

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Taboada World Camp
2008

Special Issue
2008



Happy 60th Birthday



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Contents

From the Publishers Desk

Grandmaster Bobby Taboada 60 Years Young

Balintawak World Camp - An Event, Worth Remembering

Australians Travel to Vegas for World Camp

My Weekend in Vegas

My Adventure into 'Bobby Taboada' World of Balintawak Eskrima

Fiesta Henderson

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

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

Las Vegas, Nevada, a party town to say the least, and what other place would be good to celebrate Grandmaster Bobby Taboada's Birthday and to have a World Camp?

Well the answer is easy it was the place and it was a great time had by all. With Saturday seminars instructed, by Ama Guro Raffy Pambuan, Master Willie Lim, Master Samuel Scott, Grandmaster Topher Ricketts, and Master Nene Gaabucayan.

Lunch which was at the buffet at the Fiesta Henderson Hotel & Casino was only surpassed by the evenings activities at the banquet, with a super performance by Lohan School of Shaolin, and demonstrations by, Master Joe Tan, Punong Guro Hufana with his son Mike and his daughter Lizelle, Master Scott, Grandmaster Jorge Penafiel and visiting from the Philippines Grandmaster Bob Silver Tabimina.

Then bring into the Balintawak ranks of Grandmaster through a candle ceremony by the Grandmasters of Balintawak and students Nene Gaabucayan.

OK now you would think with seminars, demonstrations that what could make a great ending to this event. Well Sunday morning started with Grandmaster Taboada instructing all morning, followed by testing of Balintawak students in the afternoon. The FMAdigest congratulates students of Balintawak that passed and moved to the next level. The FMAdigest wants to thank Jeff Soriano, Mitch York, and Steve Mirman for their views and articles. And a special thank you to Sam Buot and Gabriel Rafael for providing most of the pictures.

So it is hoped that with this Special Issue you will get an idea of the event and it is hoped that if Grandmaster Taboada has another camp you attend. And last but not least Happy Birthday to Grandmaster Bobby Taboada.

Maraming Salamat Po

Jeff Soriano supplied sticks and gear for the event as well as contributed printing for the testing and banquet.

Visit



www.arnisimporters.com

Grandmaster Bobby Taboada 60 Years Young



Grandmaster Bobby Taboada was born in Cebu, Philippines on November 6, 1948, the oldest of the five children of Sergio and Gabriela Taboada. He grew up fighting in the streets of Cebu, not because he was a troublemaker but because it was the only means of survival on the streets. He in fact is soft-spoken and very slow to anger except when he rises up in defense of himself which is almost nil and infrequent. Bobby was first introduced to eskrima by his father.

Grandmaster Taboada left home when he was twelve and lived with Grandmaster Teofilo Velez like an adopted son as well as a student of eskrima. That literally meant sitting at the foot of the master in full obedience and loyalty in his search for knowledge and wisdom. That was also when he had the opportunity to learn from Grandmaster Jose

Villacin and Great Grandmaster Venancio "Ansiong" Bacon the secrets of Balintawak Eskrima. Bobby discovered that the art was deadly, effective and sophisticated. As a fearless and undaunted volunteer for fights and tournaments, Grandmaster Taboada was trained by all the Balintawak Masters in the practical aspects of combat fighting. In this light, it must be emphasized that in the Philippines, Eskrima is not a sport in the traditional sense of the word governed by rules of safety. It means combat fighting and sometimes a fight to the finish. Only lately have there been efforts to make it safe as a sport. Bobby is a long way from the street battles in Cebu, where he has experienced street battles and deadly fights, some with multiple opponents. He has also witnessed "fights to the finish" until one either surrendered or died. Now he is on a mission to promote Balintawak Eskrima worldwide with primary emphasis on self-defense techniques, which he has continuously researched, tested, retested and improved on his own.



Teofilo Velez



Teofilo Velez and Bobby Taboada

Grandmaster Taboada Balintawak Arnis Cuentada Method

Balintawak Arnis Cuentada Focuses on the use of a single stick and empty hands, concentrating on close range fighting tactics, and can be classified as a "modern system", a composite of several fighting methods, as opposed to the ancient and classical methods.

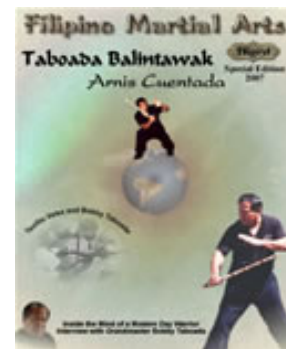
The "Cuentada" system (from the Spanish word, "cuentar" or "to counter") follows a basic principle of physics and mechanics: the equality of force and counterforce. For every resultant force, there is an equal and opposite reacting force. As applied to the practice of Balintawak arnis cuentada, this mastery of the offensive and defensive movements requires a series of well planned movements, wherein the opponent cannot but reply with a corresponding set of forced movements and reactions. In this way, the opponent is always kept under complete control. A true master of the art can therefore predict with precision, which part of the body of the opponent he will target and hit.

In the Balintawak Eskrima style the stick is used as the primary training tool to familiarize the students with weapons and blows. It is believed that familiarity in confronting weapons reduces fear and panic in actual combat. It is a combat both with weapons and bare hands. The theory is that the stick is only an extension of the arm and that the human body can only move in so many normal ways.

This is the development of certain basic blows to illustrate the source and direction of blows. Beneath the wide swinging, flashy and visible blows are the sophisticated secret moves, dynamics in balancing, holds, parries, clips, ruses, feigns, tripping, sweeping, kicking, trapping, reversals of motion and direction, blows with simultaneous offense and defense and a myriad of combination blows with the stick, fist, elbow, knee, foot or head butt. It is easy to hit but difficult to defend. Thus an emphasizes is on a strong defense for all beginners, mastery of the defensive stage of the art and then the incorporation of speed in the hand-eye coordination through reflex and flexibility in the body movement.

There is no limit on where and what to hit except in friendly workouts where injury is avoided and safety is imposed. As a matter of fact, what is considered foul in many arts is what is taught and mastered in Balintawak. It is combat, street fighting and self-defense.

To know more about Grandmaster Bobby Taboada, download the Special Edition.



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Balintawak World Camp - An Event, Worth Remembering

By Jeff Soriano

On November 8-9, 2008, a very special event unfolded for Balintawak practitioners and martial artists from around the world. Grandmaster Bobby Taboada hosted this one of kind event for two reasons, to gather the many people he has taught, trained with and befriended through the years, and to celebrate his 60th birthday. The location was Las Vegas, and the event was billed, International Balintawak World Camp, the first of its kind.

For the select few that arrived on the 7th, they were treated to a workshop with Master Nene Gaabucayan, a 35 year Balintawak Master originally from the Philippines, now residing in Los

Angeles. For the rest of the 50 or so attendees and dozen or so instructors and demonstrators who came from as far away as Australia, the UK, and throughout the US, the seminar kicked off bright and early on Saturday, November 8th, with an impressive lineup martial artists and Masters. Ama



Steven Dowd, Sam Buot, Joe Tan, Bobby Taboada, Jorge Penafiel, and Nonato Nene Gaabucayan

Guro Raffy Pambuan was first up, sharing a few gorgeous knife techniques with the group, equally entertaining and teaching at the same time. As has become one of his signature calling cards, he broke out his bull whip for an impromptu demonstration later in the session, shredding a piece of paper into stamp sized shards. Next up, Master Willie Lim, an old friend of Grandmaster Taboada's, sharing some insight into his teaching philosophies based on a lifetime of training and teaching in Tae Kwon Do, Karate and Tai Chi. Soft spoken and smiling, Master Lim talked about his concepts of practical application of traditional martial art forms. Following Master Lim, Master Samuel Scott, with over 30 years of training in various martial arts, taught a series of practical knife and empty hand applications that got pairs of attendees to mix it up on the Fiesta Hotel ballroom floor. Master Scott, a humble teacher and self-described "student of the martial arts", moved like a man half his size while he demonstrated some brutal techniques to the crowd. Next, Master Pat Strong, a first-generation student of the great Bruce Lee and Master Rick Mitchell spoke about the subtleties of reaction time, energy flow, and the thought process for taking martial arts development to the next level. An obvious thinker and innovator, Master Strong offered a welcomed cerebral pause to the physical aspects of the seminar.

After a jam-packed morning with the masters, the group broke for a massive buffet lunch which allowed everyone to chat and recharge their batteries for the remaining sessions.

Festival BUFFET All-You-Can-Eat



Ama Guro Pambuan enjoys the dessert bar





Immediately after lunch, Grandmaster Topher Ricketts brought the crowd of attendees and observers back to attention with a very physical session with the double sticks. A legendary martial artist, who has been documented in many publications, Grandmaster Ricketts and his fellow Bakbakan presenter, gave everyone a small taste of the complex footwork and movement that are trademarks of Illustrisimo kali. After a short break, Master Nene Gaabucayan, a soft spoken master of Balintawak, gave an impressive demonstration of his art, exhibiting both quickness and power with the single stick. Taking volunteers from the audience, Master Nene "tapped" his friendly opponents at will, daring them to defend his strikes. He ended his session by splitting a baby coconut with a flick of his stick.



The evening banquet was a beautiful display of friendship and pageantry and ceremony. Grandmaster Taboada, dressed in a traditional Filipino Barong Tagalog, took to the mic to welcome everyone and thank them for their support. He shared anecdotes of his life, from his humble beginnings in Cebu, where he first met friend Bobby Tabimina,



through the many friends that helped him along the way - many of whom were seated throughout the audience. One was Master Irwin Carmichael his very best friend who helped Grandmaster Taboada to locate in Charlotte, North Carolina and introduced him to the law enforcement there. The theme of his life experiences seemed to be summed up by the very people he was speaking to: good friendship, loyalty and an openness to share his art with people regardless of race, country, or background. After Grandmaster Taboada's speech, Punong Guro Myrlino Hufana and Raffy Pambuan presented newly minted hall of fame plaques to Grandmaster Taboada and Grandmaster Ricketts for their contributions to the Filipino martial arts.

For a moment, the mic was set down as the crowd was delighted by a dance troupe. It started off with a simple greeting and then on with the show. The Entertainment was provided by, the Lohan School of Shaolin, headed by Sifu Steven Baugh, of Las Vegas, Nevada. Known for their expert performances. His students with drums, cymbals, and bells put on an outstanding demonstration, which included the Lion Dance, Weapons forms and applications.





Lohan School of Shaolin
3850 Schiff Drive.
Las Vegas, NV 89102
(702) 364-5875
Website



Once the dance troupe had finished and everyone had eaten, Grandmaster Taboada invited just a few of the many Masters in the audience to a "two minute" demonstration of their choosing.

Everyone enjoyed the great food...



...and of course a bar for refreshments

Master Joe Tan demonstrated the long stick techniques of Tapado, while Master Scott performed a few blindingly fast open hand weapons disarms and Punong Guro Hufana gave a short demo with his daughter and son. Grandmaster Jorge Penafiel took a minute to demonstrate his palm stick techniques. After a short pause, where Grandmaster Taboada searched the room for the next "volunteer", he asked the audience, "*Who would like to see Grandmaster Bobby Tabimina?*" to which the audience applauded a warm sign



Bobby Tabimina and Bobby Taboada



Punong Guro Hufana and Ama Guro Pambuan present Grandmasters Taboada and Ricketts with the WFMAA Pamana ng Lahi Visit www.worldfma.com to learn more...



Punong Guro Hufana with his son Mike and his daughter Lizelle and student

of approval. Grandmaster Tabimina did not disappoint, first, taking the mic to tell the audience how much his friendship with Grandmaster Taboada meant, referring to him as "number one" and himself as "number two", then demonstrating the close range techniques and unique style of Tabimina Balintawak with his son.

The evening concluded with an elaborate candlelight ceremony by Grandmaster Taboada, conferring the appointment of Nene Gaabucayan to the title of Grandmaster, for his 35 years of dedication to teaching and promoting Balintawak around the world. The moment was a fitting end to an eventful day.



Grandmasters: Sam Buot, Jorge Penafiel, Nene Gaabucayan, Bobby Taboada, Bobby Tabimina



Sam Buot, George Penafiel, Topher Rickers, Bob Silver Tabimina, Bobby Taboada, Nene Gaabucayan, Raffy Pambuan, Scott Samuel

Bobby Taboada, Bobby Tabimina and Sam Buot



Menchie and Sam Buot, Steven and Vicky Dowd



Menchie Buot, Luz Taboada, Vicky Dowd

Master Pat Strong and Steve Mirman



Chad Tabimina (son of Sir Bob and head instructor Tabimina Balintawak USA), Sir Bob, Jorge Penafiel, Jojo Ygay (Nephew of Sir Bob and Head Instructor West Coast Tabimina Balintawak USA)

On Sunday, the attendees woke to a special training session with Grandmaster Taboada. For about 3 hours, with the help of Masters Patrick Schmidt and Robert Kampfer, Grandmaster Taboada put the group, many of whom have trained with him for years, through a rigorous training session of power strikes, footwork and fundamentals, typical of a Taboada workout. From there, the group broke for another huge lunch at the buffet, while a select group of individuals prepared for their afternoon testing.



Beginning around 1pm and ending just before 6pm, 11 students tested for their respective certifications for Completion of the Art and Qualified Instructor, in front of a panel of notable Balintawak instructors and masters. Testing, as expected, was long, difficult, and intense, with most of the student's tests ending with an array of attacks from randomly selected masters in the panel. The final attacks were as varied as the people who delivered them, with a special final attack delivered by master grappler and fighter Rick Mitchell. Congratulations to...



Testing group

Qualified Instructors:

Al Ainsworth - Melbourne, AUS
Ross McDonald - Marimbula, AUS
Darrell Parker - Melbourne, AUS
Jeff E. Love - Bowling Green, KY
Steve Mirman - Charlotte, NC

Completion of the Art Certificate:

Jemar Carcellar - Richmond, VA
Scottie Hartsell - Charlotte, NC
Seonsook Park - Albuquerque, NM
Jeffrey Soriano - Winston Salem, NC
John Soriano - Seattle, WA
Scottie Hartsell - Charlotte, NC
Adam Greenspan - Florida



Jeffrey and John Soriano

Final thoughts on this event bring to mind, not only the caliber and skill level of the martial artists that were present, but the show of brotherhood and friendship that was on display throughout the weekend. As Grandmaster Taboada stressed in his speech, it is indeed about friendship, for without friends he would have no students and without students he would not be who he is today.

Australians Travel to Vegas for World Camp

By Mitch York

A small group of Balintawak practitioners traveled all the way from Australia to train with Grandmaster Bobby Taboada at his home in Charlotte, North Carolina and then ventured together to Las Vegas, Nevada to participate in the 2008 International Balintawak World Camp. The group included Fully Qualified Instructors Garth Dicker and Paul Gale as well as Allen Ainsworth, Ross McDonald, and Darrell Parker.

The men hail from two different areas in Australia which includes Melbourne, Australia and Marimbula, New South Wales, which lies approximately midway between Sidney and Melbourne.

Some of the members of the group began their association with Grandmaster Taboada more than 15 years ago, while he lived in New Zealand. It was through their Australian Goju Karate instructor that they were introduced to Balintawak. Though the Australians already had a familiarity with Filipino martial arts through an excellent Modern Arnis teacher, the Balintawak style taught by Taboada, which emphasized powerful techniques, made a favorable impression on the large statured Australians.

It was specifically Balintawak's emphasis on powerful countering techniques that drew the Australians to the art. "The idea is to control other people and to control yourself," said Qualified Instructor Dicker. It is perhaps this aspect of Balintawak, more than any other, which helps to filter out unsavory characters from the art. "Self-control is a very important part of the martial art and the high emphasis on power... the object is that you can end a conflict with one hit to the head," he noted. This level of self-control, and the knowledge of the power that one possesses, requires a high level of physical and mental discipline and might prevent overly aggressive people from pursuing the art for any length of time.

The distance between Australia and the United States hasn't been a deterrence for the dedicated martial artists from "down under" and is evidence of their commitment and discipline to studying Balintawak. Since Grandmaster Taboada's migration to the United States, the Australians have kept in regular contact with him by traveling once every other year to train in North Carolina at Taboada's school, and inviting him to their home country on the years in between. Furthermore, Garth Dicker, whose medical practice occasionally requires him to travel to the United States for medical conferences, finds additional opportunities to stop in to Grandmaster Taboada's home for further training.

When asked about his association with Grandmaster Taboada, *"it's a very special relationship I feel that I have with him,"* said Mr. Dicker. *"He's like a mentor and a father-figure, and he treats you like family. When you stay with him, we stay in his house...it's very different that the average master/pupil relationship that Bobby's*



L-R: Paul Gale and Ross McDonald, taken during McDonald's test for Qualified Instructor.

created." He paused briefly and noted that *"it's the friendships that you make out of something that makes it worthwhile."*

The group traveled to North Carolina first, where they had the opportunity to engage in intense one-on-one training with Grandmaster Taboada for a week prior to continuing on to Las Vegas for the second portion of their ten day journey.



Training group a week prior to the World Camp

For Ainsworth, McDonald, and Parker, the extra time training with Taboada showed, as they demonstrated what Grandmaster Jorge Penafiel of Cincinnati Balintawak called "an awesome display of speed and power" during their testing for Fully Qualified Instructor status.

A unique aspect of Grandmaster Taboada's test for a Fully Qualified Instructor requires the testee to introduce 24 new techniques to the Balintawak curriculum, drawn from either their experience with other arts, or from new interpretations of already existing Balintawak techniques. To that end, Mr. McDonald's precision and power were obvious, and his ability to incorporate both Karate and Muay Thai techniques with Balintawak, was impressive, to say the least. Additionally, the endurance required of Ainsworth and Parker during their test, was a testimony to not only their fortitude, but to their quality as martial artists as well. By the end of their test, both men appeared to be physically and mentally exhausted, but were obviously still capable of continuing on, if required to do so.

All three of the men testing to become Qualified Instructors demonstrated a sound knowledge of Balintawak, and their ability to help the art grow, as they seamlessly interwove techniques drawn from a variety of sources during their public examination.

Grandmaster Taboada's open-minded approach to Balintawak, and the time spent training intensively in North Carolina, was perhaps the most impressionable parts of the entire process for some of the members of this special group of Australians. As Mr. Dicker noted it is, "his [Grandmaster Taboada's] ability to constantly challenge you; to constantly come up with new things," that was most impressionable. "I am surprised with the scope of the art and his openness to new ideas. It always evolves into something that can be added on to," he added.

Because of Grandmaster Taboada's guidance, the future of Balintawak is certainly sound in Australia. The distance between their home and the United States has proven to be only a minor inconvenience to this group of dedicated and capable martial artists. The entire group will continue to be a shining example of this dynamic art, and they will be surely serve as responsible ambassadors of Balintawak for many years to come.



L-R: Paul Gale, Alan Ainsworth, Garth Dicker, Grandmaster Taboada, Darrell Parker and Ross McDonald

My Weekend in Vegas

By Mitch York

Because I have never been to a seminar hosted by Grandmaster Bobby Taboada before, I really wasn't sure what to expect when I traveled to Las Vegas, NV for the 2008 International Balintawak World Camp and to celebrate Grandmaster Taboada's 60th birthday.

It turned out to be so much more than I could have anticipated. I had the opportunity to be introduced to a broad spectrum of disciplines during the numerous seminars, participated in the celebration of Grandmaster Taboada's birthday at a large formal banquet, had the once in a lifetime chance to witness the promotion of Nene

Gaabucayan to Grandmaster, and finally, got a sneak preview of what lies ahead of me as several students tested for "Completion of the Art" and "Qualified Instructor" status.

As the seminars began, I was impressed with the tactical, real-world practicality of the material available in the Pambuan Arnis and Combat Kuntao systems. While I enjoyed the opportunity to experience the technical aspects of both of these dynamic systems, I was especially impressed by Ama Guro Pambuan's show-stopping and impromptu demonstration of Latigo techniques. The gunshot crack of the whip punctuated each movement as Master Pambuan demonstrated how the whip can be used to establish a defensive perimeter around himself that few would dare to challenge. Furthermore, the apparent subtlety of Master Samuel Scott's Kuntao/Kung Fu techniques were betrayed by the voice of his assistant, whose audible expressions of pain were testimony to the effectiveness of his combat techniques.

I found the translation of sword-to-stick techniques, demonstrated by Grandmaster Christopher Ricketts of Kalis Illustrisimo, both challenging and rewarding to learn. The complexity of the interaction between dramatic sword fighting specific footwork, and the mental adaptation necessary to make the transition from a stick fighting to a bladed art, opened my eyes to the historical reality of the Filipino martial arts.

I was struck by the philosophic and esoteric lectures by Masters Willy Lim and Pat Strong, who encouraged us to discover the deeper meaning and possibilities available in the expression of mechanical motions, and what their value might be to us as we interrogate the mind/body connection.

Grandmaster Nene Gaabucayan's demonstration of awesome speed and power was a thrill to witness and impossible to copy. After watching a participant crack a coconut with a full range stick swing, Grandmaster Gaabucayan absolutely demolished another coconut with a simple flicking technique from the Balintawak arsenal. He is truly an impressive and inspirational martial artist to behold.

During the celebration of Grandmaster Taboada's birthday, I enjoyed further demonstrations, including a splendid Kung Fu exhibition, an introduction to Master Tan's Tapado's staff-length techniques, more of Master Scott's self-defense principles including dynamic gun disarms, and the use of Grandmaster Jorge Penafiel's palm stick, whose diminutive size belies its brutal and penetrative effectiveness.

Grandmaster Bobby Tabimina was downright amazing during his demonstration of Balintawak Cuentada and captivating in the carefully measured and profoundly significant words of his speech.

During the banquet and throughout the weekend in general, I got to learn more about Grandmaster Taboada's vision and philosophy than I expected. Grandmaster Taboada's touching sincerity, openness, and admonition to be a builder of bridges was not merely hype, but was proven by his invitation of people from diverse disciplines and backgrounds during this multi-cultural congregation of people from around the world.



Sam Buot, Master Willy Lim, and Grandmaster Taboada

His simple philosophy, encouraging us all to "be friendly," is a meaningful and appropriate reiteration of the Golden Rule, and worthwhile for all of us to follow.

The banquet was capped off by a very special event. To witness the promotion of Nene Gaabucayan to Grandmaster status was literally a once in a lifetime opportunity. With a figurative passing of the torch from Grandmaster's Taboada, Penafiel, Tabimina, and Buot, Master Gaabucayan vowed to honor the responsibilities inherent in promoting and supporting the following generations of Balintawak students.



It was at this moment that I realized that I was in the presence of Arnis greatness, and that I had been witness to historical moments within the Balintawak tradition.

The following day was a real treat, as I had the chance to practice Balintawak with people who had traveled from around the world to attend Grandmaster Taboada's seminar. It was a rare opportunity to train briefly with people from as far away as Australia, England, and Costa Rica, while still surrounded by the familiar faces of my friends from my home club in Cincinnati, Ohio.

After the seminar, the testing of students seeking "Completion of the Art" and "Qualified Instructor" status showed the amount of work each person had done over the many years of hard training, under the watchful and thoughtful eyes of Grandmaster Taboada.

When I went to Vegas, I couldn't hope to absorb all of the technical knowledge available, because it would simply be overwhelming to try to do so. Instead, however, I hoped to meet new friends, be exposed to the breadth of the Filipino martial arts community by presentations from some of the world's most respected artists, and have the opportunity to attend Grandmaster Taboada's birthday celebration banquet. I was able to do this, and so much more.

Ultimately, it was one of those experiences that take's a while to fully comprehend and appreciate. In the meantime, I can look forward to next year's gathering, and can only hope it is half as good as this year's. Until then though, I know that we were all blessed to have come together for these few days, and I will look back on them with cherished fondness for many more to come.

My Adventure into 'Bobby Taboada' World of Balintawak Eskrima

By Steve Mirman

I had taken up the sport of SCUBA diving in 1992 after losing my first wife to cancer. I became totally enthralled with the sport and was diving at least twice a month for the following three years. In that time I had heard many stories about diving in the South Pacific; and, the many Japanese wrecks that were within the scope of the recreational diver. So, one day in 1995, I called a travel agent and told him to book me in to a small island in the Philippines at a small, local hotel. Well, I arrived at a small island in the Southern Philippines called Cebu - with all 34 kilos of dive gear and a suitcase full of clothing. I checked into the hotel and then made my way to the dive shop. You might think at this point that we are embarking on a story about diving. But, as things turned out, I never unpacked my dive gear or even got in the water! I met a Filipina lady by the name of Terry that day when I returned from the dive shop; and, we got married in Cebu.



When Terry finally arrived in the States, we became very active in the Pilipino Association here in Charlotte, NC. We met Bobby Taboada and his wife Luz through that Association and became good friends. Bobby happened to be from Cebu and spoke the same dialect as Terry. I should mention here that Terry was from a small, nearby island called Bohol. I knew little of Bobby's Balintawak Eskrima at that time - we were just good friends.

In 2000, Terry and I went back to the Philippines to visit with family. During our stay, I met a close friend of Terry's whom she grew up with. She was married to a fellow who happened to be a diver. So, Keith and I became fast friends and dive buddies. One day, Keith returned to the motel and had two sticks. I asked him what he had; and, he told me he had met this Filipino, Resty Badilles, who was a national Karate champion and also a practitioner of Arnis. Keith had studied Tae Kwan Do and was looking for a different martial arts to study. He said that Resty was going to pick him up around 6pm and I asked if I could tag along. Resty came for us in a typical Filipino tricycle - a motorcycle with a very small side car. We squeezed in and began our training with Resty in Arnis. I only had ten days left in Bohol to study with Resty and Keith. So, Keith and I would dive in the morning and then Resty would pick us up and we'd study with him for a couple of hours in the evening. I found this really fascinating; and, was glad Keith had let me come along with him that first day.

When we returned home, I called Bobby and told him about Resty and my studying Arnis with him. Bobby immediately said to come over. I said; "When"? He said, "Now"!

So, I grabbed my stick and drove the 2 miles to his house. Bobby said to show him what I had learned. Then he asked me if I wanted to learn his Balintawak Eskrima. I said, of course. And, I started that week, in June of 2000. As I look back on my early experiences in studying with Grandmaster Bobby, I have to both smile and wonder how I

ever reached this point in my sojourn with Bobby. You see, I was like a post - my arms moved but my body did not! But, Bobby took me on as his project! He was bound and determined to get this American who moved like a telephone pole to loosen up and learn his art. His patience was unending! Often I would try to break down the movements and do them slowly. But, he insisted that I just do them quickly - that it was easier to correct me that way and also have me improve my body movement and speed. I quickly learned that as usual, he was right!

In May, 2007, Terry and I returned to the Philippines to visit family. Bobby had given me the name of his childhood friend, Master Nick Elizar, in Cebu City to contact and study with. Bobby had already contacted Nick to let him know that I would be there. So, after a few days in Bohol, we took the Supercut Ferry to Cebu and I called Nick. He took us over to an area beside Ayala Mall. I met his group of students - including his son, Norman. And, for three days I studied with Nick and also with Norman. What a fantastic experience. After arriving back in Bohol, I had to call Nick and ask him to come to Bohol so we could workout some more - I wanted more time to study with this Master. So, Nick came over and stayed at our motel for several more days. I insisted that he also call his son and have him come, too! I worked with both Nick and Norman.

I must admit that I was not used to working out in such heat. Terry brought us a dozen bottles of water and Gatorade. I think I drank most of them each afternoon! Several days later - after Nick and his son had returned to Cebu, we took a trip with family to a beach resort on Panglao Island. Returning to the motel late that afternoon, we found Nick writing us a note - he had been there several hours and was getting ready to leave! He had brought me some real fighting sticks with a nice case, and a certificate from his club - World Nickelstick Eskrima Club. I could hardly believe it! This hardened, streetwise fighter was not only humble in his own right, but so kind! I appreciate our friendship. And, as we parted, I told Nick that the next time we visit we will definitely spend more time together!

There are no “belts” in this art. Bobby has developed a really great curriculum based on his early experiences with his Grandmasters and his own personal experience on the streets in Cebu where he had real life and death encounters.

There are five basic levels to accomplish. At each level, testing requires that you demonstrate certain skills satisfactorily. Each level builds on the previous one. As I progressed slowly through each level, I had to demonstrate proficiency in each previous



Master Nick Elizar and Steve Mirman

level tested along with the new one. It took me several years to get through the Basic five levels. After that, there is preparation for testing for “completion of the art”. This was a big test! I had to not only demonstrate that I had learned the Basic five levels; but, also that I could teach levels one and two. Every week I met with Bobby and others to practice skills and work on teaching techniques. I would get very anxious in practice and sometimes in attempting certain skills I would try to do them too fast and “mess-up”! Bobby would always say, “slow down”, “relax”, and concentrate on doing them correctly - the speed would come.

I approached test day with great “stage fright”! I was as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof! There were half-a-dozen of us being tested for Completion of the Art. We paired up with our partner and started. I remember a particular incident in the testing when Bobby called for me to disarm number 5 on the right side. Well, you might know it I got very anxious and did disarm number 6! Oops! Bobby said, “Steve, that was disarm number 6, not 5!” Well, he came back to me again and I got it right! That kind of “broke the ice” for me and I got through the test okay! Yea!

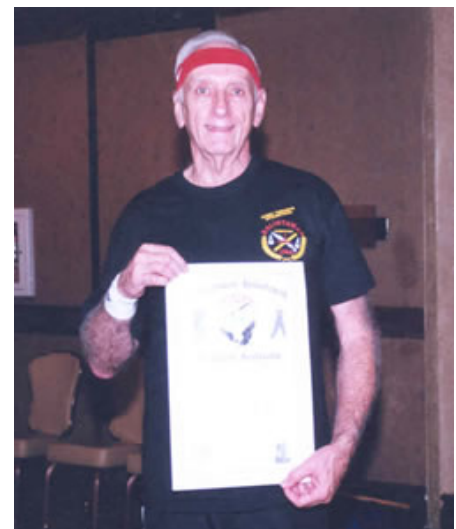
But, don’t think that getting “Completion of the Art” is the “end-all” in Eskrima! It is just the beginning, again! Now I had to learn to teach it all! And, that was like learning all over again! This is where you not only learn the finer points of teaching this art from Bobby, but also really start to refine your own skills. It was fascinating and exciting! We worked hard, laughed a lot, and worked hard some more! It was fun!

Then, about 6 months ago, Bobby started talking about his upcoming sixtieth birthday. He wanted to do something special. So, he planned a Las Vegas Birthday with a workshop, demonstrations and testing. And, he said to me that it was time to test for Qualified Instructor! Talk about butterflies in your stomach!!! This was going to be a really big event with other Grandmasters coming in from around the Country and world to do demonstrations and evaluate the people being tested for both Completion of the Art and Qualified Instructor.

I studied harder. Besides all the help and training I received from Bobby I must mention two other people who have not only been good friends, but also so very helpful in my training. They are both, Qualified Instructors, Robert Klampfer and Patrick Schmitt. I don’t believe that without the help and constant assurances from these three people in particular I could have accomplished as much as I have to-date.

So, Terry and I got on the plane for Las Vegas with many hopes for success and a lot of “butterflies” in my stomach! There were six of us who tested for Qualified Instructor. Yes, I passed - as did everyone else! I was overwhelmed and almost cried as I shook Bobby’s hand and gave him a hug. He said: *“its okay, Steve - you did good!”* And, I continued down the line shaking all the Instructors’ and Grandmasters’ hands. I felt proud and at the same time humbled in their presence. Yes, I had passed, but here again was a new beginning!

Now, let me tell you what I had omitted to this point. You see, I am 71 years young - and a cancer survivor. Life is wonderful; and, I’m enjoying it



thoroughly. You can do whatever you want to do in this life. The choice is yours alone!

Thank you Grandmaster Bobby Taboada, Robert Klampfer, Patrick Schmitt and all my other Balintawak friends that helped me reach this level of achievement.





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Links of Seminar Instructors and Guests

Balintawak, Sam Buot Sr. - www.buot.net

Balintawak Arnis, Bob Silver C. Tabimina - tabiminabalintawak.com

Cincinnati Balintawak Club, Jorge Penafiel - cincinnatiabalintawak.homestead.com

Teovel Balintawak Gold Chapter, Nene Gaabucayan - www.myspace.com/gold_chapter

Pambuan Arnis, Raffy Pambuan - www.pambuanarnis.com

Bakbakan, Christopher Ricketts - www.bakbakan.com

Full Circle Martial Arts Academy, Samuel Scott - www.fullcircle-maa.com

Hufana Traditional Arnis International - www.arnisador.com

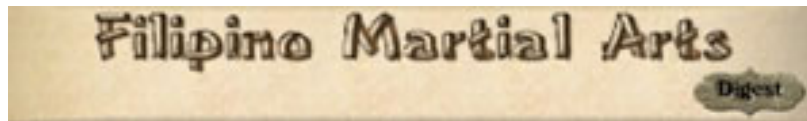
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