiated in 1973.

Later, I continued the propagation of Modern Arnis to the American public by performing demonstrations at special events and competing in martial arts tournaments. I continued my commitment in exposing Modern Arnis by linking myself with other Filipino martial arts around Northern California.

Being a very active martial art practitioner in Northern California since the 1960's, I was appointed the Executive Producer of the Asian Martial Arts Exposition, by the Asian Community. Asian Martial Arts Exposition was held at the Kaiser Convention Civic Center in Oakland, California. With Grandmaster Remy Presas in mind, I thought this could be a great opportunity for me to petition Grandmaster Remy Presas to attend and participate in the Asian Martial Arts Exposition. We did everything we could however we were not very successful on getting the petition. Correspondence with Grandmaster Remy Presas continued through 1974. Once in a while, I would get a letter from Dean Stockwell, a Hollywood movie star, who befriended the Professor in the

Philippines during the filming of “Pacific Connection”. We knew with hard work, Grandmaster Presas would be allowed to come to America.

One day in 1975, the phone rang and I picked it up. To my surprise, it was Grandmaster Presas saying, “*I am coming to America. Send me the ticket.*” I could not believe it. It was, a dream come true. I picked him up in Los Angeles during the WMAE (World Martial Arts Exposition) Convention. He was a special guest as one of the Philippine delegates. I remember though the words that he said “*I am coming with you and I will stay with you.*” So I agreed.

With my friends in the Filipino American Political Community, FAPA, they coordinated seminars and demonstrations for Grandmaster Presas all over Northern California Bay Area. Grandmaster Presas and I had the opportunity to perform at public schools, which sometimes had 500 students in the school gymnasium. We conducted seminars at several Law Enforcement Agencies, introducing the basic fundamentals and practical disarming, traps and locks of modern arnis, which impressed the participants. We arranged other seminars at other Bay Area martial arts schools and performed at other public centers like libraries and Filipino cultural fiestas.

I also organized the Instructor’s Training Seminars in my school sometimes with 75 attendees consisting of famous Bay Area martial arts practitioners, local police and sheriffs. It was our persistence that allowed us to demonstrate Modern Arnis at the world-famous Ed Parker’s International Championship. We had to convince Mr. Ed Parker by phone to include us in the demonstrations during his Evening Showcase. Besides propagating Modern Arnis, my black belts and I trained with him whenever time permitted. Those were some of my best days with him.

Now I wonder how I survived those times. It was not all about the money it was all about Modern Arnis being on FIRE! All of the seminars were free of charge to the community. It was the cultural propagation of Modern Arnis in America.

After many month of our propagation of Modern Arnis, I started to realize that I was spending less and less time with my family. I have three boys, Joseph, Max Jr. and Jordan, who were in elementary school. My love for the art became more of a priority than my family. And I had to make a choice. When I realized this, there was no choice to be made, I was raised with strong family values and my choice was my family.



I sat down with Grandmaster Presas and we both tried to find solutions together. He decided to move in with his relatives in San Francisco, California. When we separated, we knew we were going to be friends for life, but the lifestyle of the ambitious Grandmaster Presas, whose dream was to propagate Modern Arnis, didn't correspond with my family lifestyle. Our separation was unfortunate but necessary and a blessing in disguise. There was some resentment from both of us when he left, but I moved on without him until now.

I knew his success cost him a lot for the love of Modern Arnis. But, for him it was a dream come true and a mission accomplished. Modern Arnis now is bigger than anyone can imagine and is still getting stronger. Honestly, he was the best instructor I ever had. I am very proud of him and his accomplishments in Modern Arnis, which is one of my strongest foundations in my style of the Philippine martial art. I was inspired by his many positive qualities; his aggressiveness, courage and determination to succeed, he marked his footsteps with fire. Through time, I found his style of teaching very unique and charismatic. It seemed like he knew what a person wants and he gives it to that person. He was unstoppable because he had a dream for his family and his nation. He exemplifies the quality of a true "warrior."

For several years, I continued to operate a martial arts school in downtown Oakland which included Modern Arnis but without Grandmaster Remy Presas. Having difficulty getting in touch with him, I sought other Masters in Filipino martial art.

Sometimes we would run in to each other but it wasn't like it was when he first arrived in America. I remembered the last time we really talked. It was during the Masters Martial Arts Demonstration in San Francisco, sponsored by the Kuk Sool Won Organization. He had my sons Max Jr. and Jordan participate with him in the demonstration. There were other occasions, but never like the time when we first met in 1973 and during the time that he was staying at my home in 1975 and part of 1976.

Knowing that, I continue to do my own research for Philippine martial art styles in America, as well as in the Philippines until today. I didn't realize he was sick, until he had passed away. I attended his memorial dinner in Philadelphia. There, it was evident that his dream came true and his mission was accomplished. For this, I reminisce the happy days together in the Philippines and in America. When he first arrived, I knew that with his extraordinary martial arts skills, he would be a martial art legend, "the art within the art."

I give my prayers to his family, friends and to his eternal rest... "He was a Great Loss to the Philippine Martial Arts".



At the 40th Annual Sama-Sama seminar held February 2008.
Grandmaster Pallen gives some memorable items to Dr. Presas that his father had given him.



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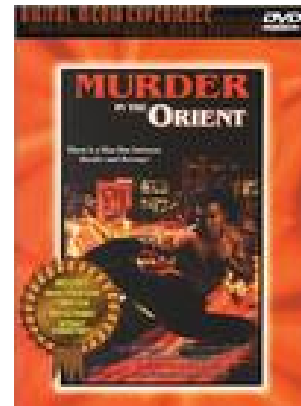


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Meeting Remy Presas

By Leo Fong

In 1974 I went to the Philippines to star in my first movie “Murder in the Orient” with my business partner and friend, Karate Champion Ron Marchini. When the movie was completed, I decided to remain in the Philippines and seriously pursue a movie career. In the mean time I joined the Health and Fitness Club at the Mabuhay Hotel on Ermita Street operated by Joe Ramos, a Filipino Body Builder. It was at the gym that I told Joe Ramos my desire to meet some of the top Arnis/Escrima experts in the Philippines. He introduces me to Antonio Mendoza, a writer for Black Belt Magazine in Los Angeles. Mendoza was also a Wing Chun Kung Fu teacher in downtown Manila. Two days later while working out at the Mabuhay Hotel Health and Fitness Club, Antonio Mendoza came with Remy Presas. After a short introduction Remy said to me, “Kick me!” I didn’t know what to think, so I floated a high kick to his head. He traps my leg and step in to execute a leg sweep. As I was headed for the floor, I grab his hair to break the fall. I did not know what he wanted to do, so I was prepared to do some floor grappling. However, we both got up and Remy smiled, looks at me and said,

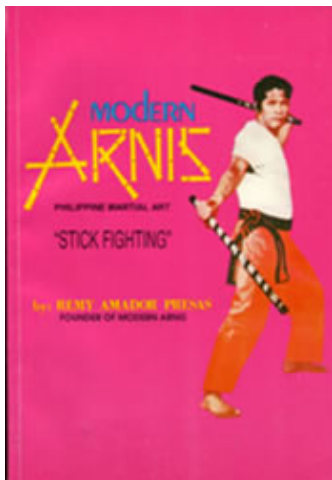


“Verily good, verily good. When do I start working with you?” I said, “Tomorrow morning.”

Sure enough about 7:00 AM I heard a loud knock on my apartment door. It was Remy with an arm full of sticks. He introduced me to his twelve strikes. Since I had been training with Angel Cabales in Stockton, California for over a year, I had no problem adjusting to Remy’s style. We banged the sticks for over an hour and then headed for Quiopo for rice porridge with a thousand year egg. If you don’t know what a thousand year egg is, I will not attempt to explain in this article. All I can say is it hit the spot but smelled like a rotten egg; it’s not for everyone.

Five days a week, Remy, like clockwork would knock on my door for training, during these sessions we explored things that would work and did not work. Remy respected my skills as an experienced martial artist. Some of the trapping techniques we worked on were similar to some of the trapping hand techniques I learned from Bruce Lee in Wing Chun Kung Fu. One of things I remembered about Remy, he was not above learning from others. He was willing to “empty his cup” so he could taste my “tea”. For over a year Remy and I “hung out” going to various places in Manila; mostly by Jeepney or Taxi.

When the American cast of “The Pacific Connection” arrived in the Philippines, Remy introduced me to the likes of Fernando Rey, Dean Stockwell, Nancy Kwan and the Filipino Producer and Director Nepumencio, as well as Roland Dante.



Page 131



I also had the privilege of meeting his family, his wife Rosemary and the kids. I still remember one of his daughters performing a Modern Arnis Kata for me. Remy’s first book “Modern Arnis: Philippine Martial Arts Stickfighting” was written by his wife Rosemarie. I went with Remy to the printer on many occasions to see the work in progress. When the book was complete he gave several dozens of copies, which I sold through the Inside Kung Fu Magazine. Remy’s book was my first foray into the mail order book business. It was the first product I sold through Koinonia Productions. Although I have only two copies of the book, the hard cover was specially made for me and signed by Remy.

After each training session, Remy would share his dream of becoming a famous Arnis master around the world, especially in the United States. I suggested that he produce some 8mm films of Modern Arnis. I even outline for him the original four 8mm films that he sold when he

arrived in the United States in the late 70s. When Remy arrived in the United States he initially stayed with Dean Stockwell and then moved to San Francisco. Once he established himself conducting seminars, he moved from one town to the next. I saw Remy several times after he arrived in the United States but he was always busy. I lost contact with him until about five years ago when he was teaching a seminar at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. I was also on the program with George Dillman, Leon Jay and Remy. Since we first met in 1974, his Modern Arnis art became more refined from years of teaching with George Dillman, Wally Jay and others. His improved skills had a lot to do with keeping an empty cup and daring to taste the other person's tea.

I will always remember Remy as a friendly, giving and a dedicated martial artist. He was always first a friend and then a teacher. The present state of Modern Arnis is a reflection of Remy's giving spirit. Everyone came out of the wood works to claim they are heirs to Remy Presas' Modern Arnis.



April 17, 1974

To Whom It May Concern:

Since being in the Philippines I have been fascinated by the Philippine National art called Arnis. After talking to several Arnis students and instructors I sought out Mr. Remy Presas, known as the father of modern Arnis for instruction.

I chose Mr. Presas for his brand of Arnis because Modern Arnis is close akin to my style of Kung Fu self defense. Modern Arnis embodies both long range and close quarter fighting. The trapping hand techniques of his close quarter fighting is very similar to the Wing Chun style of Kung Fu that I learned from the late James Y. Lee and Bruce Lee. Mr. Presas is a very proficient performer and instructor because he is able to present a complicated art in the most simple and practical way.

I am proud to be associated with Mr. Presas and to learn more about this fascinating art.

Sincerely yours,

Leo T. Fong

I am sure he told everyone he taught and came in contact that they can carry on his system. Many lay claim to that literally. Most are motivated by the potential profit they think they can generate by attaching themselves to the Remy Presas name, much like the present sad state of Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do.

It is my personal opinion that we can best honor Remy and other great martial arts icon such as Bruce Lee, not by exploiting their names but by living an exemplary life seeking our own truth. One of the greatest lessons I learned from Bruce Lee, was the day when he asked me, "Why are you training at so many styles of martial arts?" I said, "I am looking for the ultimate!" He smiled, puts his finger on my chest and pushed and said, "Man, there is no ultimate; the ultimate is in you!" He went on to explain to me the value of taking what is inside of me and developing it. Since he knew I had boxing skills, he suggested I

expand on that within the context of martial arts. It was the same with Remy. He did not insist I be like him. I observed and picked up one element that stood out, it was his ability to move from one movement to the next. I learned from Remy the ability to be fluid and to flow.

At the Black Belt Magazine Hall of Fame in July of 2006, which I was one of the inductees; the biographical information they published about me, made a statement to the effect that I trained with Bruce Lee but “prefer not to promote his system.” I had to explain to several people that I prefer not to call my approach Jeet Kune Do, not because I had no respect for Bruce Lee but because of my tremendous respect for him and his legacy I cannot call my approach Jeet Kune Do. I can still remember his declaration to me, “Man, there is no ultimate; the ultimate is in you!” Jeet Kune Do is Bruce Lee. When he passed, Jeet Kune Do went with him. Those who call themselves Jeet Kune Do are merely imitators. So it is with Modern Arnis. No one will understand Modern Arnis better than its Founder Remy Presas.

May we continue to honor his memory and seek our own path; knowing that Remy was the finger pointing to the door of knowledge. In seeking; when we discover, pause to remember this great martial artist and his giving spirit. Imitation may be the great form of flattery; but being the best you can be in your own rights is the key to self-respect and personal growth. – **Leo Fong**



Visit Leo Fong's Website: **www.leotfong.com**

Learn about: Leo Fong, Wei Kuen Do, Koinonia Productions, Sky Dragon Entertainment.

Arnis: Classical vs. Modern

By Carlomagno Seletaria
Lakan Tatlo (Third Degree Arnis Black Belt)
First Degree Sikaran Black Belt

Carlomagno Seletaria is a Lakan Tatlo (Third Degree Black Belt) in Modern Arnis and a First Degree Blackbelt in Sikaran. He is the only grandson of the late Grandmaster Remy A. Presas. He started taking interest in martial arts at age four under the tutelage of his father. He had a serious study in martial arts when he turned 15. He went to the Philippines to advance his learning in Modern Arnis. Although he did not directly study under his Grandmaster grandfather, he was tutored by some of the Grandmaster's original students, such as Rodel Dagooc, Gerry Dela Cruz, and Vic Sanchez, who in their own rights, are recognized as among the best in Modern Arnis. Aside from the Sikaran knowledge he learned from his father, Elpidio Seletaria Jr., a 6th Degree Sikaran Black Belt, he also studied under Sikaran Master Meliton C. Geronimo himself. While in high school (Salesian High School, Richmond, California) through college (San

Francisco State University, San Francisco, California), he had been performing a number of Modern Arnis exhibitions, including his appearance in a College TV channel, introducing Arnis as part of the Philippine cultural heritage. (This article was originally written in fall 2001, when he was 16 years old, right after the death of Grandmaster Remy Amador Presas).

Should a Martial Artist Cling to the Classical Methods or Catch Up with the Times and Modernize?

I hope that my fellow students in martial arts (we are all and will always be students) read through this article with an open mind and leave their slippers of judgment and conclusions at the door before they enter. A mind without judgment and prejudice is closer to realizing the truth than that of a mind constrained with the burden of bias.

The Classical Era



The massive wave of Filipino martial art systems that came into the scene and out of the woodwork in the last three decades is phenomenal. A whole slew of grandmasters and styles were developed when before were unheard of.

But what is not widespread knowledge in the history and development of these systems is that in the pre-Remy Amador Presas and the Modern Arnis phenomenon era (prior to circa 1960s), there was no organized and systematic approach in teaching Arnis, Kali, and Eskrima. Before the Modern Arnis of Remy A. Presas, the Arnis masters (or maestros as they were called) imparted students who were outside of their family line with limited knowledge due to issues of loyalty and secrecy. Arnis was taught in a pedigree, and knowledge in the arts of the blade and the stick were held in great secrecy by its practitioners, while the influence and pressures of the dominating western cultures of the Spaniards and the Americans entombed any chance of the re-emergence of the art as a national symbol of the Filipino's cultural strength. Thus Arnis was doomed to die a silent death.

A very important aspect of their training was that most modern concepts of the art seen today were absent, especially the most civil way to teach Arnis where the student will not be hurt badly or in a way that minimized injuries. Secrecy and pain were synonymous with the name Arnis to non-practitioners.

The Maestros clung to their traditions. One such was that they believed the cane was sacred, because it held the power of life and death, and the soul of the art, and with it the soul of the ancestors who wielded it. Thus blocking was directed to the hand and the forearm and not at the cane itself. This mentality in teaching proved to weed out students who were not serious in learning the art and at the same time discouraged large numbers of students who got hurt and subsequently lost interest in learning the art. This in turn slowly led Arnis to the brink of extinction.

The Maestros did not have a progressive system of teaching both on the striking and blocking techniques. It was largely a notion of teaching technique after technique in a disorganized fashion. The sticks were swung in a very ferocious and uncontrolled fashion, simply disregarding that in order to learn and minimize injuries there has to be

control in practice. The students were given tools, yet no instructions for its complete comprehension. The students did not learn the techniques in a sensible order and with it no progression on the different applications of the methods, as most Maestros focused largely on one style (i.e. Abanico style for one or Contrada for another) and neglected to expand the fundamentals into a more comprehensive system. This unorganized and deficient approach of the art in its "rawest" form, though not entirely negative in itself, did not help in the propagation of Arnis. For if one can only grasp a single aspect of the art, how can he/she continue to teach it well and proceed with his/her own path? This is akin to a painter who has but one color to use when he wants to paint an entire rainbow. His picture would be incomplete.

These men were not fools however. They knew how to fight. They knew the method of combat. They knew how to apply the art, yet like any other doctrine or school of thought, it started with an idea, some sort of truth. A wise man realized and experienced the truth, yet he did not set it down and write in stone. He instead, preferred to keep it raw in his mind and the minds of others. As time passed, the wise man passed away as well, and his disciples took what has been shared, what was given, and what was raw and vibrant, and turned it into doctrine and crystallized it as what was, what is, and what always will be. What was once alive and real has been dried of its life force, ceremonies were fabricated, the truth set to adhere to critical standards and the approach formalized, and the wisdom became a tradition.



Modernization

Then came Remy Amador Presas and his revolutionary style of teaching in the form of Modern Arnis. In the late '60s the art started gaining ground in the city of Bacolod. By the '70s it had reached Manila and became nationally renowned. Through his efforts and countless exhibitions later, Modern Arnis had caught the eye of Col. Arsenio de Borja, director of the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF), and encouraged and supported Arnis to be taught as a regular subject in Physical Education throughout various colleges in the Philippines. This in turn led Remy A. Presas on a crusade to re-introduce the art of Arnis to the general public and Modern Arnis as the first Filipino martial art to be taught in high schools, colleges, and universities in the Philippines.

Remy A. Presas' wife, Rosemary Pascual Presas, renowned for the title "Mother of Modern Arnis," aided him in his dream of reintroducing the art of Arnis, donating her years of experience as a college teacher in devising a modern approach and developing a progressive curriculum from which Arnis can be comprehensive in a way that was void of all the classical burden that nearly extinguished it from the Philippine culture. Many of the antiquated techniques in Arnis have been modified in order to be easy to learn and to avoid injuries to students, and its presentation to help students grasp the intricate styles and techniques without sacrificing the soul of the art. As the fruit of their labor the first

book of the art entitled, Modern Arnis: Stick Fighting was published in 1974 and remains as a template of the teaching curriculum taught today by its practitioners.

Controversial as it may sound, Remy A. Presas was the first to devise a 12 striking structure of the angles of attack. The previous methods did not have such an order, which explains why it was more challenging to learn. The students were taught how to control the strikes in practice, and when to let loose in combat. This type of practice ensured not only safety of the students, but a simple step by step pattern in muscle memory. After Remy A. Presas 12 angles of attack and the success of the methodology of teaching that Modern Arnis was gaining, other Eskrimadors found it necessary to pattern their striking order from that of Modern Arnis, this in turn helped in the propagation of the Filipino martial arts in general.

An Arnisador's Values

Seeing the fears of the old masters in the misuse and disloyalty of students in the art, Remy A. Presas devised and emphasized morals values in Arnis in the form of the Six Cardinal Principles. These principles emphasized that an Arnis player must be of good character, sincere to himself, his partners and his teachers on his intentions in learning and practicing, a person of discipline, a person of self-control, a person who treats others with the same etiquette they would wish upon them, and most importantly, a person who values his or her loyalty to the teacher that he or she owed so much of his knowledge. The opposite of these values or the misuse of the art is a spit and slap to the face of those who came before them.

Extension of the Hand

In the revolution that Modern Arnis stirred in the Filipino martial arts, the classical way of teaching was the first to go, as Remy A. Presas emphasized that Arnis can be practiced just as safely as any other sport. Instead of hitting the hand and forearm in practice, the stick would hit the stick, or in cases of stick versus empty hand, it would be with controlled force. The stick of course, is just an extension of the hand, and whatever weapon an Arnisador can wield may be effective and lethal when one understands the concept of Extension of the Hand. This is very important in learning the essentials of Arnis, and this methodology of teaching attracted new and large amount of enthusiastic students. Arnis was no longer seen just as a violent man's game as it had been perceived, but that it can transcend itself as an aesthetic and cinematic art, as a sportsman's passion, as an effective self-defense technique, and of course, as a lethal form of self-defense.

The Essential Concept

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines Modern as, characteristic of present and recent time, contemporary; not antiquated or obsolete. Modern Arnis was founded on a basic concept that one must adapt, evolve, and grow in accordance with what is necessary in the moment, so that one can survive. Almost Darwinist in a sense but not



necessary as brutal, Remy A. Presas modernized classical Arnis so that it would catch the public's eye, and in turn helped the Filipino realize the beauty of the art, and saved it from the state of cultural oblivion. Techniques that were forbidden to be taught were exposed in the art, such as the empty hand disarming against stick, of which the Maestros deferred from teaching, because the very notion of teaching someone how to take away the stick of an Arnis player was absolutely abhorred, thinking that the emphasis was that the stick should be the one that would end up to be much more superior and in turn come out as winner. But that had to be changed. Such mentality was neither practical nor beneficial for the propagation of Arnis. And so Modern Arnis broke ground by defying classical methods of teaching, and coping with the necessities of the times. Growth has been emphasized, the force that drove the will of the art must be fluid and never crystallized, for there was no growth in stillness or preserving tradition, as this very notion defied the essential element from which Modern Arnis was concocted from.

A Criticism of Today's Modern Arnis

Since the death of my grandfather, Remy A. Presas, in August of 2001 in an uncomfortable care home in Victoria, Canada, various factions have continued to expand his legacy and the legacy of Modern Arnis. Whether it be my family's MARPPPIO, Kelly Worden's NSI, Tim Hartman's WMAA, Rodel Dagooc's AAIL, Jerry de la Cruz's ACP, Vic Sanchez, and too many others to mention worldwide (of which most are legitimate and some are hacks), their efforts ensure that the teachings of Remy A. Presas will not be forgotten.

But then again history can inadvertently repeat itself. With no clear and present leadership in the art today, people cling to what have been taught to them, and even worse, claim that it is better than the other, or its predecessor. Arnis is Arnis. For one to think that: This is the way it was taught to me, and to keep the art alive and the Professor alive in me, this is the way I shall keep it, is thinking backwards. One must grow with the art and the art must continue to flow.

On another note, don't limit yourself to one aspect of the art, just because it is contemporary, or "it's what the professor emphasized," whether it is the Sinawali techniques or the Tapi-Tapi method. Take for example, a student who practices his tapi-tapi drills so rigorously, that he focuses on it day and night. So much so that he envelops himself into believing that Tapi-Tapi is a martial art of its own, and not part of the broad spectrum of techniques that Modern Arnis has to offer. After all, how often do you have an aggressive encounter with someone on the streets with good knowledge of Tapi-Tapi? Oh, and the fact that you and him are both armed with a rattan stick! And the fact that you both engage in attack in such manner? In this case, the word "lethal" takes an entirely different definition.

Liberate yourself from the negative mentality that the old maestros have had and value their strategy in combat. What it really comes down into is that Arnis is Arnis, and it shouldn't get any more confusing than that. Do not crystallize it; share it, and share it and continue to share it. The old maestros have died with their own techniques unknown and unshared because of their paranoia in loyalty and secrecy.

Modern Arnis is not just a martial art, it is a way of discipline and morality, and to learn it is to express one's fluid knowledge in an uninhibited and unrestrained manner.



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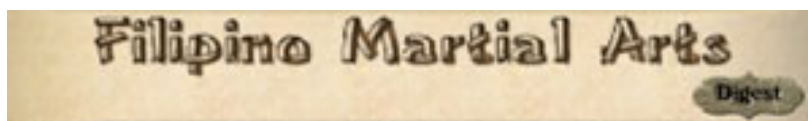


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