

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Special Edition
2007

Buot - Balintawak

Interviews with Sam Buot and Teddy Buot



Teddy Buot



Sam Buot



Publisher

Steven K. Dowd

Contributing Writers

Sam Buot

Ian Kinder

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

This Special Edition is called Buot Balintawak, not saying it is another style of Balintawak, but it is the history and remembered facts from Sam and Teddy Buot. This Special Edition is copyrighted by Sam Buot and please read the copyright.

This Special Edition has been in the works for almost one year now and finally the FMAdigest is able to bring it to you the reader.

Through Guro Sam Buot the FMAdigest presents in this Special Edition some excellent information on Balintawak, which the FMAdigest hopes enlightens those that do not really know about Balintawak.

Especially great in this issue is interviews with Sam Buot and Teddy Buot. It was through Sam Buot that the FMAdigest was able to get an interview with Teddy Buot. Since his stroke in 2006, Teddy Buot's health has not been steady and the interview was done when his family had the time and he had the strength.

When I personally met Sam Buot I found a practitioner that is humble, however carries himself with the pride and professionalism of a true Escrimador. Sam Buot is a wealth of knowledge on the history of Balintawak.

It is hoped that Sam Buot's book will be out sometime near the end of 2007. The FMAdigest, which got to have a peek at it really suggests that when it does come out, get it. Do not let it pass by and definitely it is not one just to be placed on the bookshelf for looks.

Well enough of the talking and let's get into the Special Edition Buot Balintawak.

Maraming Salamat Po



www.buot.net



Sam Buot and the
FMAdigest Publisher

To appreciate Anciong Bacon's Balintawak eskrima, you have to understand set-ups, anticipation, outwitting through ruses and lures; economy and simplification of motion, sans lavish and squandered movements; effectiveness of strikes bonded with speed, power, elegance and grace.

It is with great sadness and dismay that almost all of the great original Balintawak eskrimadors have passed away. Venancio Bacon, Jose Villasin, Teofilo Velez, Teotimo "Timor" Maranga, Jesus Cui, Delfin Lopez, Tinong Ybanez, Isidro Bardilas, Arnulfo Moncal and Ationg Abella - many of them forgotten or unknown within my own era of training and of course Teddy Buot is still around after suffering a serious and debilitating stroke. Skills, talent and genius have died with these masters. It is incumbent upon us the living, to reconstruct, collect and preserve the little knowledge, wealth and skills for posterity.

*To my fading memory, the remaining original students of the later generation of Bacon include Arturo Sanchez, Dr. Abe Cerna, and Jody Lopez, Octavius Jim Boy" Hife, Johnny Chiuten, Bobby Tabimina and Roman Encarnacion. Students of Velez and Villasin include the Velez brothers - Chito, Eddie and Monie, Bobby Taboada, Nilo Servila, Nick Eleazar, Dr. Ben Marapao, Fred Buot, Jr., Eddie dela Cruz, Nene Gaabucayan, Winnie dela Rosa and Romy dela Rosa and the surviving sons of Villasin, namely Ver, Joey. Bianor and John Villasin. In the United States, to my knowledge, only a handful can claim to personal instructions from Anciong Bacon. Many more came at various times in these masters' lifetime and career. No offense and disrespect is meant for the omission of many. - **Sam Buot***

Grandmaster Venancio "Anciong" Bacon



Born October 15, 1912 in Carcar, Cebu City, Philippines, He lived in Labangon, Cebu City. He studied under Lorenzo "Tatay Ensong" Saavedra in the early 1920's in a style called corto linear. "Tatay" is an affectionate term for father as in the American term "pops" or "dad". "Tatay Ensong" organized what was then known as the Labangon Fencing Club, then to be renamed as the Doce Pares (twelve pairs). After the death of Tatay Ensong, through club rivalry, Anciong seceded from the club. Bacon was frustrated with internal club struggles and politics. He and Teodoro "Doring" Saavedra were Tatay Ensong's most outstanding students. Doring Saavedra died during the Second World War at the hands of the Japanese *kempetai*.

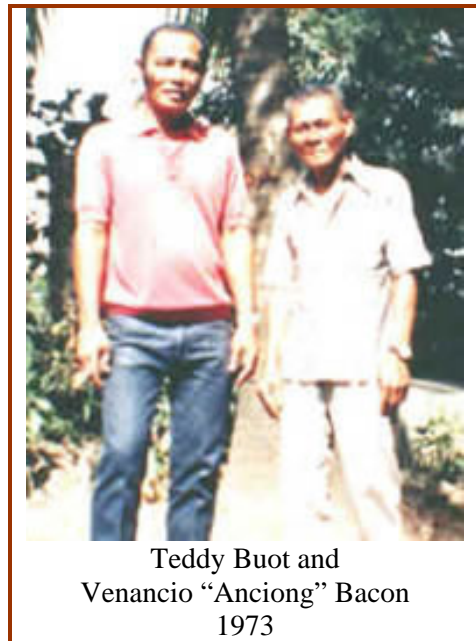
Anciong was innovative, original and fearless. Part of his training was as a wrestler. The man was small in stature, probably only 5'2" in height and no more than 120 pounds, soaking wet. Anciong was a proponent of the single stick, using the free hand in what is known as *tapi-tapi*, checking hand or literally translated as the scolding (*badlong*) hand. The left hand was used to push, pull, clear, parry, punch, distract, chop, lift, hold, carry and swing over the opponent's stick. It was used in lieu of the daga or dagger that was used in earlier training. This was at first ridiculed by his detractors since the double stick was the standard of the day. The story is that Tatay Ensong took the short

stick or daga from him when he would stab his sparring partners. Whether that is a fictional or the truth is beside the point. He created and mastered the single stick and stuck for its practical usage. Today it is widely imitated and copied by rival clubs. Anciong abhorred the fancy stick twirling, a signature of the "rival club", as impractical in real fights. Bacon's moves were music in motion - graceful, balanced, effective and powerful - even mysterious and baffling. He preached balance and was the master of psychological warfare. He called this "taking the power" away from your opponent.

Bacon established a club in the small backyard of his student Eduardo Baculi. This was at the back of Baculi's watch shop on a side street known as Balintawak Street in downtown Cebu City, thus the name Balintawak. Balintawak is a historical place in Caloocan, Rizal, known as *Pugadlawin*, where the patriot Andres Bonifacio made his famous cry for an armed struggle in revolt against Spain. This was later known as later *Sigaw ng Pugadlawin*.

Bacon had several students and he had to make the rounds before he could spend valuable time with a student. Often, a student spent training time with his senior students or head instructor. Anciong would supervise instructions and executions were done correctly. When a student was waiting for an instructor, he had to listen amid the din of clicking sticks, to what the Grandmaster was teaching other students. A diligent and attentive student could pick up and overhear valuable lessons. Therefore, although a student may have spent years at his club, he may not have spent that much time in personalized instructions with the Grandmaster. That is not to say his instructors were not proficient and capable. Bacon's body was starting to deteriorate from a wasting disease. Many times, he took time outs through long lapses of conversation that would interrupt the workouts.

Anciong was a genius of his art, certainly a daring claim, not by Anciong but by his pupils. He was fabled and legendary - loved and respected by his student but hated and feared by his rivals and lifetime enemies but never disrespected. He was the single most deadly practitioner of the art with verifiable battles (bahad - full contact duels) to his name, including one that landed him in jail for homicide. He killed a man who waylaid him in the dark among the coconut trees in Labangon. His lawyer failed to convince the judge that what he did was done in self-defense. His lawyer apparently failed to prove that he used necessary deadly force to defend his life. Until his death in his seventies, this little man was known to humiliate young, strong and disrespectful *Karatekas*, martial artists and eskrimadors. Often landing them on the seat of their pants with him standing over them in a menacing manner. His talent was esteemed, admired and even romanticized and embellished by his students and admirers. He was also shunned or avoided by his rivals. Regardless, he was a prodigy and master of his art that gained the respect and admiration of both friend and foe.

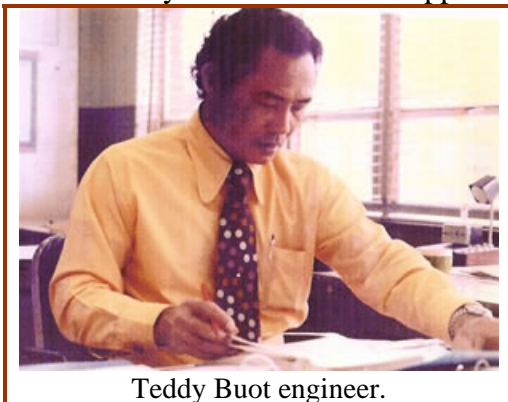


As far as the author is concerned, there is and will always be only one grandmaster of Balintawak, that is, “Anciong” Bacon. Many so-called masters of other clubs have used the term grandmaster in a trivial manner as if attaining a self-anointed black belt; so few have deserved the title. The term has been trifled and cheapened - it has become almost worthless. Every so-so eskrimador anoints him as a grandmaster. Who grants these grandiose titles of grandmaster anyway? Is it just bald-faced egotism and immodesty? ‘Just asking, none of his students during his lifetime dared call themselves “Grandmaster”’.

Teodoro "Teddy" Buot

Teddy Buot is the oldest son of Ricaredo Buot and Remedios Abellana. He was born on July 1, 1931, at Cebu City. Although trained as a mechanical and electrical engineer, he too has been fascinated by the deep sophistication of the art of eskrima. He, in great probability, has spent more time in eskrima than in engineering. Aside from eskrima, he kept himself fit playing basketball with young Filipinos until his devastating stroke in 2006.

Teddy studied under Anciong Bacon starting in 1959 and was his head instructor until his departure for the United States in 1974. I know the old man had a tender spot in his heart for Teddy. Out of respect for the Grandmaster, he does not call himself Grandmaster; neither have Villasin and Velez. His students call him “Manong Ted”. (Manong is a term used in respect for an older brother.) Teddy now lives with his wife the former Denny Sanchez in Southfield, Michigan. After his departure for the US, Ted’s brother-in-law Arturo Sanchez had since taken over as head instructor of Bacon’s school. Sanchez is now in the US and occasionally returns to the Philippines.



If there is anyone who can claim himself as heir to Anciong’s style, Teddy can rightfully claim himself as the standard-bearer of the purist Balintawak style eskrima. He disapproves of any teaching different from Anciong’s teaching, thus he dismisses Villasin’s “grouping method” as non-original and a departure from Bacon’s teachings.

Unfortunately for the art, Teddy is not a mass media hog to promote him and the art. He has been mostly reclusive, withdrawn, and

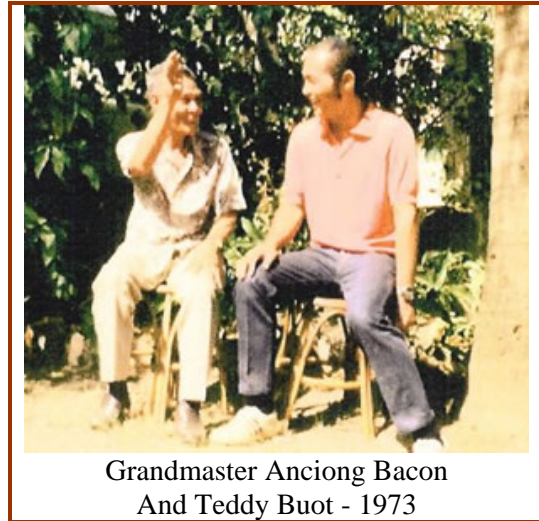
inaccessible and has accepted only personalized students - strictly by recommendation.

Interview with Teddy Buot

The Fmadigest was very lucky in getting this interview with Teddy Buot who had a stroke in 2006 and has recently worsen and is bed ridden at the time of this interview. It was with the help of Sam Buot and family that this interview was possible.

FMA Digest: *Who were some of the best students of Grandmaster Bacon, not just the ones that were popular and well known, but students that practiced the art and excelled? In your opinion, can you tell a little about each what you remember, what made them stand out?*

Teddy Buot: Sidro Bardelas (Retired Professional Boxer). Ationg Abella (Spokes person of the senior group that complained to Anciong about Ted being delegated to teach and they were not delegated.)



FMA Digest: *What can you tell about Grandmaster Lorenzo "Tatay Ensong" Saavedra?*

Teddy Buot: I do not know much about Tatay Ensong. Except from I was told by Abon. Tatay Ensong taught Anciong different from the others. Anciong was not taught how to do Amara, just punta y daga.

Others complained to Tatay about Anciong hurting them with the daga. So Tatay Ensong took away the daga from Anciong. So, Anciong used his left hand for slapping, management of opponent's stick, and also for striking with a left hook.

FMA Digest: *When did you start your training in the martial arts?*

Teddy Buot: I was always interested in eskrima. I had a neighbor from Luzon that practiced eskrima dancing around and twirling his stick. I was not interested in learning that kind of eskrima.

In 1957, I met my dad's cousin, Felipe, who is comradre (godfather) together with Anciong.

I was raising fighting cocks and sold them. Felipe Abella (who learned eskrima from Anciong) brought some fighting cocks over to my place. While there, he asked the group who wants to learn eskrima and judo. I raised my arm. Next week he brought some sticks. But as it turned out, Felipe just wanted to use people as practice dummies. While Felipe was training with his brother, he popped him in the head and his brother quit. Then Felipe worked with Tony, the younger one, and Felipe did a *sa-sa* (stick sliding along opponents stick) and hit his hand. I said to myself, he doesn't want to teach, he just wants practice dummies.

While still working for the City Government as an Engineer, I had a half day off from work. I decided to go to Mambaling where Delfin Lopez (my Dad's distant cousin)

lives. I asked about training in eskrima and ended up working with Judi Lopez (distant cousin to Delfin Lopez). When I asked how I was doing, they said OK.

I heard about Anciong Bacon. He was known as the founder of Balintawak. Delfin Lopez was a student of Anciong Bacon. I heard stories about how Anciong's students would spar and were always looking for blood. They worked out hard and some people say "Hey, that's blood running down your face." The student said, "That's not blood (wiping his forehead), that's sweat." The early students did not have very good control.

FMAdigest: *How did you meet Grandmaster Anciong Bacon?*

Teddy Buot: In 1959, before I met Anciong, I went to Balintawak Street and stood in front of a building with the sign "Balintawak Self-Defense Club" in Cebu City. Eduardo Baculi (owner of the shop) asked me if I was interested in eskrima. Eduardo remembered me when I was with my father. My father and I would visit Eduardo to have him repair our watches years ago. I told Eduardo yes, I am interested. Anciong, coming from his job, showed up to teach class and Eduardo introduced me to him. Anciong asked if I am the son of Manong Ricar (Ted's dad). I said yes. Anciong asked me to come into the club.

FMAdigest: *What was training like when you started training with Grandmaster Bacon?*

Teddy Buot: That first day, Anciong taught me the stance and fundamentals correcting what my cousins taught me. I stayed from 5pm to 9pm. Training with him was always one-on-one. Students would sit on a bamboo bed waiting their turn. Training was round robin. When one student was finished training, because he was erratic or tired, Anciong would say "OK, next!" I would learn while watching and listening to Anciong's instructions to other students.

Anciong would go into the corridas during his teaching. If you are late with your moves, you get popped. Unlike some of Anciong's earlier students that would hit the head, he would pop you in the arm. The more a student complained, the harder (more force) the stick would fall. However, Anciong taught control by not making contact to the head. Anciong was trying to have students learn continuity of movement in case your first or second technique will not work. Anciong would always say; I will show you what to do. If you don not practice it, you will have returned it to me.

Delfin Lopez would come by and ask Eduardo, "How is my nephew doing?" Eduardo said "OK". In hearing this, Delfin wanted me to play with Isidro (Sidro) Bardelas (a former boxer taught by Anciong). As I said, Anciong's old students like to see blood. Delfin and Sidro were the same way. Sidro's blocks and strikes were very strong. But, I used the timing as taught to me by Anciong and blocked all his strikes. When I countered with a strike, I controlled it "inches" from Sidro's head. Delfin would say "Time out, replace Ted." Another student replaced me, and Sidro hit the student's head and drew blood. Delfin was happy.

FMAdigest: *Who are some of the other students that trained with you when you started that continued up to today or until they passed and can you tell us something about them?*

Teddy Buot: All of the students were Anciong's Students and they were my seniors. I was the last student of Anciong's. Out of respect for them, I would not hit them. I used control as Anciong taught me. In 1960, Anciong delegated me to teach at the

(Balintawak) Club. All students that come in after me were my students. Sergio Arcel was one of my students. My brother-in-law was another one of my students, but I taught him at home. When I felt he was ready, I brought him to the club to work with Anciong.

One day Anciong told me that some of the senior students came to complain about me. I asked what they were complaining about. I use control and I did not hit them. Anciong said that they were not complaining about being hit. They were upset because I was delegated to teach and they were with Anciong longer than I was. They wanted to know why they were not delegated to teach. They said that Anciong favored me because I was his nephew, and he taught me all the good moves. So I asked Anciong what he said to them. Anciong said he told them that I teach you the same thing I teach Ted. The difference is you give it back to me and Ted keeps it and calls it his own. It was Anciong's way of telling my seniors that they did not practice what Anciong showed them. An example of this is one day one of Timor's students was watching me while I was teaching at the Balintawak club. When the session was over for the day, he came down to talk to me. He said that he was observing me and the way I move. He said "Your moves are the same as Anciong's." I said to him, "I understand you are Balintawak also. But what kind of Balintawak do you have?"

FMAdigest: *There is talk of fights, death matches, competitions etc. Which, and who, did what that is memorable or that you can recall. Can you tell us a little about them on what you observed or know about from personal experience?*

Teddy Buot: I have only witnessed two matches outside the Club. First one was in Tisa. The match was between Lauren Sanchez and Ising Atillo. I went to see the match and people were just standing around. I asked what the problem was and they said they had no referee. So, I volunteered.

Lauren started the action by striking a #1 angle strike. Ising ducked and hit Lauren in the knee. I heard a loud sound upon impact. However, Lauren had long fireman's boots on which cushioned most of the blow.

Lauren Kemp stepped forward (with no strikes) and Ising kept moving back. This action continued for a while until they just stopped. Lauren turned and walked away from Ising. I asked what is wrong. Lauren said he wanted new rules. One, if a fighter loses his stick, the fight continues. Two, make a circle for the fighters. If one of the fighters steps outside the circle, they lose the fight. Ising's father did not agree to the circle. Since no one wanted to agree or compromise, I had both fighters shake hands and I said "Fight over! No winner!"

The Second one was in Talisay on the beach. Anciong and I heard about the match, so we went down there to observe. When we arrived, there was a guy with two long sticks. This man was very frustrated and upset because his opponent did not show up. So, the guy started challenging everybody around him. He yelled out, "I'll fight anyone! Even you Anciong!" Well, Anciong could not turn down the challenge. Since we did not bring our own sticks (which had tape on one end to prevent slipping), Anciong used a shellacked stick with no gripping tape.

The beach was set-up with two circles. The fighters would be in the inner circle. The outer circle had me, Timor Maranga, and Delfin Lopez. The public had to stay outside the outer circle. It was very crowded. People were even climbing trees to watch the match.

This guy would swing one stick horizontally side-to-side with the other stick ready to attack. He moved his stick very fast. Anciong initially misjudged the distance and was scratched on his forearm. He went back into the fight after having his forearm patched up. This time the guy swung his stick hard and all the way across his body and followed up swinging his second stick that also came across his body. Anciong rushed in just as the tip of the second stick came in front of him during the swing. Anciong hit the guy's hand and the guy froze. Then Anciong hit him full force on the head. Anciong's stick flew out of his hand, and at the same time, the guy dropped both of his sticks. Anciong hit him with an empty hand strike. The guy ran away bleeding and trying to push his way through the crowd. The crowd would not let him go through.

The crowd was restless and during all this commotion, one of Delfin's students came into the circle and grabbed Anciong to prevent him from hitting the guy any further. But Anciong did not know who the person was and knocked him down. In the meantime, the challenger broke through the crowd running down the street. Anciong and I followed him. He went inside a building. I asked Anciong to wait outside and I would go in and talk to the guy. The guy was hiding in a corner with blood running down his face, and was worried that he would be beaten up if he came out. I assured him he would be okay and we would fix up his injury.

I also use this story for my students to help them understand that Balintawak is also effective in long range combat.

FMAdigest: *What are some of the memorable times you had with Grandmaster Anciong Bacon?*

Teddy Buot: I remember mostly the quality time I spent with Anciong. Anciong was looking for a legacy, someone to follow in his footsteps. Anciong first thought of Delfin. But he didn't know how to teach.

One day Anciong came to my office where I worked. During our conversation, he said, "I understand you are going to the United States." I said "Yes." Then you will be back in five years?" (At the time Anciong thought I would go to the U.S. on a consulting/contract job which is usually five years in duration.) I said, "No, I will live there till I die." Anciong said, "I was looking for someone to fill my legacy and I found you. But you are going away." He was very sad. I explained to him that wherever I go, I would teach the way he taught me.

I teach my students everything I know because they will be potential instructors. This way, someone will be there to keep up the work of Anciong. There are some instructors out there and some people that do not know if they are teaching students the real thing or not. I teach what Anciong taught me, and I do not deviate.

Some people from the Philippines think that Americans are third rate eskrimadors. I say my students are the chip off the old block.

FMAdigest: *What are some of the memorable times you have had in teaching Balintawak?*

Teddy Buot: After I was delegated by Anciong to teach at the Balintawak Self Defense Club, Anciong watched me like a hawk. I taught (like I do today) control and expect my student to also have control. This is what Anciong wanted. What I did was to take

Anciong's broken method of teaching techniques and string them together in a progressive manner to create flow and continuity.

One day Anciong said to me, "*Do* (short for *Undo*), I want you to work with Abon. Teach him the fundamentals." Abon was an older student (20 years Ted's senior) of Anciong's from before the war (WWII). He had no control with his powerful blocks and strikes. He was noted to drop students (knock them out) while training. Eduardo told me to watch out for Abon.

I worked with Abon on the fundamentals. I could see he was getting bored. Then I said "I don't know what you have. Anciong wants me to show you the new moves. Let's just move." I gave a #1 strike and he blocked and then struck back with a "powerful" strike. I blocked it with a small C (a strong Block in Balintawak). I gave him a *tochada* (thrust); he blocked and came back with another powerful strike. I blocked it. Now I realized what Eduardo meant by "watch out". I was so glad I block properly as Anciong taught me. This is one story I always tell my students. It reminds them of how they need to block properly because you never know who will strike you with high impact. I showed Abon the *sablig* and *tukas* (*sablig* and *tukas* are terms I coined to help with teaching. Anciong picked up on these terms and used them when he would teach). During my workout with Abon, it was always high impact. He did not have good timing. Abon just smiled. He really liked the *sablig*.

One week later, Abon came back to the club to tell me his exciting story. Abon was challenged by a stranger who called him yellow. After this man persisted on fighting, Abon asked his wife for a couple of sticks. The stranger initiated with a #1 strike. Abon blocked it and did the *sablig* knocking-out the stranger.

I tell my current students the story of one of my experiences to help them remember the art of timing and why not to grab. I call it the Zebra story. Another one of Anciong's senior students wanted to workout with me after class. Little did I know; he wanted to get inside my defense. During our workout, he grabbed my stick. When I did a fulcrum move and escaped, I then used *lansis* (set-ups). Each time he thought he had my attack blocked, I hit him on his hand. Then I hit the forearms, upper arms, and shoulders as he went ballistic trying to block my attacks. We stopped. I told him the next shot will be at his head. He dropped his stick and said I quit for today. The next day, he came to the club. Anciong saw the striped marks on his arms. Anciong laughed and called him a zebra. Anciong asked who did that to you. He said Ted did it. Anciong said, Oh, I know Ted. You must have been trying to get inside Ted's defense." When I tell this story, you are not to grab the stick, because if your opponent knows the counter to the grab, then the grabber (you) get popped in the arm.

FMAdigest: *What would you say or recommend to future practitioners of Balintawak?*

Teddy Buot: I recommend that students have respect for Anciong. Some people try to put Anciong down. Without



Teddy Buot and David Hatch.

Anciong, we would not know anything about Balintawak.

Practice! If you do not practice, you return it (your knowledge) back to your instructor.

You can always learn from people and the knowledge you receive, respect where (the source) it came from.

FMA Digest: *In your personal opinion, what do you think of the Balintawak of today compared when you were learning it?*

Teddy Buot: People had problems back then. Anciong was not like us. He did not have the ability to explain and make it understandable to the students.

I gave reasons for why you should do this and that. The way I teach today, it is more systematic in the instructions. The Grouping Method of teaching (that other people are using) deviated from what Anciong taught.

When Anciong taught Tabimina, he told him that he was teaching him the real Balintawak. Tabimina misunderstood Anciong. Tabimina thought he was learning an updated version of Balintawak. But actually, Anciong was correcting him from what he learned from Villasin.

One-on-one instruction is much better to learn Balintawak. This way you learn to execute techniques properly.

Jose V. Villasin

First to dissect the works of Bacon in an academic and written fashion, while teaching eskrima at the University of the Visayas.



Villasin taught eskrima and martial arts at the University of the Visayas. He tried to organize his course by making mimeographed notes for his students. Thus, this attempt to organize the thought process of the Grandmaster: by dissecting and breaking down the art into understandable and digestible morsels for beginners. It was an outline with sketchy descriptions of moves. Incorporating it in demonstrations varied the demonstrations to make it more exciting, appealing and less monotonous. It was under the personalized tutelage of Joe Villasin that the author had a quick start and understanding of the basics, intermediate and advanced studies of eskrima. Villasin's study simplified the lessons for faster understanding. Purists dismiss his attempt as a corruption of the Grandmaster's thoughts and methods. During demonstrations, the un-choreographed moves were varied and more exciting - instead of the dull and repetitive strikes during *palakat*. There was variation, grace, beauty and realism. The ultimate blows were controlled even as they appeared real. They used these fight scenes for their "*moro-moro*" scenes during fiestas and movies. Villasin's work was the first attempt to reduce

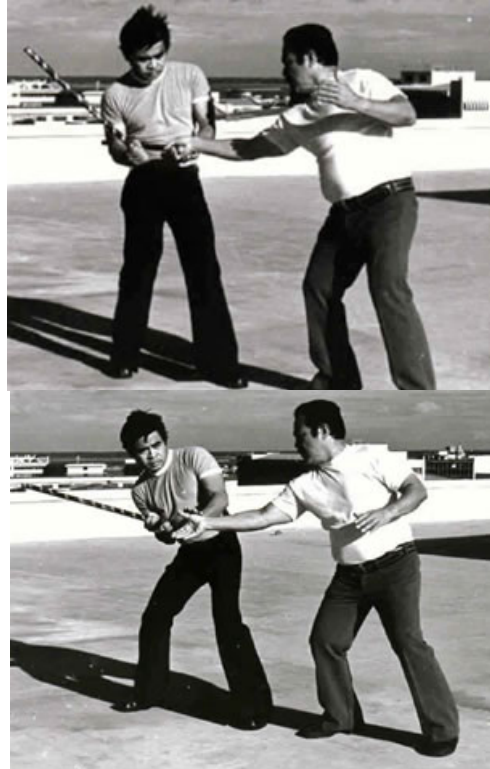
Bacon's art into writing. Villasin was a great teacher - soft-spoken, gentle and always with a ready smile. It was wrong to underestimate his portly stature. If he heard or noted a blowhard talking about his toughness and adventures, he would lead him on and allow them to really hang himself. He would then lead him and say, "Oh, that's great! Go on, tell me more." He would ask him, in a sheepish and innocent way, "So how did you do it?" The braggart would continue to lengthen his hang rope by speaking out of turn. For the final *coup de grace* (pronounced by the French as *ku da gras*, meaning blow of mercy, he would say, "Show me." That was when he would show him his total ignorance of self-defense and especially of eskrima.

Villasin was strong as a bull but graceful and agile in his moves as incongruously displayed in his tango and cha-cha dance moves. It was wrong to misjudge his self-deprecating humor and easy smile. Beneath his humility was great confidence and conviction in his ability in his art.

Villasin was president of the Balintawak International Self Defense Club and the writer was his one-time vice-president. At the time the club was called "international", it was more in playful humor since there was nothing of any international flavor. Only Teddy Buot was in the United States. Even then, Teddy did not particularly ally himself with Villasin and Velez who, presumably, he took to be heretics. The use of the word "International" has proven to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Balintawak has since gone international with Bobby Taboada traveling worldwide holding seminars and organizing Balintawak clubs over the entire world; Teddy Buot doing his teaching in the east coast and Sam Buot doing his little part in the Phoenix, area.

Villasin later moved classes to his home in Lahug. The author helped him acquire his home as a reward for removing squatters from the land of Atty. Eddie Gabriel on Salinas Drive in Lahug. The Grandmaster often came to visit and do check-ups on the progress of his students or just to visit and socialize. He may have originally been threatened by the eskrima teachers, although they were his own students, which were in competition with him. He eventually came to accept the fact that these were his "children", loyal students and defenders of Balintawak especially during the organization of the Cebu Arnis Federation (which included all *eskrima* clubs in Cebu). Bacon, Villasin, Velez and the author together with Johnny Chiuten, Bobby Taboada and Chito Velez represented Balintawak. Meetings were tense, paranoid and suspicious as to intent and motives. There always seemed a potential for even explosive physical violence. It was like meeting with Bin Laden or the Hamas. In Reagan's words, "Trust but verify!" In retrospect, giving

Jose Villasin and Sam Buot atop Sam's office building, Cebu City Philippines



Jose Villasin and Sam Buot atop Sam's office building, Cebu City Philippines

credit where credit is due, thanks to the leadership of Diony Canete (eventually elected president) such events were avoided. The group was however organized with much less participation and enthusiasm by Balintawak.

Teofilo "Pilo" Velez



Teacher, faithful soldier, organizer and promoter

Few people have promoted the early Balintawak art as Teofilo Velez did. He housed the club at his home where nightly workouts of the Villasin-Velez branch of the Balintawak club were held with check-ups by Grandmaster Bacon. His senior instructors were Bobby Taboada and his sons Chito, Eddie and Monie Velez. Bobby was a more dedicated student of the master as against Velez' own sons. That does not mean that his other sons were not as good. You always had to watch out for Chito and Eddie, they did not hesitate to hit or hurt, if necessary. Demonstrations by Bobby, Chito and Eddie were realistic and scary fighting scenes - using real knives with split second thrusts

and parries - with little or no safety precautions.

Velez was a friendly and affable fellow, quick to grab your hand and uncomfortably long in releasing it. He was a loyal soldier and a faithful defender of the Balintawak name. He was also a good teacher. In his humble means, he often hosted get-togethers at his home for the Balintawak members. He was a recruiter for and promoter of the art. At his home, he ruled with an iron fist, taming his three sons Chito, Eddie and Monie Velez, his daughter Caridad and Bobby Taboada.

Balintawak owes Velez gratitude for the multitude of students that grasped loyalty to the style (including the author), to Villasin and to Bacon. Velez was the PR man of Balintawak - amiable with friends but fierce in the defense of Balintawak, especially severe and stern in handling his boys and Bobby.



Bobby Taboada



Recipient of multiple awards and prime promoter of Balintawak eskrima worldwide.

Bobby Taboada was born in Cebu City, Philippines, on November 6, 1948, the oldest of 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 is soft spoken and very slow to anger except when he rises in defense of himself that is infrequent and almost nil.

He was first introduced to eskrima by his father. He also boxed for six years and went into the exotic and imported arts of Karate and Kung Fu. Bobby left home when he was twelve and later lived with Teofilo Velez as 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. He then learned the secrets of Balintawak eskrima

from Jose Villasin and Venancio "Anciong" Bacon. Bobby discovered that the art was deadly, effective and sophisticated. As a fearless and undaunted volunteer for fights and tournaments, Bobby 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 at that time, eskrima was not a sport in the traditional sense of the word and therefore not governed by safety rules. It meant combat fighting and sometimes fights to the finish (bahad). 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 violent and deadly fights, some with multiple opponents. He has also witnessed full contact duels (bahad).

Now currently living in Charlotte, North Carolina where he has established his Balintawak Headquarters. He is now on a mission to promote Balintawak worldwide. His primary emphasis is on defense techniques, which he has continuously researched, tested, re-tested, innovated and improved. He teaches law enforcement officers, martial arts instructors, black belts and advanced students from all styles of martial arts, who he thinks have attained the maturity, discipline and capacity to absorb the skills and techniques. In his 40 years of experience in martial arts, he contends that the hardest thing to learn is how to defend. The easiest thing to learn is how to strike, hit, punch or kick. That is why the techniques he teaches places primary emphasis on defense.

Bobby Taboada has made several video tapes for commercial worldwide distribution. He has incorporated original and innovative exercises and drills and even fancy stick twirling, *amara*. *Amara* was frowned upon by the masters as signature showboating moves of the rival club. This has been assailed and criticized by purists as a desecration and defiled version of the Grandmaster’s art. They are however, eye catching and they do sell tapes and seminars. Today, Bobby Taboada is the most visible advocate

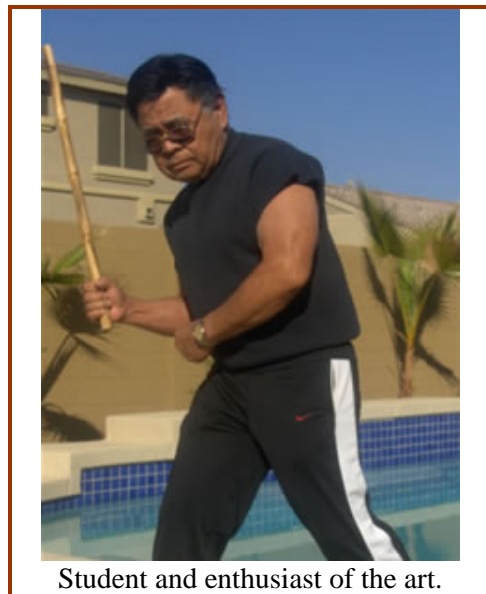
of the Balintawak style of eskrima. Bobby is far from the oppressive slums of Cebu City. He is a success and the consummate example of the achieved American dream.

Sam L. Buot Sr.



Sam Buot, Sr., was born in Cebu City on March 24, 1936, eldest son of Alfredo and Susana Lagrito-Buot. He grew up in the rough neighborhood of Katipunan Street in the Labangon District of Cebu City. He learned the rudiments of eskrima from Teddy Buot, who lived next door. Sam left home at the tender age of twelve to study at Silliman University in Dumaguete, Negros Oriental, from high school through law school. Eskrima was limited to the summer vacations. Except for some neighborhood boxing, with smelly gloves and old-fashioned bare-knuckle brawls, serious studies of the arts did not occur until after college. Besides education, the university polished his dull edges with some culture. However, the enduring Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest and elimination of the unfit," never totally left him. After college, he found himself heir to his father's struggling real estate business. He built up his business to an extraordinary success. He developed subdivisions, acquired real estate and had arguably, the most successful brokerage firm in Cebu City at that time period.

After college, he resumed his eskrima studies, although business and his law practice competed for his time. During martial law in the Philippines in 1972, owning firearms was a capital offense, punishable by death. The only legitimate way to defend one-self was through martial arts. This intensified Sam's interest in the martial arts, most especially eskrima. Self-defense became an urgent matter. He was smitten by the sophistication, finesse and elegance of the art, especially since it was indigenous to the Philippines. In the age of colonial mentality, nothing home grown was deemed good, only foreign made goods and imported ideas were believed worthy. It dawned on Buot that the Philippines had something original and indigenous, which was comparable and sometimes even better than many concepts of self-defense. As a staunch nationalist, he wanted to promote the Filipino art. This time he could afford to hire the best instructors. He proceeded to hire all talents in eskrima and other martial arts - including Anciong Bacon. He worked out during and after office hours until near



Student and enthusiast of the art.

curfew hours at midnight and more intensively and extensively on weekends. This went on until Martial Law triggered his departure for the United States. Eskrima obsessed him. It was a way to escape his frustration with the oppressive and dispiriting Martial Law regime of the conjugal dictators Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos.



Buot has adapted the more open, progressive and tolerant attitude towards innovation and the growth of eskrima - although he is vigorous in the defense of the integrity of eskrima as a Philippine art. He does not however believe in rigid and narrow-minded inbreeding. Inbreeding is discouraged in the propagation of the species, thus the forbiddance of incest. It is discouraged at schools of higher learning. Otherwise, there is no infusion of new knowledge and ideas. It is seldom that the student can excel beyond his teacher if he is not innovative and original in his thoughts, unless he is willing to

learn beyond what he has learned or even to question what he has learned. As much as unadulterated eskrima is much desired, it cannot be denied that a majority of our students have had their basic martial arts experience at and from other arts. Many of them are martial arts instructors and school owners. It is thus necessary to know the defenses against the strengths of these other arts and to take advantage, power and control over their weaknesses. Sam Buot believes that although eskrima does not have all the answers, it does provide a lot of the answers and defenses to these other arts. When Buot's students learn eskrima, he encourages them to apply their knowledge in either offense to or defense against eskrima. He also believes that for every counter, there is a corresponding counter. Only practice and mastery of your art is the key to reflexive counters and confidence. Sam Buot has researched and innovated techniques but refuses to take credit - always crediting his teachers for his knowledge.



Sam Buot with Ryan, Craig, Bart and Allen



John Jacobo and Sam Buot



Sam Buot and Craig working techniques.

Interview with Sam Buot

FMAdigest: *Who were some of the best students of Grandmaster Bacon, not just the ones that were popular and well know, but students that practiced the art and excelled? In your opinion, can you tell a little about each what you remember, that made them stand out?*

Sam Buot: I was not really a part of the first group of students. Although I saw the older students during training, they were my seniors. We met in social groups, often times, I did not realize at that point in time that they were old hands in eskrima. The person who was notorious and feared was Delfin Lopez. He was known to be brutal and willing to inflict pain. As a young man, I would sit at the Times Kitchen and always avoided eye contact. He was armed and carried a baton and sat on the corner keenly watching movement around him. He was a labor leader and was notorious in a lot of ways.

I had some of my basic training with Teddy Buot. Due to schooling which was out of the province of Cebu. Eskrima did take serious turns until after college years. Eskrima interest was rekindled when I met Teofilo Velez who did typewriter repairs for my Dad. Then I was introduced to *Pare* Joe Villasin (*Pare* is contraction of the term *compadre*, that is, when you stand as sponsor in a child's baptism. I stood as sponsor in the baptism of his daughter Cheryl) and 'No Anciong Bacon, who both regularly visited Velez' backyard training.

FMAdigest: *What can you tell about Grandmaster Lorenzo "Tatay Ensong" Saavedra?*

Sam Buot: I was too young to know or meet Saavedra. He was long dead before my training time.

FMAdigest: *When did you start your training in the martial arts?*

Sam Buot: I started in the early 1950's. Before that, I was more interested in backyard boxing, training with Teddy Buot; lifting improvised weights made with molded concrete in clay pots and hanging on a homemade chinning bar.

FMAdigest: *How did you meet Grandmaster Bacon?*

Sam Buot: I was introduced to him by Teddy Buot. I visited his training group at the backyard of Eduardo Baculi on Balintawak Street. I could not afford to pay; besides, I was still going to school at Silliman University in the neighboring province of Negros Oriental. It was not until after I became a lawyer and started training with Velez and Villasin that we reconnected. I started going to his classes at Enad Building, then at Juan Luna and later at Go Chan Building. I was informed that he was distantly related to my father's mother on the Abella side of his family. He called my dad "*Mano Alpe*" Ted's dad "*Mano Ricar*", usually a sign of respect for elder relatives.

FMAdigest: *What was training like when you started training with Grandmaster Bacon?*

Sam Buot: All his instructions were personalized. He had a senior student that usually tutored (*agak*) the students; then, he would go round-robin and gave personal instructions or corrections. If he noted certain errors in your movements, he would call attention to it. He would say, "Don't do it that way." Sometimes he would make certain you would remember; usually with rap on the knuckle, a poke with the stick or even a controlled knock on the head would usually make you remember faster. I went to the clubhouse at every opportunity I had and I also had instructions at my home or office. I was already a lawyer and he would go to my office at SSS Building where I would train in a form of questions and "what if's."



Balintawak Group on top SSS bldg - Cebu

FMAdigest: *Who are some of the other students that trained with you when you started that continued up to today or until they passed away and can you tell us something about them?*

Sam Buot: The people who stood out to me and still on my memory were Arturo Sanchez, Boy Hife, Roman Encarnacion, and Dr. Abraham Cerna. We just did not socialize that much. I remember Timor Maranga attending training sessions regularly, mostly to help teach (*agak*) students. We met older students of '*No Anciong*' mostly in social events and parties, especially at Velez' home. Villasin would point them out to me and tell me about some of their idiosyncrasies and traits. He would also point out to me some of their favorite moves which I also took notes.

FMA Digest: *There is talk of fights, death matches, competitions etc. Which and who did what that are memorable or that you can recall and can you tell us a little about them on what you observed or know about from personal experience?*

Sam Buot: (Death matches were far in between. Sorry to say, I was never a witness to one. There was treachery and murder but not in the usual stick fighting fashion. The stick fighting matches were actually an extension of what used to be bolo (machete) fights to death. The stick has been a practice weapon for the real machete fights although they too came in handy as actual self-defense weapons, not particularly to cause death but to cause pain.

Anciong figured in death matches when he was waylaid under coconut groves in Labangon. This case landed him in jail. He failed to convince the judge that his use of deadly force was necessary, considering that he was already a famed eskrimador. Anciong and others were in death matches, none of which I witnessed.

Delfin Lopez died in a treacherous attack at a bodega, by an assailant at a labor strike. From stories I heard, the assailant was on top bags of rice and jumped on him from behind with a stab wound on his neck which went straight to his heart. I was at his wake at Cebu Cosmopolitan Funeral Parlor. It was a very large crowd.

There was the proposed tournament of the Cebu Eskrima Federation which was largely boycotted by Balintawak because of rules that Balintawak did not approve of such as the use of excessive protective gear. We also objected to the pairing matches. Anciong Bacon and Momoy Canete would have been perfect match since both were Grandmasters and both were about the same size and in the same age category. Villasin or Velez could have matched up with Cacoy Canete. Both were also in the same age category, experience and standing in the club. Jun Canete would have matched with Bobby Taboada or Roman Encarnacion among the younger ones. I was a novice and had not earned my stripes.

FMA Digest: *What are some of the memorable times you had with Grandmaster Bacon?*

Sam Buot: He had simple needs and was satisfied with cigarettes, a bottle of orange soda and Siopao (a Chinese steamed meat bun.) He would visit me in my office and trained with me mostly in question and answer sessions. Payment was never mentioned but you just gave an amount as if to say “thank you”. That also motivated his visits. One of my regrets was that I never had a picture with him. As a matter of fact, I never valued our group pictures until decades later. We sort of assumed that he and the masters would be around always. His lasting fame was something we never contemplated. I’m sorry to say, we took our masters and grandmaster for granted. Luckily Johnny Chiuten took the effort of taking a group picture of the club.

FMA Digest: *What are some of the memorable times you have had in teaching Balintawak?*

Sam Buot: I have had many and they are all dispersed all over the country. They have come from different styles and it was always a challenge. My great regret was that I never wanted to teach (*agak*) younger and less experienced students. I was lazy to teach and selfish in wanting to learn and keep what I had learned to myself. There always seemed to be a threat of some eventual showdown, even with your stable-mates. My attitude changed in the US when there was no longer a threat but rather a need to

perpetuate and promote the art and honor the legacy of my teachers who had passed away. I have had good students from different martial arts that brought new challenges, counters and moves to meet the different styles. Knowledge not imparted or written is lost. It is a perishable commodity that perishes with the master. This is the reason for my belated effort to teach and impart what I have learned.

FMAdigest: *What would you say or recommend to future practitioners of Balintawak?*

Sam Buot: Seek good teachers or students of original students of Anciong. Give credit to the source of your knowledge and don't try to appropriate it as belonging to your base art. It is a sign of ingratitude.

FMAdigest: *In your personal opinion what do you think of the Balintawak of today compared when you were learning it?*

Sam Buot: It has grown internationally and gone farther from the original Bacon style of training. It is more geared towards safety and making sure your students are not hurt or offended. It has also been watered down. Students seldom master basic moves. They seldom master basic grip, stance, stepping, strike deliveries and basic counters. There is always a rush for instant knowledge and certification of expertise. They want to have belts to prove that they know the art. We never had belts. We always proved our proficiency every night at workouts. You were only as good as your last fight.

FMAdigest: *Were Remy Presas and Bobby Taboada in training with Grandmaster Bacon during or before you were training with the Grandmaster?*

Sam Buot: Remy Presas, before. Bobby and I trained about the same time. I never met Remy Presas. I don't know at what stage of grandmaster's life he met Bacon. From what I have learned, he learned his Balintawak training from Arnulfo Mongcal, a student of Anciong Bacon and may have had some sessions with Anciong.

FMAdigest: *Was Delfin Lopez the best Balintawak fighter?*

Sam Buot: He was known for being brutal and willing to inflict injury. He was a good and fearless fighter. He was a large man for a Filipino with a very imposing and intimidating appearance. His reputation was wide and feared both as a labor leader and as a fighter.

FMAdigest: *- Has Grandmaster Ted or Sam Bout, decided who will be his successor in his version of Balintawak?*

Sam Buot: I have never designated a successor. I believe only those that have learned enough and have taken it as a mission to teach, share and impart knowledge. Successors only come in terms of who has a lasting, enduring and persevering interest in the art. This is not obligatory and cannot be imposed or willed. It is a privilege to be part of the vanishing students of the masters.



Age 42



Age 60 in Cebu



Age 71 Phoenix, AZ.

My Training with Manong Ted Buot

By: Ian Kinder

I began my training with Mr. Buot in 1994, training weekly until his illness in 12-05. When I started, I was not looking to learn Balintawak or Filipino combat and did not know enough about his background to appreciate his significance as an instructor. I just wanted to learn effective combat skills and was aware of his no-nonsense reputation. He did not believe in rank, titles or formalities. The training focused exclusively on realism and the development of practical skills. We spent countless hours of one-on-one instruction in a small clearing in his basement... time that I will forever treasure.



In the beginning, I was evaluating him as much as he was evaluating me. It was from that perspective that I came to appreciate his genius and the genius of his teacher Anciong Bacon. It was also from that perspective that I came to call him teacher and to appreciate being a student of Balintawak. Since then, every student that I have trained has had the benefit of his influence.

I've learned a lot from Mr. Buot, both as a trainer and a practitioner. He taught me to out-think my opponents by forcing them to react in predictable ways and then counter their reaction before the successful completion of their response. He also taught me the importance of timing and the use of proper body mechanics to maximize the force of every strike. Students learn to "abort", which is the ability to redirect a strike that your opponent is attempting to counter. In the earliest stages of learning, training focuses on fundamental issues like stick selection, grip, principles of striking and the fighting platform. Body mechanics are stressed when learning how to strike and block, as is footwork and the ability to lean. Leaning is a deceptive way to increase and decrease distance without the use of footwork.

Once students understand and can apply the fundamentals listed above, training shifts focus to one of the most important aspects of combat: recognition and reaction. Skills are practiced in a controlled method of sparring called *corridas*, in which students are required to instantaneously recognize and respond to a continuous flow of random attacks while applying proper timing and execution. This forces students to perform under realistic conditions and provides a protective filter against unrealistic methods. Structured drills are avoided in Balintawak to preserve this connection between recognition and action. Once a student understands and can apply a new skill, that skill is immediately put into the “mixing bowl” to ensure that the student can apply the new skill reflexively under spontaneous conditions.

Students of Ted Buot also learn the *lansis*, a deceptive skill which uses a strike to draw out a reaction to expose a specific target. A simple example is to strike at the leg to draw out a low block so that you can strike the head. The timing of a strike used as a *lansis* is generally altered to allow the opponent a chance to counter, though the strike is real and will hit if the opponent fails to respond. Students also learn to use a *Cuentada*, which is the use of several successive actions to deceive and direct an opponent to a specific, predetermined outcome. Penetrating the defenses of a skilled fighter who has good timing and uses tight, controlled movements can be very difficult. By leading your opponent into a *Cuentada* you can cause their movements to open up and become frantic, making the opponent much easier to hit.

The principles of Balintawak can be applied to almost all aspects of close combat. When I first began training with Mr. Buot, I was also training with another renowned and highly qualified instructor, Roy Osborne. Roy Osborne is a practitioner of Okinawan *Shuri-te*, an old and very aggressive form of combat. Like Mr. Buot, Roy Osborne has had a profound impact on my training. With the knowledge and consent of both men, I would review the methods of each with the other probing them both for input. This resulted in a dialog that profoundly deepened my understanding of both systems. I continued to review all aspects of my personal training with Mr. Buot, including my experiences boxing, and have been constantly amazed in his ability to simplify skills and to rout out and correct faulty methods. Stick fighting was always the primary focus of my training with Mr. Buot but I have spent countless lessons learning to apply the principles of Balintawak to a broad range of defensive issues, including unarmed combat, the use of pens, knives and flashlights, gun disarms, and even the use of a four foot staff. When I co-founded Live Safe Academy, LLC, I reviewed our entire curriculum with him. Live Safe Academy, LLC is a safety and self-defense school specializing in the training of first aid, assault and crime prevention, unarmed combat and the use of chemical defense sprays, sharp and impact weapons and firearms. He was able to enhance every aspect of our combat programs.

The net value of my training with Mr. Buot was not learning a collection of techniques; it was learning how to think. He taught me how to evaluate, simplify and out wit. I have successfully applied his methods in combat and am very grateful for his teachings.

Thank you Manong Ted, because of you I am a better practitioner and teacher. You have kept your promise to the old man and so shall we.

Ian Kinder



For a Better View
Click Here

Balintawak Websites to Visit:

The Official Site of Bobby Taboada - www.worldbalintawak.com

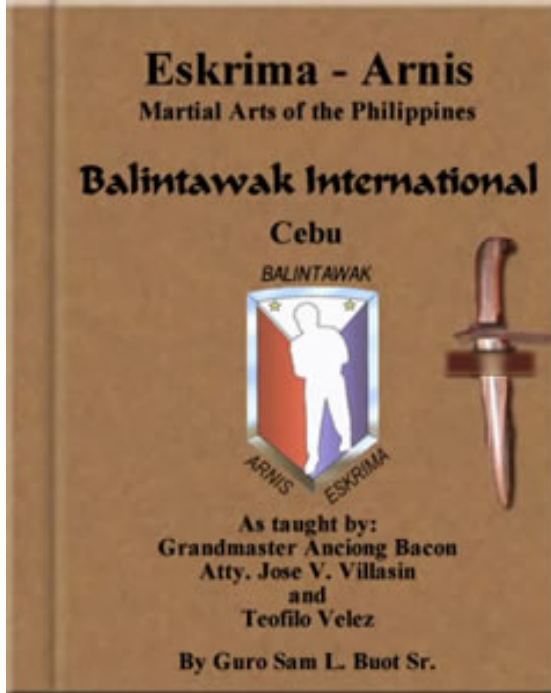
Balintawak Escrima, Ver Villasin - balintawakinternational.com

Balintawak Arnis Academy, Ver Villasin - www.vervillasinarnis.freesevers.com

Balintawak Arnis, Bob Silver C. Tabimina - balintawak.s5.com/home.html

Teovel Balintawak Self-Defense Club, Inc. - e.domaindlx.com/teovelbalintawak





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Check Guro' Sam Buot's **Website** for information and availability.

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www.buot.net



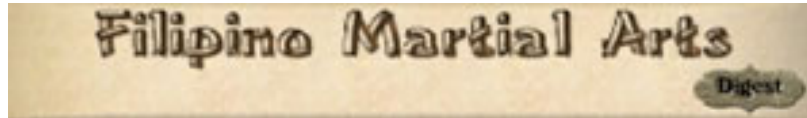
Teddy Buot



Sam Buot



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