

BALISONG



IRON
BUTTERFLY

by
Cacoy "Boy" Hernandez

BALISONG IRON BUTTERFLY

Disclaimer

The techniques described and/or depicted in this book are dangerous and must not be practised or used. The Publisher will accept no responsibility whatsoever for any injury, damage or loss of any sort that may arise out of the practice, teaching or other dissemination of any of the techniques and/or ideas contained herein. This book is an account of a period in the author's life and should be viewed as such. It should not, under any circumstances, be regarded as an instructional manual.

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BALISONG IRON BUTTERFLY

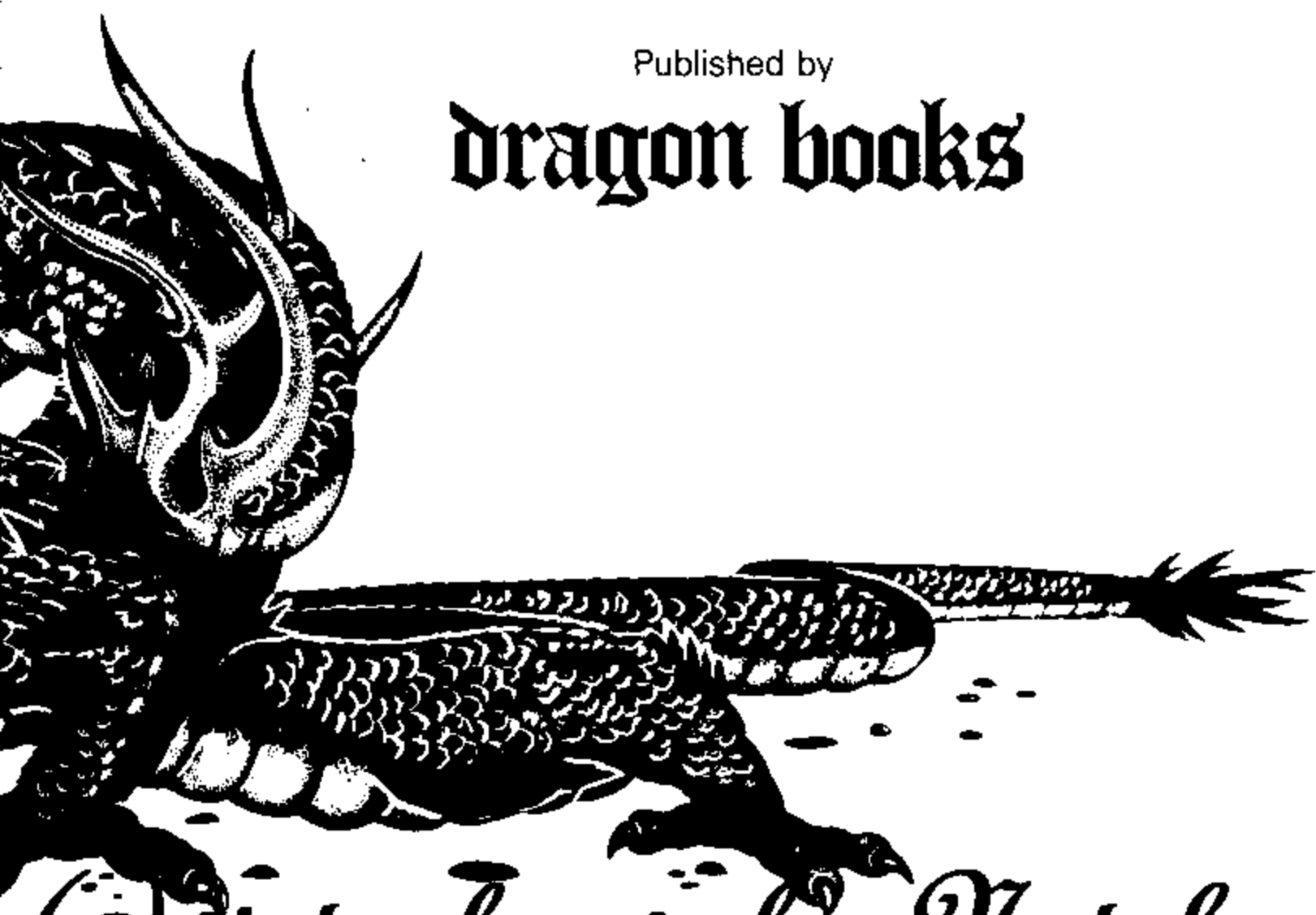
by

Cacoy "Boy" Hernandez

Being the life and times of a fighting man
(The years 1947-1951)

Published by

dragon books



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INTRODUCTION BY CACOY "BOY" HERNANDEZ

Let me introduce myself and this book. Please don't expect school book writing – I just write what I know.

A lot of fancy people say Balisong is a warrior's art, OK, but there wasn't no Samurai where Balisong was born. Sure we didn't have no fancy stances, no special clothes. We just have Balisong and ourselves. We got not time to make up some ritual – just fight.

Let me tell you, a lot of fat cats talking now about Balisong only being good against Balisong, no good against leather jacket. In Phillipines, we no wear leather jacket – but if some smart boy do, we always got machete! If you lose weapon pick up another, do something, don't be cry baby and give in easy – That's not a man's way – No way!

People say we always fighting – sure – it's our way. You city folks with big house, air conditioning and shiny car can pay for guys to protect you. "Insure your interests" I hear them say.

But in Phillipines, we don't got that, that's why I agree with Master Bimba – What a fighter. Just after the war, he back down to nobody, Never! – Anyway, he say if you got to fight – you got to win. Don't never step back. You got to know the other guy's mind or man, he's just going to cream you – that's why when I see these guys in white pyjamas saying they going to teach self-defence – I got to laugh!

The man wasn't born who fight for real by rules – Not if he got any sense he don't.

I see a guys square up, he drop into a horse stance and growl like some mad dog, I just kick him private and run fast. No more to it, if he get up and come after me, I figure he don't just want my phone number, so like the man say, I use my deterrent, but that's another story.

There's a lot of guys, mostly in America, wants to make Balisong martial art and have all kind of competition, have sticker on jacket, say "coach" or "instructor". Just dreaming, like most Karate now!

Yeah, I thought that'd ruffle a few tail feathers. Like they say in the cock fight – Bit o' salt, bit o' blood make a champion. Think about it!

Well OK! There's only a few teachers teach old Karate way, same way

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Escrima, Arnis and Kali. Why? Simple! Student don't want go go away with broken mouth – not if he pay big bucks – no way Jose!

I guess I must be getting old or something, but it sure teach a real way.

Next birthday I will be sixty one years old. In my life I have met and fight a load of guys what call themselves masters and wasn't, and a few, a real small few who called themselves nothing but were real masters. "Tiger Eyes" I call them. Man, you see them, you know you get real fight.

That's what I believe, let me tell you, if you want to know real technique, not just stupid tricks that don't work when you outside of studio, you got to sweat a little, bleed a little too maybe!

So you see, this book is not just about Balisong, it's deeper than that. I don't like to say spiritual, because maybe you mix up what I say – Not like some hippy. No I mean how to train so you hard outside and hard inside, but still able to be soft when you want to be.

So no matter what comes, you can hold your head up high and don't step in the gutter for no man.

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STATEMENT BY THE PUBLISHERS

The publishers, Dragon Books, are proud to bring to the notice of the general public, the works of the noted master of Balisong, Cacooy "Boy" Hernandez.

We have decided to keep to Master Hernandez' unique writing style in the introduction, but with his full co-operation, we have edited his original manuscript in a way which we hope will best illustrate this truly dynamic man and his devastating arsenal of techniques, gleaned from a lifetime's experience.

The techniques described in this book are combat proven; under no circumstances should they be entered into lightly. Master Hernandez advises extreme caution, the techniques have no sporting or competitive outlet. Indeed, the possession of a Balisong knife may be construed as an offensive weapon and certain area authorities regard them as a prohibited weapon. Both the publishers and author wish to state; this volume is intended as an educational and sociological study of one man's life. The techniques, by their very nature, are not intended to be practiced. Neither the publisher nor the author will be held responsible for any misuse of the information contained in this book.

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A simplified map of the Philippines, circa 1950.

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Balisong's History



In 1947, with great difficulty, I managed to get employment at Manila port on Luzon Island which is in the Philippines. I was young and fiery, but in those dark days, if you didn't stand up for yourself you were dead. As it was, you had to pay out a tenth of your day's money to the dockman (a form of gangster). Most of the work was loading and unloading boxes and sacks. You were given a tallystick for each sack or box, then at the end of the shift you cash them in for your pay, minus the tenth that the dockman wants.

We all moaned about it but the sight of the dockman's helpers (thugs) who we were paying to lounge around the dock wearing fancy Hawaiian shirts and smoking good American cigarettes, put us off from doing anything.

That was, until the dockman said he wanted two tenths off everyone. It was in the June of '47. Yes, that's the date, it was the first time I ever saw Master Bimba and Balisong. To look at Master Bimba, you really wouldn't think much about him. He was about five feet three inches tall and weighed around 110 pounds. Usually, he wore a pair of khaki shorts and some rope sandals – when you looked closer, you saw that this little man was iron hard – every muscle picked out sharp and equally developed. Only his hair betrayed his true age, it was grey-white and closely cropped. I suppose he must have been nearly sixty then, but he had a full set of teeth and more than a few girlfriends besides his wife – the joke was, that there were more Bimba children than years in a man's life.

Anyway; the fateful day came. The dockman said two tenths – we worked the whole day dreading the end of shift. In those days, just to survive was hard enough on our wages, let alone live. But we Phillipinos are a strong people, we will endure much before we crack. The klaxon went and the shift changed – some men tried to double shift to get more money, but unless you were well-connected there was no chance. The line made its way to the office (a corrugated roof with no walls), on the

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Malaysian Keris.



Makassarese Badik.



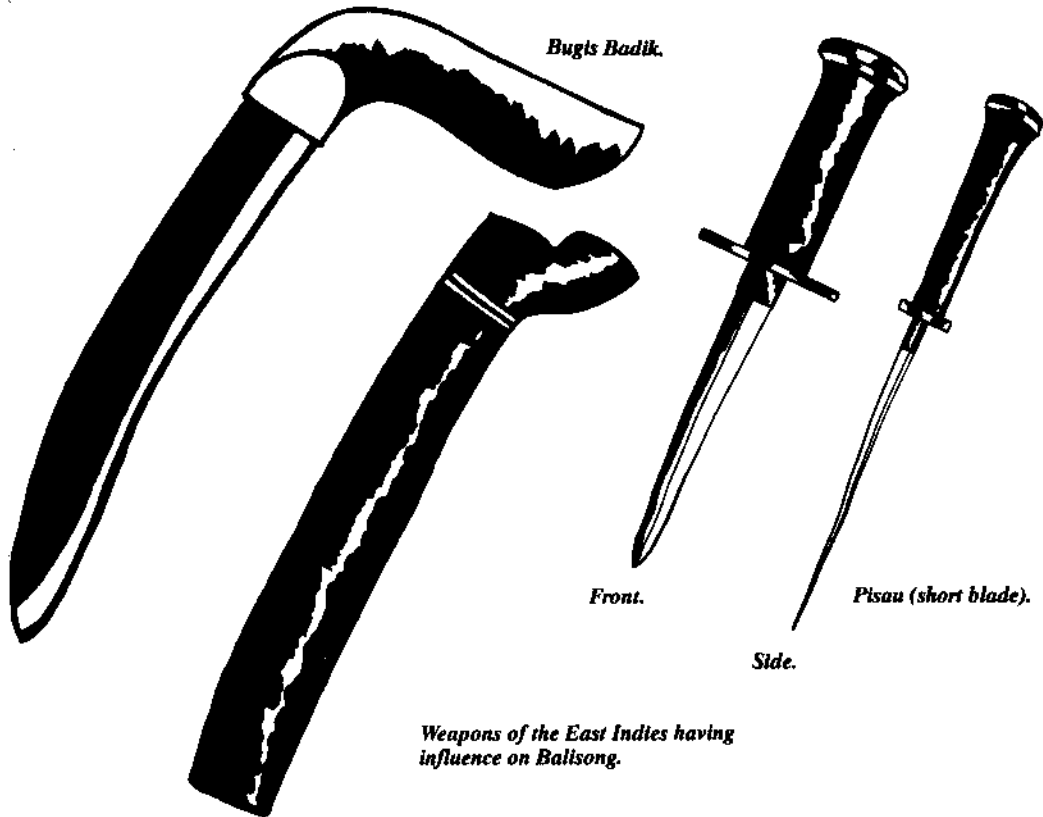
Weapons of the East Indies having influence on Balisong.

way, we had to go past the dockman and his helpers. They stood together so that only one man at a time could pass through their ranks – two tenths of the tallysticks passed into the sack held by one helper.

When it came to Master Bimba, he gave one tenth, no more, no less. The dockman looked at him with wide eyes full of rage. (I was two people behind Master Bimba, I will never forget that look.) The dockman spat out his chew (a tobacco and herb mix) and squared up to Master Bimba. I have never seen anything happen so fast. Master Bimba drew, flipped and slashed his Balisong up one side of the dockman's nose and down the other. The slits opened like a cinema curtain and the blood started to run. The dockman held his fancy bandanna to the wound. All this time, his helpers had stood back, then one drew his machete and slashed from behind. Don't ask me why, but I shouted – "Bimba, watch out!" Master Bimba spun on a dime and punched out at the helper with the butt end of the Balisong. The helper dropped down, stunned. Then Master Bimba spoke, I will always remember, as he spoke, he twirled the Balisong to the retrieve and cradled it safe but ready in the palm of his hand. He told the dockman – "One tenth from everyone as usual." Master Bimba was not stupid, he knew that to get rid of the dockman was to invite another gang in. In those days it was not organised as it is today. Through the blood-streaming nose, the dockman said "Yes" and the line moved on.

When I had been paid, I raced off after Master Bimba. He was going into a bar, oh yes, as well as a fighter, he was a drinker too. I followed him in and bought him a glass of the rough spirit which he favoured. He

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Weapons of the East Indies having influence on Ballsong.

recognised my voice from the line and offered me some of his tobacco which was better than a spoken thank you.

Like a stupid young idiot, I praised him and called him a real fighter, I begged him to show me his knife, for I had never seen anything like it. Instead of being flattered, he downed the rough spirit in one gulp and made for the door. I blinked in the sunlight as I looked for him. Then, in the distance, I saw him walking down a back alley.

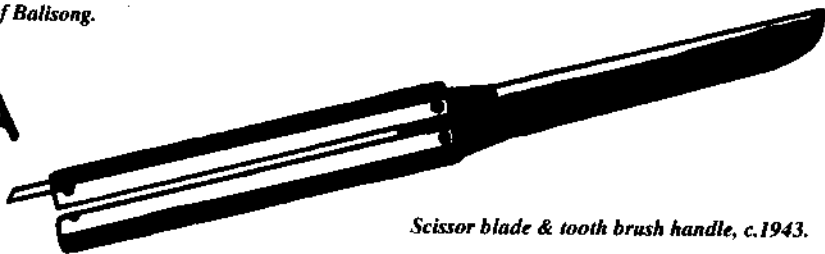
Kicking up a cloud of dust, I ran after him. As I closed on him, he stopped and turned, he said something which a good churchman should never say. I, however, stood my ground.

Master Bimba paused for a moment, then he gave that wide grin, that we who studied under him, will always remember. He said that I really did not know what I was letting myself in for. But like the young always are, I must be a little extra stupid. I replied that I would dearly love to be a fighter like him, to learn all his tricks and tactics. He smiled and the last thing I remember before all the lights went out, was his fist coming towards my jaw.

I recall coming round; my head was spinning and there was a rushing like a steam turbine in my ears. As my eyes cleared, I saw Master Bimba,

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A



Scissor blade & tooth brush handle, c.1943.

sitting on his haunches and laughing fit to burst. I struggled to my feet, my jaw hurt but not so badly as my pride. Master Bimba told me that I had just learned the first rule – never, never, lower your guard. At the time it puzzled me but now I know what he meant. It was probably the single most important lesson. It has saved my life a score of times. But that's for later.

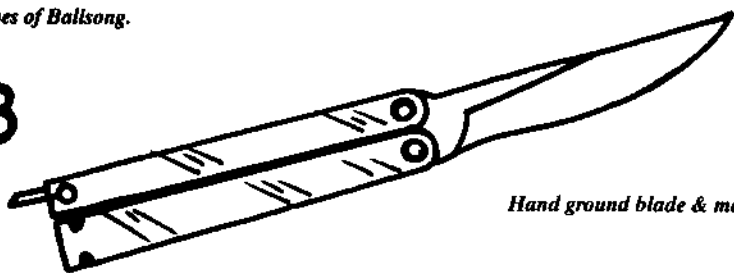
Master Bimba said that he would not show me his knife until I had gone for a good six months of training. It happened, that on days when there was no work, Master Bimba had an informal school. Using a piece of stamped-out earth behind his brother's eating house, his small class drilled in the Arnis de Manao. Although I did not realise it, I was greatly honoured to be invited to train. Train! What a word to use; we just fought like lions. His byword was; Never reject a challenge and never step back.

In the first three weeks, I had cracked two ribs and blacked my eyes countless times and cut my knuckles raw. Still, they say that a poor fighter comes in for heavy blows and it's as true today as it was in the time of the Conquistadors. But after about four months, I started to get the "edge" as they say. Fewer and fewer blows landed now and training became a real joy to be part of. At no time did Master Bimba ever ask for any money for teaching. Once, I remember, we had all saved together, and bought a bottle of the English Scotch Whisky, 'Johnnie Walker', (in those days about two month's salary for a dockworker). We presented it to Master Bimba, who, had tears in his eyes. (*Man's tears, Mr. Hernandez wishes to emphasize.*) He called into the eating house for his brother, he showed him the bottle and then opened it and took a sip. He passed the bottle around and around the class until it was empty. He said that our gift was like the fighting skill, nothing if it were not shared. I remember that moment to this day. But my regret is that some of my class mates who are now famous, and they know who they are, have forgotten that part of the Master Bimba's teaching. Enough of this, it's their lives anyway.

To return to the story. True to his word, after six months, Master

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B



Hand ground blade & metal handle, c.1948.

Bimba called me to the practice yard. Here he first checked that there were no prying eyes. He drew out a small package, about seven inches by one and a half. I remember it was wrapped in the front cover from a National Geographic magazine, such pretty pictures. With that famous smile of his he handed me the package and told me not to open it until he had gone. But I was young and I ripped it open. It was a Balisong. He then drew out his own Balisong and carefully opened it. Showing all the methods of catches, retrieves and cut and slash, he went through the ways of Balisong. I began to realise how kind Master Bimba had been – for the moves of Arnis de Manao enabled the Balisong to move with effortless ease. He saw that I had understood and his smile grew even wider. Then, like a rat-trap, his mouth closed and he looked those Tiger eyes that made grown men shiver.

“Be warned!” he said “The only way to know whether you are master of Balisong is to fight with it – for real!”

I tell you that a cold shiver shot up my spine. Master Bimba never tried to make us believe that Balisong was anything but deadly. He used to say, “Respect Balisong and Balisong respect you”. I asked Master Bimba, “who invented Balisong?” I remembered, he laughed and said, “we all did”. I didn’t understand, so Master Bimba showed me how the Balisong was made. Indeed Master Bimba made all his own Balisong. Particularly during the war, a lot of throats were cut by partisans using Master Bimba’s blades. But that again is another story for another time.

Master Bimba said that the first Balisong he made was made from a tooth brush handle and a blade taken from a pair of scissors. He reckoned that the idea was based on a cut-throat razor but the problem with a single-handled cut-throat razor is that it’s only a slashing weapon and is inclined to slip or close on hard contact; so to have a handle which totally encloses and locks onto the blade is the most powerful form for cut, slash and stab.

During the twenties and thirties, a number of knives with a spring opening came, via the French sailors. We came to call them “Inox”; switch blades, I think you call them in the U.S. “Inox” is what was written on the blade – it was only years later when I was a sailor on shore leave in Marseilles, that I discovered that “Inox” meant rustproof – Ah well, such is life! These blades were popular with the roughs in the centre of Manila City, but really they were not very good. They opened with a flick and maybe they frightened somebody without fighting spirit, but in a fight, they were flimsy; no strength behind them. I recall being laid off from the docks for about three months. I found a job in a slaughter house, cutting ox carcasses. It was dirty, hard work, but in the break for meals, I started to think about Balisong. I hung one of the ox carcasses from a hook and first cut, slash and stabbed Arnis style with an “Inox”. It was O.K. but it seemed to slip and slide. It didn’t penetrate, also the blade had loosened in its mounting. I drew the Balisong that Master Bimba had presented me with. I tried the same cut, slash stab – the Balisong passed through like a knife through butter. As an afterthought, I examined the blades of both the Inox and the Balisong. Because of the Inox’s shape, the tip was bent slightly and the edge was chipped where it contacted bone in the ox carcass. But the Balisong, with its thick back and double grip, sliced cleanly. I examined the point and the edge. I can tell you, I couldn’t wait until work finished to get to see Master Bimba.

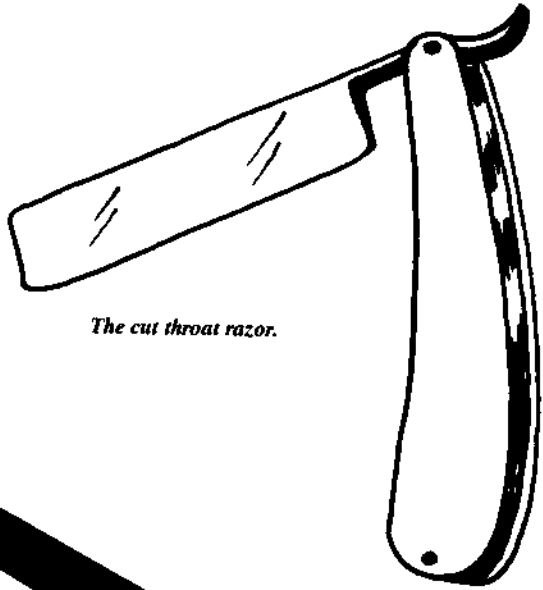
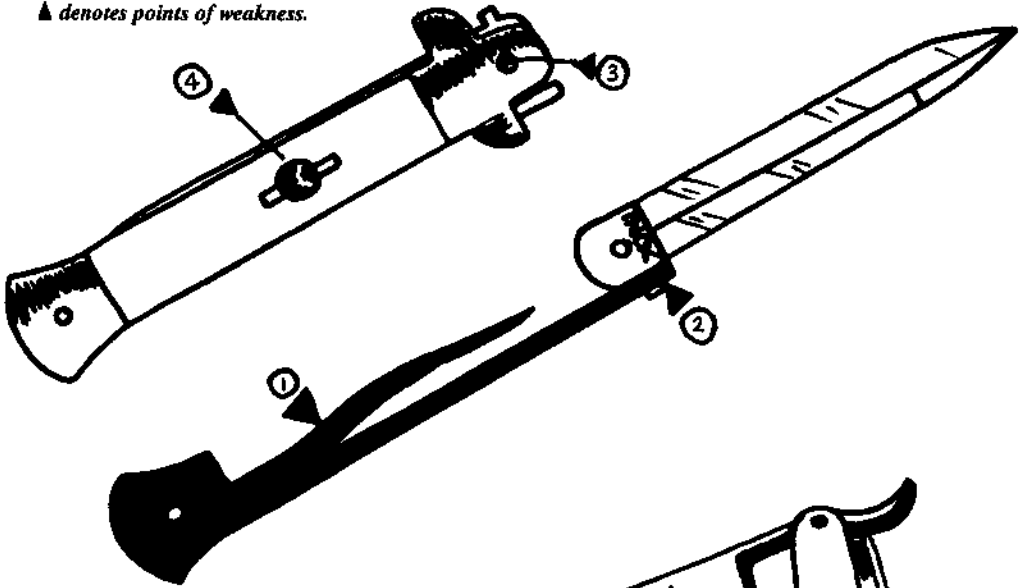
I met him in his local bar. Although he had not been working since the lay-off, he was not short of money, his students made sure that he would not worry for money. But dare I say it – that’s another story. Anyway I told Master Bimba of my discovery in the slaughter house. He thought for a moment and then agreed with my discovery of the superiority of the Balisong over the Inox. But then those old rat-trap eyes slammed down –

“But an ox carcass doesn’t fight back. What you have learned is good, but don’t base all of your strategy on it!”

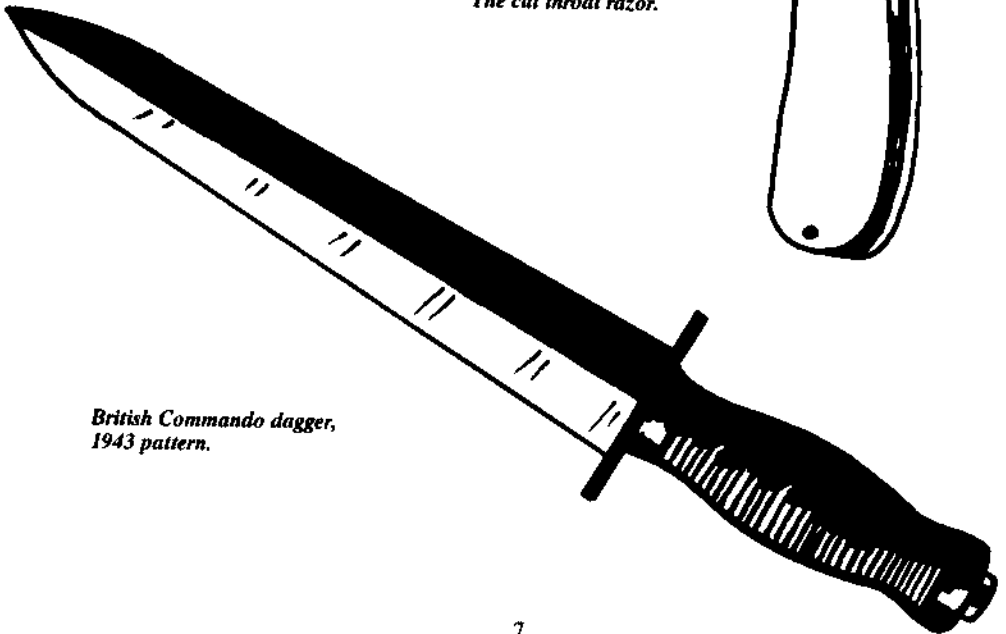
I was crestfallen, but slowly the wisdom of Master Bimba’s words came through to me. As the months passed, the work in the docks came back, and with it, the chance to work beside Master Bimba. During that time, he showed me his form of Escrima which he said he developed from his other brother who lived in Cebu City. We trained long and hard in it. I said that I thought it was a bit like sword fencing. Master Bimba agreed and told me that a lot of the moves and parries came from old

Inox and its weaknesses (note due to legislation certain details of construction have been omitted).

▲ denotes points of weakness.

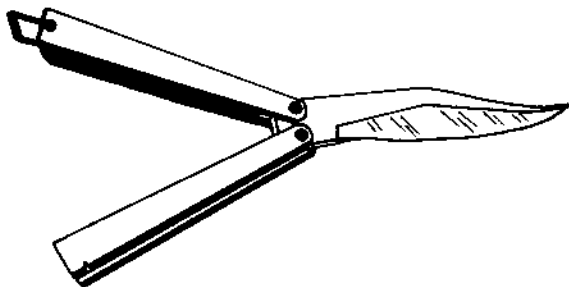


The cut throat razor.



*British Commando dagger,
1943 pattern.*

Modern Balisong with hollow ground stainless blade & die cast metal handle.

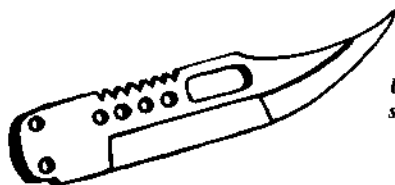


Lapu Lapu and the Spanish warriors of long ago. He said you could just as well train with a rattan cane as a machete. One night we tried it. That's the scar (*Senor Hernandez has a scar which runs across his chest from right shoulder to left floating rib*). See! That's the skill Master Bimba had. I tasted steel in battle and lived to tell of it! Just cut enough to mark, not hurt. I always come back to Balisong though. I would like to be good enough to use one in each hand like Master Bimba. But I guess I've got a lot to learn yet (*Senor Hernandez is being modest. Ed.*). A couple of knives which I recognise as being as good as Balisong on the cut are:— The hunting Bowie, though it's a bit heavy for fast work.

The British Army Commando dagger (*Sykes Fairbairn. Ed.*). This one has everything that Balisong has except you can't close it. But if you see a guy with one, I would think twice.

I once tried the U.S. Marine Survival Knife, but I broke it at the handle. It might have been a fake, but I don't know, there was something wrong with the steel.

I trained with Master Bimba continually for three years until 1950. I would still be training with him to this day, had not the worst of all things happened — we finished our shift and walked down to the bar. On the way, a guy called to Master Bimba out of an alleyway. Master Bimba turned to look at the guy. A shotgun blast from both barrels picked Master Bimba up and tossed him across the sidewalk. I could see by the way he fell that he was dead. I was in a dream, it all seemed to go slowly. I remember jumping forward into the alleyway, falling in a tumble over some cases. I saw the guy who had shot Master Bimba — it was the dockman, I drew my Balisong and cut at him. I remember seeing him swing the sawn-off at me like a club. I ducked it and just went straight in — cut, slash, cut, slash; no more to it. I'm not saying whether he was dead, but let it be that I knew Manilla Port was no place to be. Within two days I had shipped out as a deck-hand bound for Hawaii.



Ultra modern pierced blade with saw back-tempered edges.

Catches and Retrieves



You know what they say; once started, soon finished. I want to tell you what I best know as, “catching and retrieving” with Balisong. This is the method which Master Bimba taught me, it is reputed to have come from Batangas; but I don’t know. All I know is, it works, no frills, no nonsense. So straight to it. I train both left and right hands because, as Master Bimba used to say,

“If you favour one hand and your enemy cuts off that hand, what can you do? Die? No! Use the other!”

When you look at the body of a man trained in proper Arnis de Manao, you see perfect development of body. (*Ed: total symmetry*).

Whichever hand is used, the first catch is done like this:

Catch # One/Downward

1 The butt of the Balisong rests in the flat palm. With the little finger, stroke the latch; it should spring open, if not, a little fine oil will do the trick.

2 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the bottom handle go. It will start to swing away, carrying the blade with it.

3 As the handle continues in its circle, bringing the blade to its lock out position, move the holding fingers, so that the swinging handle makes contact with the held handle. Make your grip tight and the knife is ready.

Retrieve # One/Downward

4 From the same combat-ready grip, turn blade.

5 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the bottom handle go. As in the catch, the handle and blade will drop in a swinging arc.

6 As the handle and blade continue in their returning arc, first the blade, then the handle, return to their original position. The latch will still be loose, so with the little finger, stroke it back to the closed position.

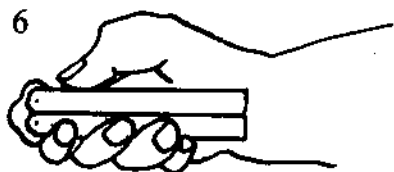
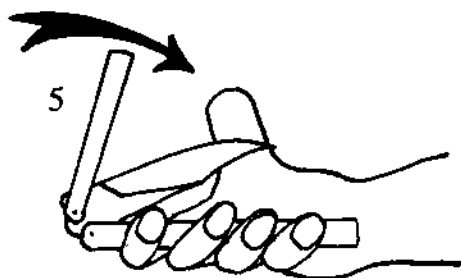
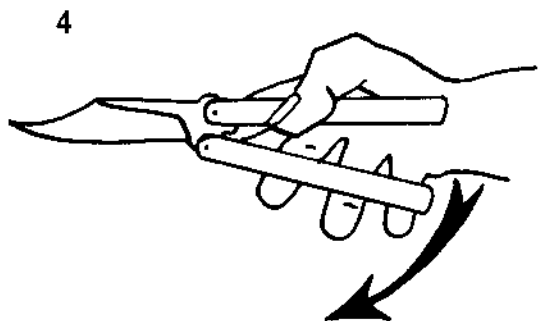
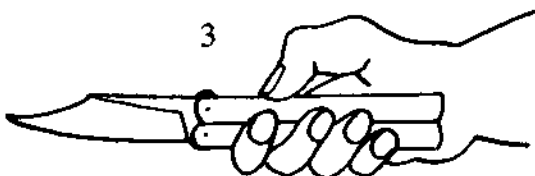
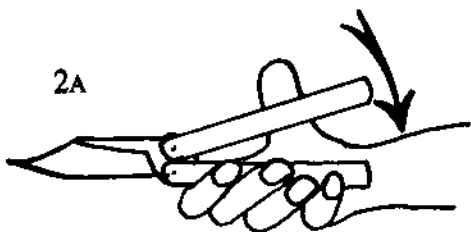
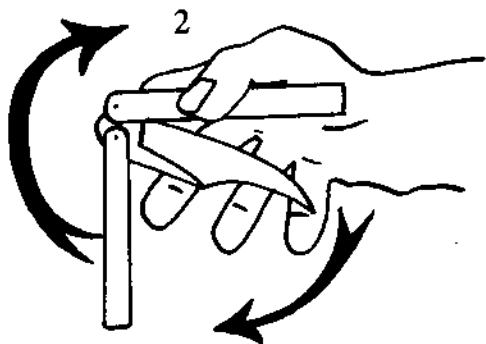
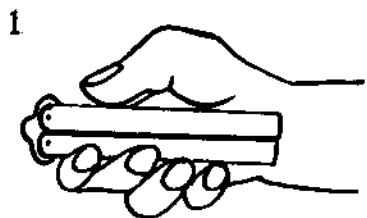
At no time should the other hand be used to help. Master Bimba was at pains to stress this. Indeed many is the crack across the knuckles of the offending hand, with Master's rattan cane. Remember it!" he would say – crack – remember.

You know, Americans used to buy them as souvenirs, until they were made illegal. They used to call them "click, clacks" or "crickets". I could never work out why.

(Ed: popular opinion is that the sound made by inexpertly opening the Balisong, resembled the click-clack of a cicada).

Let's go on to catch and retrieve number two – Horizontal:

Catch and Retrieve # 1.



Catch # Two/Horizontal

1 Palm uppermost, with the heel of the Balisong resting in the flat palm, stroke the latch with the little finger, so it opens slightly.

2 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the outside handle go, with a gentle, flicking wrist action. It will start to swing away, carrying the blade with it.

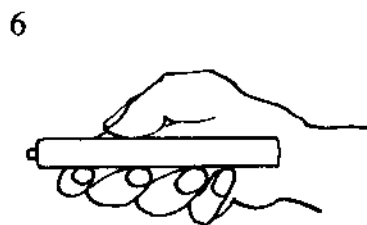
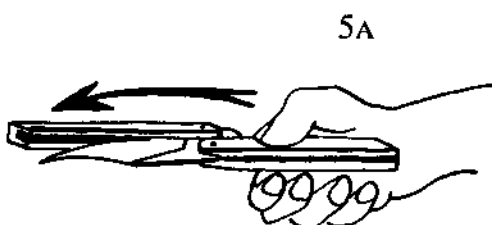
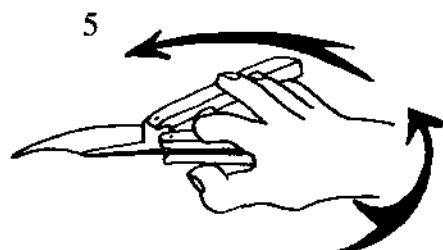
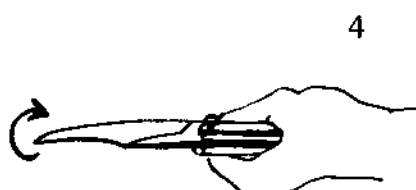
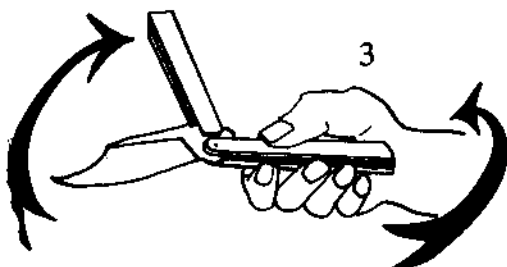
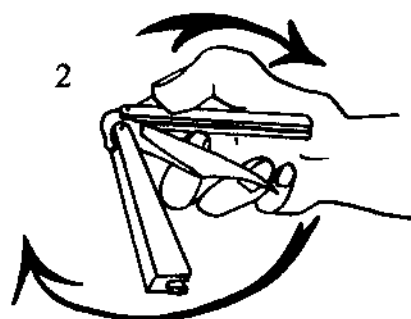
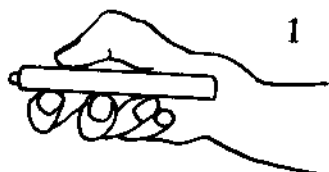
3 As the handle continues in its horizontal circle, bringing the blade to its lock out position; move the holding fingers and twist the wrist, so that the swinging handle makes contact with the held handle. Make your grip tight and the knife blade, horizontal is ready.

Retrieve # Two/Horizontal

4 From the same combat-ready grip, turn the blade so that its edge faces the opposite direction.

5 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the outside handle go. As in the catch, the handle will follow the wrist flick in a swinging arc.

6 As both the handle and blade continue in their returning horizontal arc. First the blade, then the handle return to their original position. The latch is stroked back into the closed position.



Catch # Three/Reverse Handle Vertical Drop

1 With the closed Balisong held vertically, butt end uppermost and the handles held between thumb and forefinger, gently stroke the latch free; so it opens slightly.

2 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the outside handle go. It will quickly fall swinging down in its arc, carrying the blade with it.

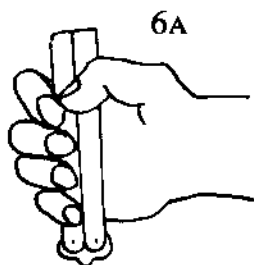
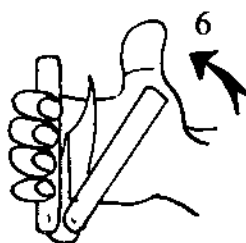
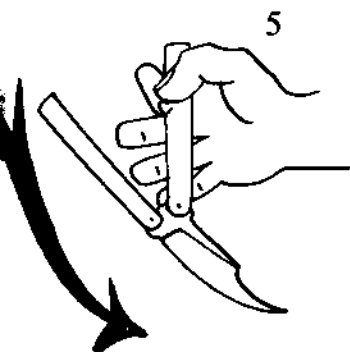
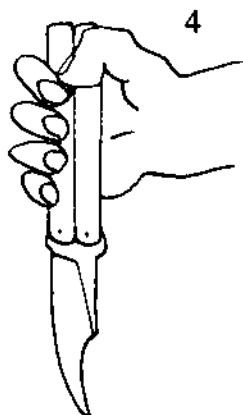
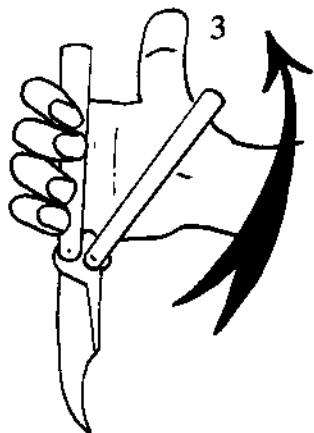
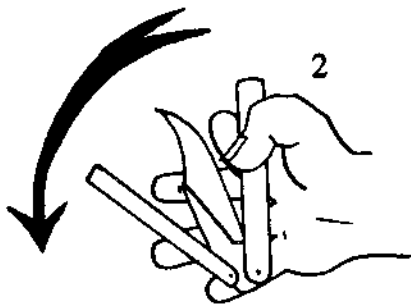
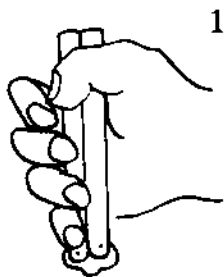
3 As the free swinging handle continues in its circle, turn the held handle a half turn. The blade has reached its lock out position now and the free handle is on its upward path. Open your free fingers to accept it, whilst maintaining the grip with the thumb and forefingers. Close fingers around the swinging handle as it makes contact with the held handle, make your grip tight and the knife blade; point downwards is ready.

Retrieve # Three/Reverse Handle

4 From the same combat-ready grip, thumb and forefinger squeezing the held handle, release the other handle.

5 It will swing down fast as it reaches the blade in its lock out position, twist the held handle slightly, to encourage both blade and swinging handle up.

6 Open your free fingers exactly the same as in the catch. As the blade and handle return to their original position, the latch is stroked back into the closed position.



Catch # Four/Pinch Grip Diagonal

1 With a pinching feeling between thumb and forefinger, hold one handle of the Balisong (it's a quick move, as if just taken from a pocket – BANG! – the draw! No time for a strong, full hand grip). So, as I say, pinch the one handle. With the middle finger, gently stroke the catch free.

2 With an overhand flick, the free handle will fly off, taking the blade with it – make sure your grip is strong, as there is no second chance with this grip.

3 As the free swinging handle continues in its circular sweep, bringing the blade to its lock out position, stretch the thumb and forefinger which are holding the held handle. This is so that the free swinging handle can pass across the open palm of the hand to meet the held handle. Make your grip tight, and you are ready.

Retrieve # Four/Pinch Grip Diagonal

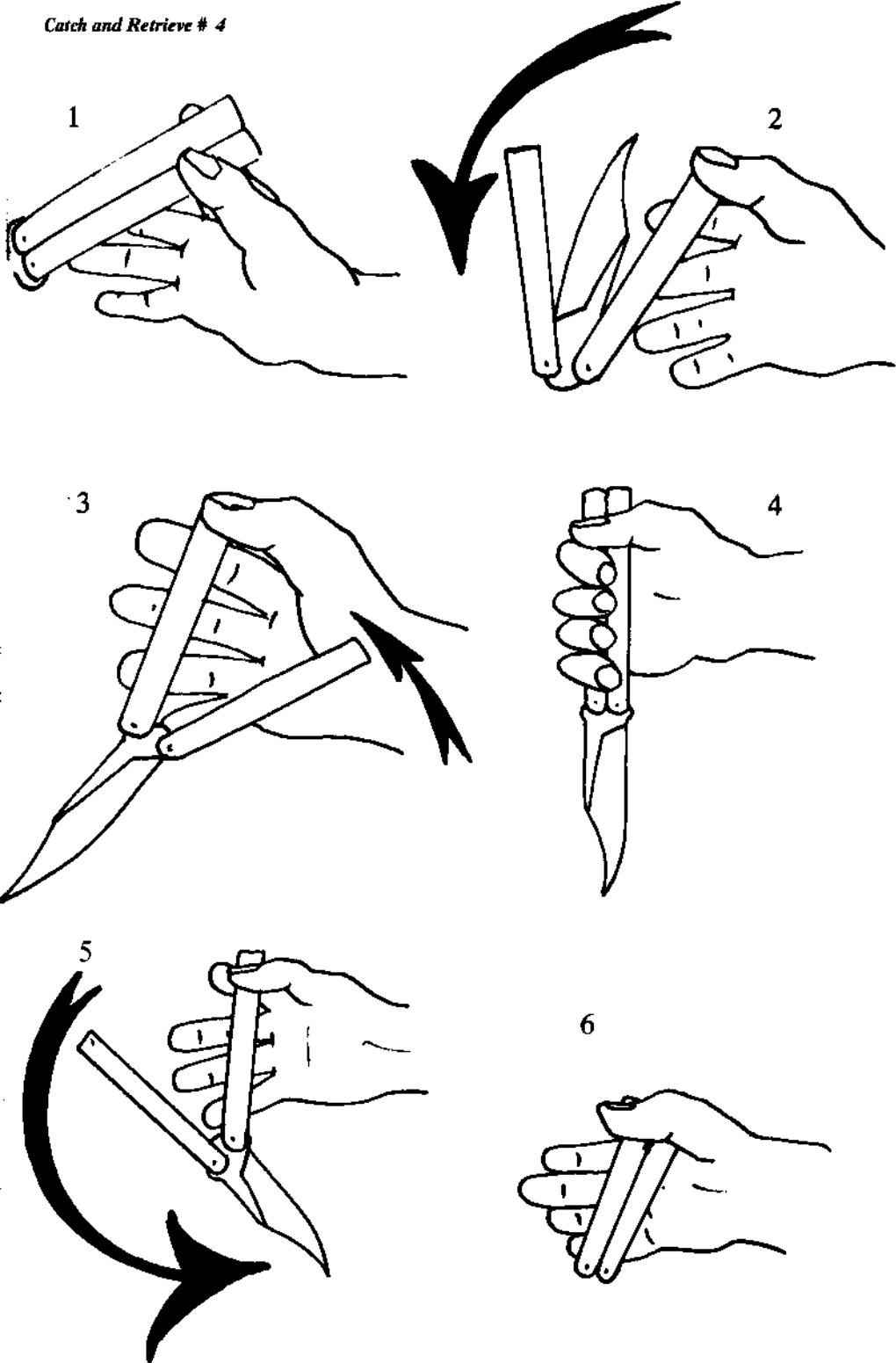
4 From the same grip, open all the fingers except thumb and forefinger which hold the held handle. Stretch the thumb and forefinger out and with an underhand flick, set the other handle free.

5 As it swings back, be sure that it does not brush the palm of your hand in its travel.

6 As it encounters the blade, both blade and handle travel together to the original start position. With the middle finger, gently stroke the catch to.

O.K., so that's the very basic bones of catching and retrieving. When I first learned from Master Bimba, I cut myself many times. I know some guys who deliberately blunted their blades, so as not to get cut. But Master Bimba said this was like making a prize fighting cock into a hen. (*Ed: we think Mr. Hernandez means something a little stronger, but modesty forbids him saying it*). He said that to take your cuts manfully was the only way to learn and I agree with him.

(Ed: modern opinion has it that a dummy blade or blunted edge, be used in the training drills, for safety. It must be remembered that Mr. Hernandez is of the "old school" and is describing his own training. Neither the publishers nor the author will accept any responsibility for any injury which may occur by reading and/or following the instructions herein contained.)



The Fighting Grips



With a definite reason, I chose to work on grips after catches and retrieves and not the other way around, as would be strict logic. – My way, which is Master Bimba's method, takes the view that the heart of Balisong is to open and close like the wings of a butterfly. It is useless to my mind, to practice holding when you're not safe on the open and close. So enough said – onto grips.

To be effective, is to be simple, whether the grip is for cut, slash or stab. There are only a few combinations of grip.

Method 1 *Like holding a hammer:*

- Blade at thumb end
 - Blade at small finger end
- Both of these have variations of blade up and blade down.

Method 2 *Like holding a file:*

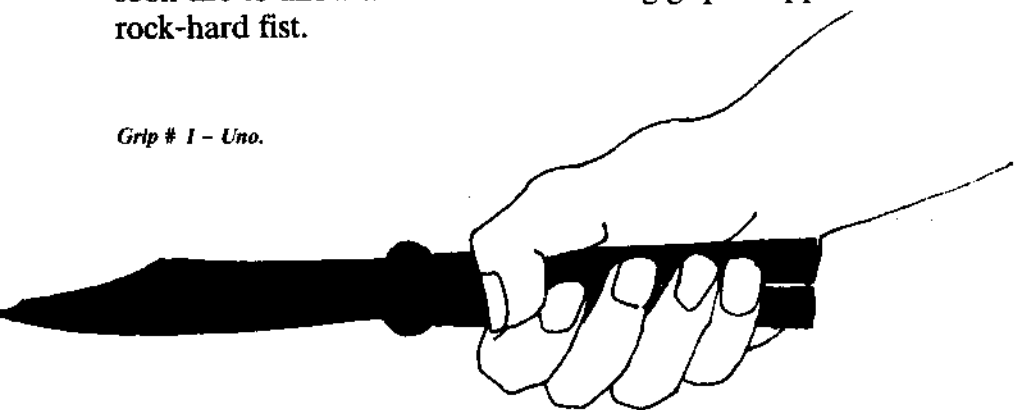
- Blade at thumb end only
- Variation, blade up and blade down.

But from these two basic forms, spring a thousand variations – as many and as varied as the character of the man wielding the Balisong. The ones which I am going to describe are a result of Master Bimba's teaching and my own experience. Another master will have different teaching and different ways – some say which is best? Only in a fight for real can we say honestly. (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez is not issuing a challenge, merely expressing his opinion.*)

Grip # 1 – uno

Like holding a hammer, with the blade at thumb end, cutting-edge downwards. This is a good grip for a short stabbing action. Make sure that the grip is strong, but not too tight. Don't hold it like a strong man because the wrist and elbow will stiffen. A stiff wrist is a weak wrist and a stiff elbow breaks easily. Relax the shoulders and concentrate any tight feeling if you must, into one of the fingers – usually the littlest finger is best, as it will soon tire to allow an overall firm strong grip as opposed to a rock-hard fist.

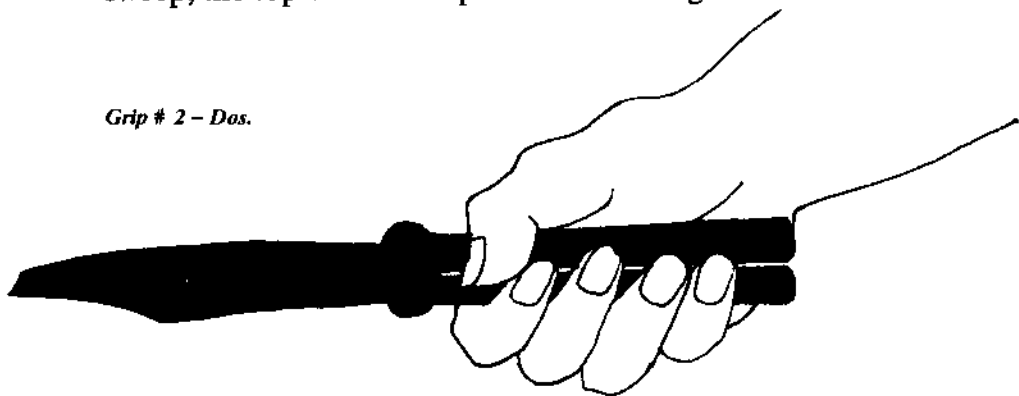
Grip # 1 – Uno.



Grip # 2 – dos

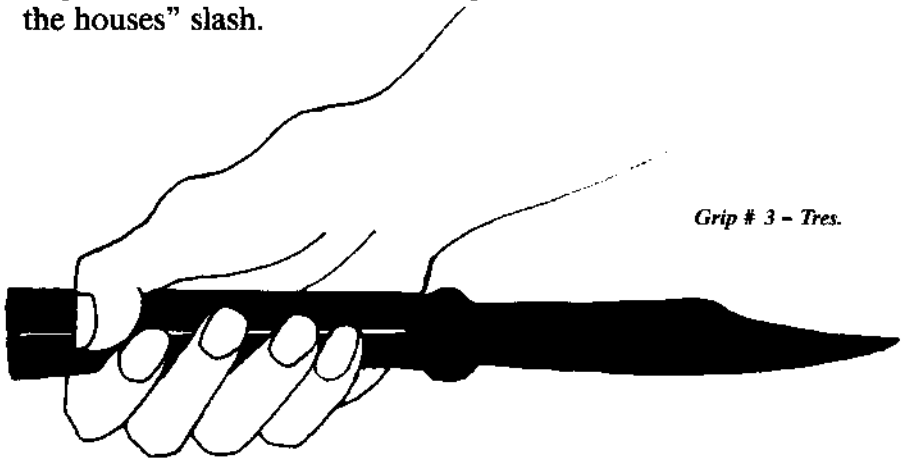
Again like holding a hammer, with the blade at thumb end. This time, the cutting edge is uppermost. This grip is good as before, for short stabs. Also in ground to sky sweeps. Again, the wrist must be supple but strong, for in the ground to sky sweep, the top of the sweep is the most dangerous to the user.

Grip # 2 – Dos.



Grip # 3 – tres

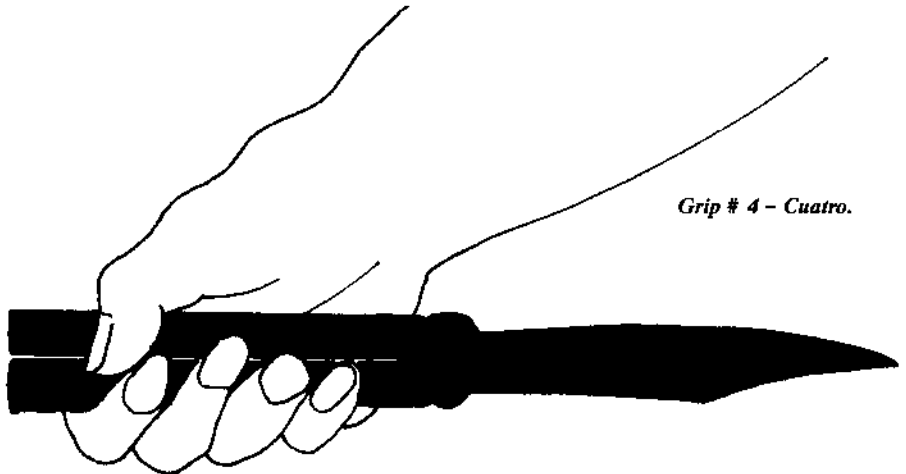
Like holding a hammer, with the blade at littlest finger end, cutting edge downwards. I prefer this grip, it's good for stabbing behind and for a "swing round the houses" slash. Be careful in this grip, for, with the blade weight at the littlest finger end, there is the chance of spin off at the end of a "round the houses" slash.



Grip # 3 - Tres.

Grip # 4 – cuatro

With the old favourite, hammer grip, hold the knife with the blade at littlest finger end, this time, cutting-edge upwards. Watch out, the blade is near your arm. However, if your wrist is grabbed, this grip works to your favour, as the blade can be used against your attacker with ease.

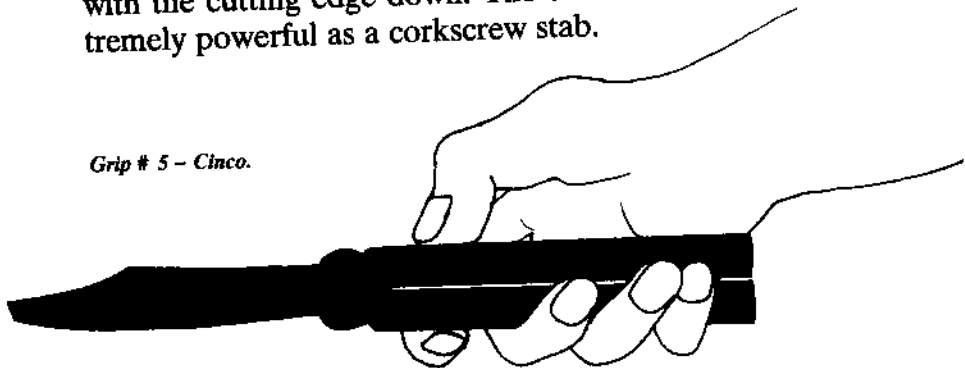


Grip # 4 - Cuatro.

Grip # 5 - cinco

Hold the knife, like you would hold a file, with a kind of pinching feeling between thumb and forefinger. (*Note: it is generally believed that this pinched forefinger method developed as a result of contact with the seafaring Bugis whose knife, the Badik, is shown in chapter One. Ed.*) In this method, the blade is always at the thumb end of the hand, in this case, with the cutting edge down. The uses are endless - it is extremely powerful as a corkscrew stab.

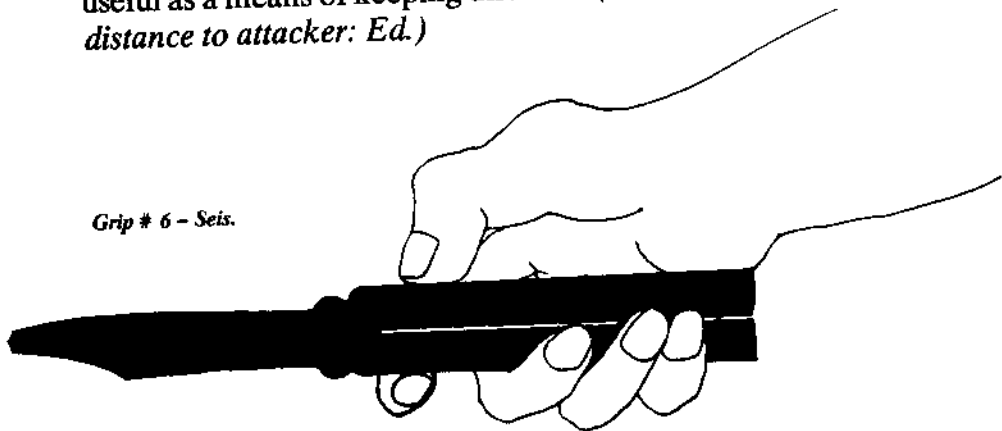
Grip # 5 - Cinco.



Grip # 6 seis

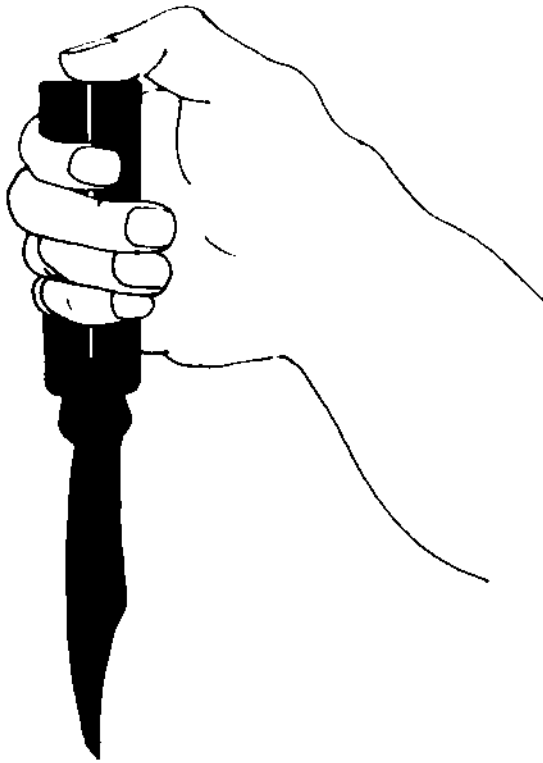
Hold the knife again in a file grip, thumb and forefinger pinching grip. But this time, the cutting edge is upwards, with the blade at the thumb end of the hand. It is useful as a rip-up movement, by rotating the wrist at the top of the rip, it can be useful as a means of keeping distance. (*Mr. Hernandez means distance to attacker: Ed.*)

Grip # 6 - Seis.



Grip # 7 – siete

This is a reinforced version of grips # 3 and # 4. It is reinforced by the use of the thumb as a cap over the butt end of the Balisong. It's very strong, it is also safe as it prevents the blade slipping through the hand. As the Balisong has no guard, it is something which is most necessary when times get tough.



Grip # 7 - Siete.

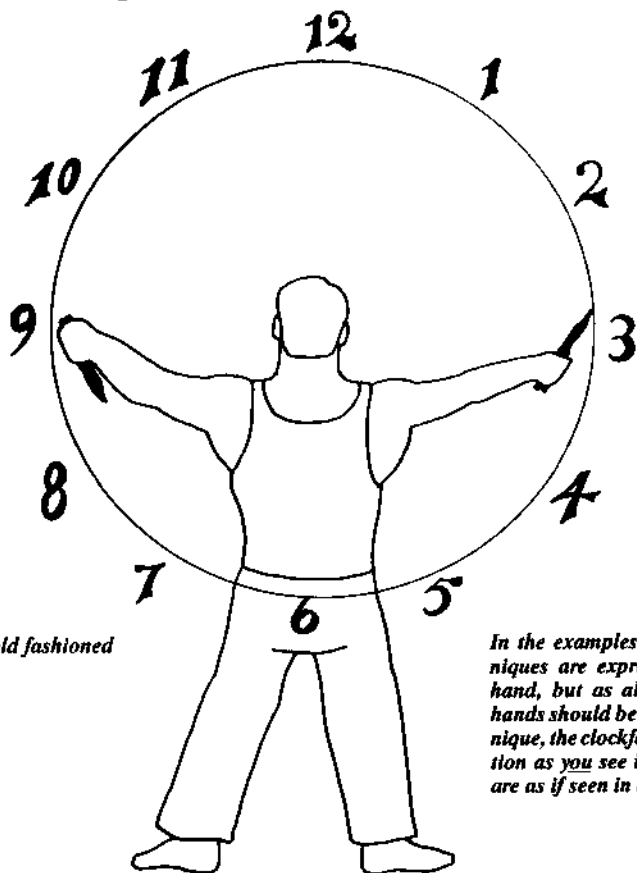
A word more about grip – a dropped knife could mean a lost life – yours. That is what Master Bimba always used to say. How often I remember the salty taste of blood in my mouth if I dropped my Balisong. Master Bimba would spot it immediately and the back of his hand would find my mouth double-quick. I tell you, it's a lesson you don't forget. You know people look and say my style is hard and crude, what can I say? It works, it has saved me a few times. It all depends what you want of it. For me, it's fighting, always has been, always will be I guess. I don't see any point in flashing and whirling Balisong – it won't frighten or impress a real fighter. Believe me – I know!

Cut, Slash, Stab



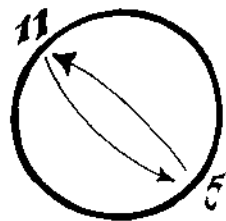
This is the life and soul of Balisong – cut, slash, stab. Many people criticise and say why cut, slash, stab not just slash and stab. Only time will reveal the answer to that question. Let me say that when I first began to train, the same question arose. I asked Master Bimba; he just smiled and said that time would be the best answer – like all of Master Bimba's teaching, whether spoken or unspoken; it worked.

To make it easier to understand what you will be doing in these techniques, think of facing an old-fashioned clock. All the cuts, slashes and stabs are done using this idea.



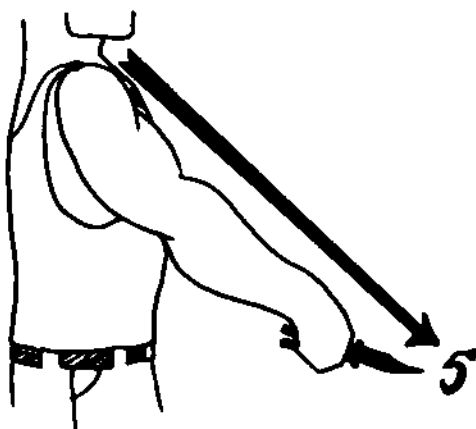
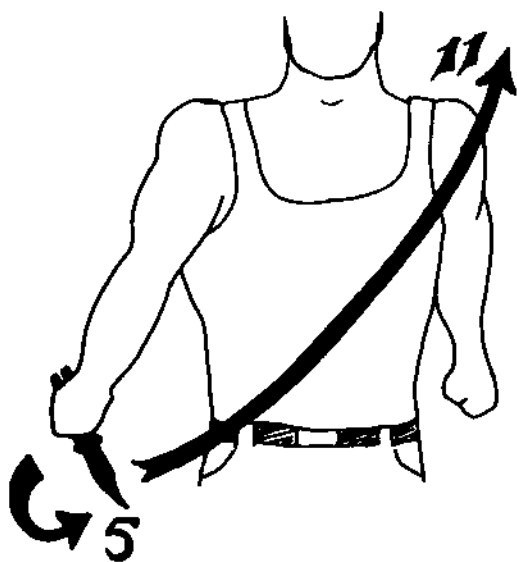
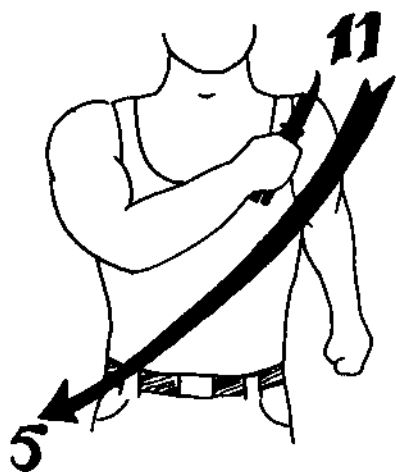
Think of facing an old fashioned clockface.

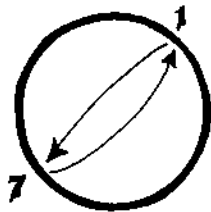
In the examples overleaf, all techniques are expressed on the right hand, but as already noted, both hands should be used. In each technique, the clockface shows the direction as you see it. The illustrations are as if seen in a mirror.



Cut, Slash # 1 – uno

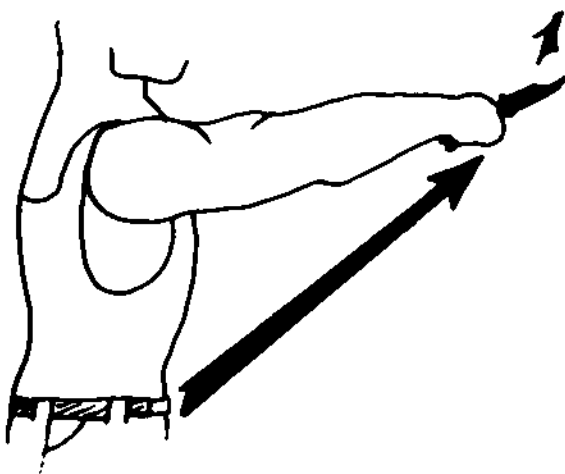
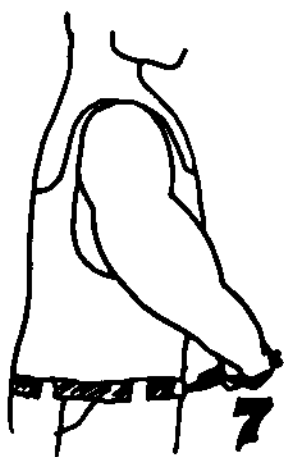
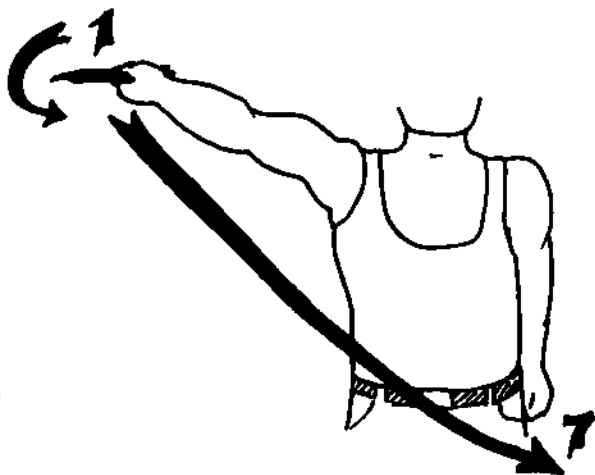
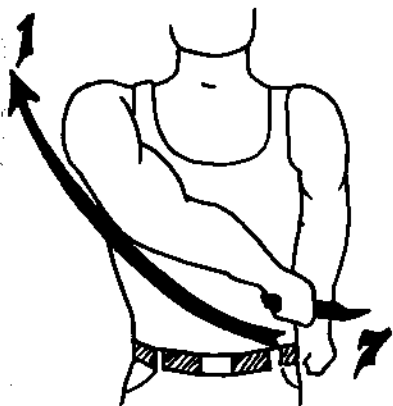
Hold knife in grip # 1 (hammer grip, edge downwards) starting with the knife at left shoulder, blade outwards, cut out as if drawing a line from 11 o'clock to 5 o'clock on a clock face. Then turn the wrist and return from 5 o'clock to 11 o'clock. Don't make a big deal out of it, just cut natural.

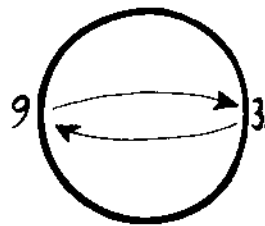




Cut, slash # 2 - dos

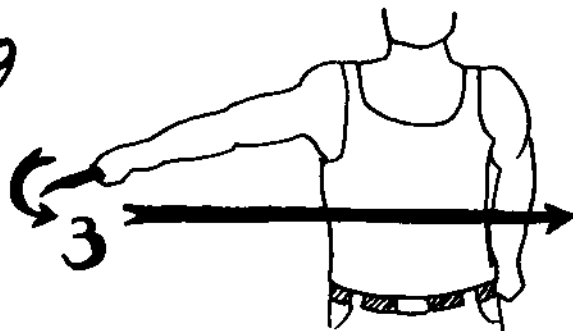
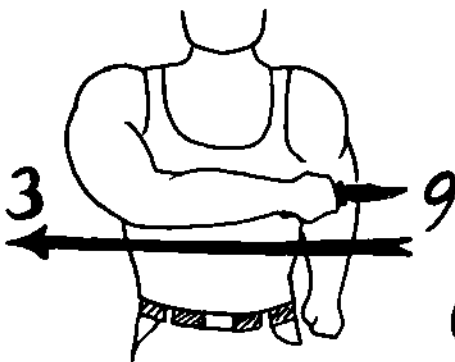
Hold the knife in grip # 1 (hammer grip, edge downwards) starting with the knife at left hip, wrist slightly twisted, so blade points out. Cut out as if drawing a line from 7 o'clock to 1 o'clock, turn wrist and return from 1 o'clock to 7 o'clock.

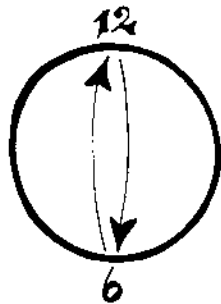




Cut, Slash # 3 - tres

Still holding knife in grip # 1 (hammer grip, edge downwards) starting with the knife at either left hip, chest or shoulder; wrist turned out so that a blade points out. Cut out as if drawing a line from 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock, turn wrist and return from 3 o'clock to 9 o'clock.

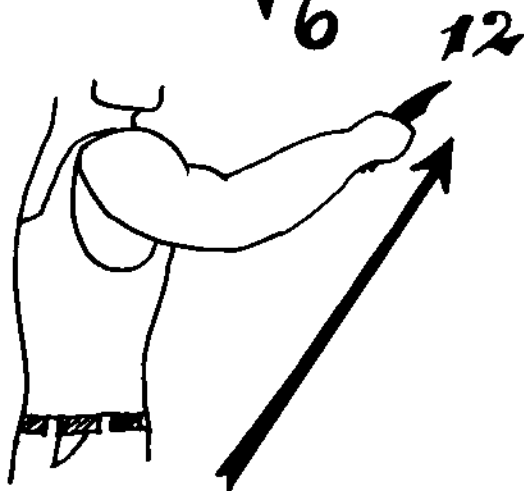
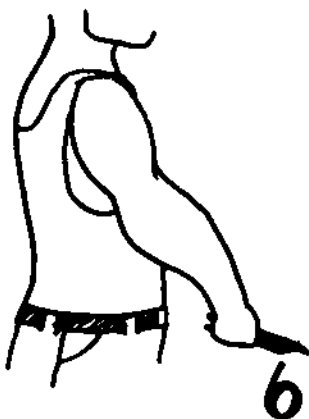
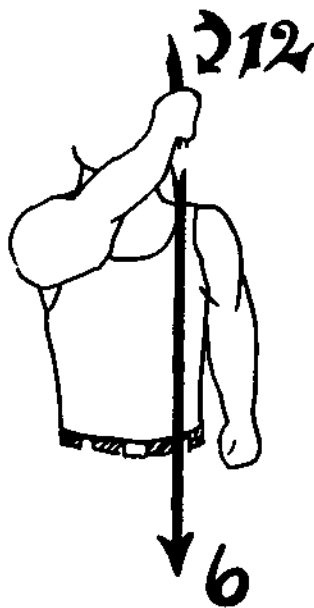
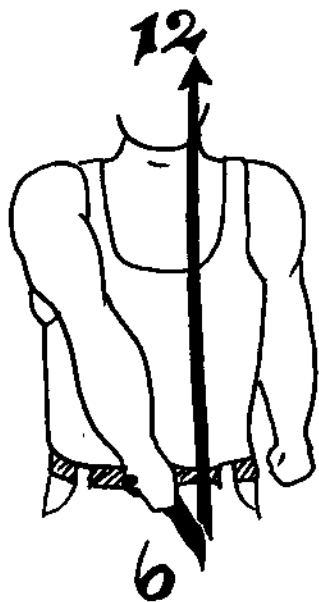


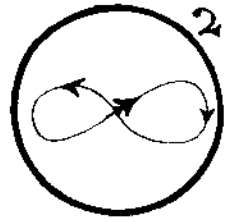


Cut, Slash # 4 – cuatro

This is very similar to uno. Myself, I don't use it that much, but I include it because it was Master Bimba's favourite. So start in grip # 1 (hammer grip, edge downwards) blade turned with the wrist at 6 o'clock low. Cut up to 12 o'clock high, turn wrist and chop down to 6 o'clock again.

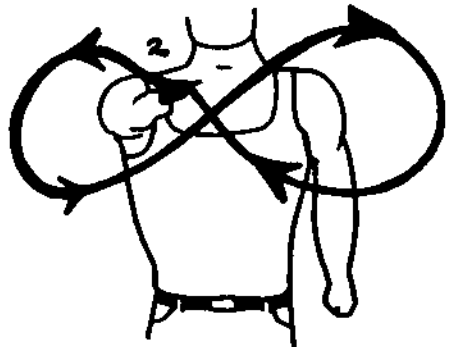
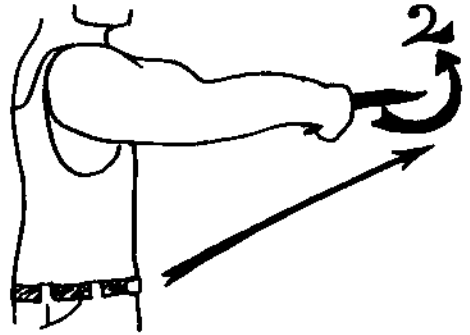
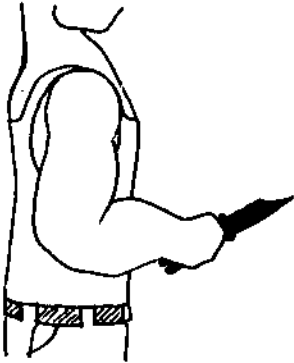
Wrists have to be very strong, but supple for this to be of any use. But at any rate, it's a good move for creating distance, (interval). It keeps an attacker safely away from you.

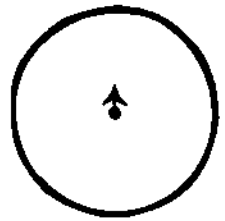




Stab, Cut, Slash # 5 – cinco

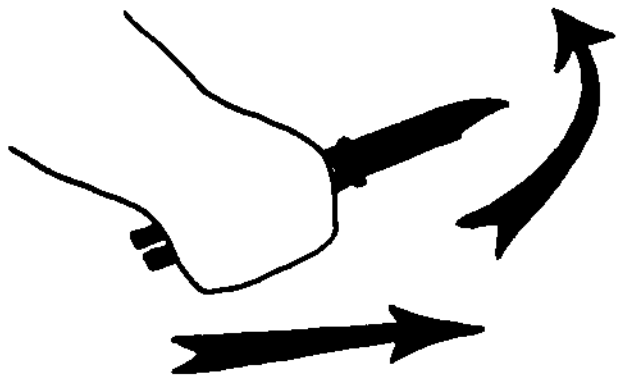
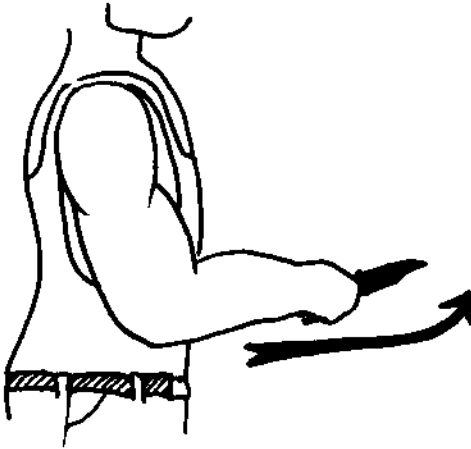
Figure Eight. This, above all else, is the technique which has most applications. Using the knife in grip # 1 (hammer grip, edge downwards) stab straight in, turning the blade in a corkscrew movement, so that the edge of the blade is at 2 o'clock. Follow the line of the blade, turning into a figure of eight laid on its side. First of all, make it a small movement. It's sometimes known as door or window defence, sometimes it's practiced within a door or window frame. No access is possible through the weaving wall of steel. As the skill increases, the movement can be exaggerated – bigger and bigger, faster and faster; then smaller and faster. Of course, using grip # 2 (hammer grip, edge upwards) just adjust your angle and range. It can be used with all the techniques described so far. As well as that, there are a few moves from grip # 2 which are quite useful, when working close in.

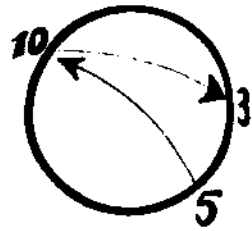




Stab, Cut # 6 – seis

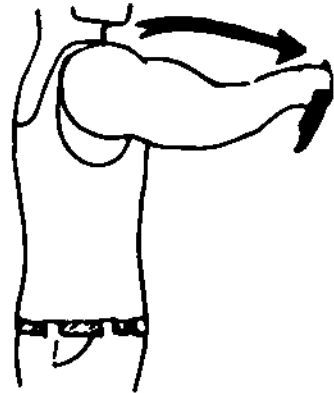
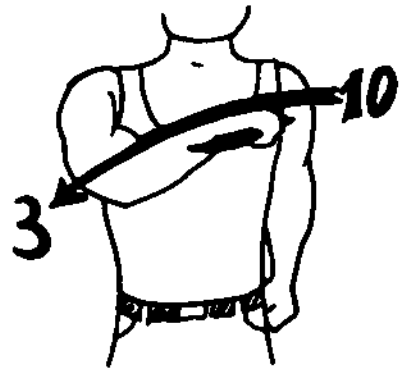
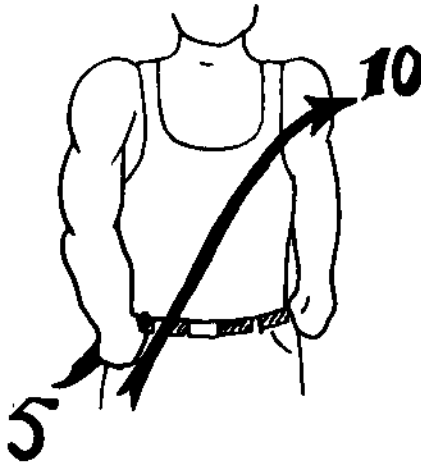
Think close work for this one. Hold knife in grip # 2 (hammer grip, edge upwards). Short stab anything from three to six inches. Cut up, using wrist as a pivot, don't raise arm. Move body in, stab; cut; move. You see the timing is like this – stab, cut, move, stab, cut, move. Pause. Stab, cut. If you need to manoeuvre without making large movements, then this is the one.

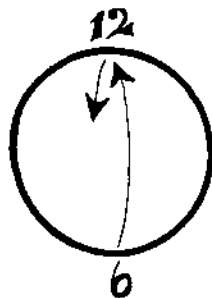




Slash, Cut, Stab # 7 – seite

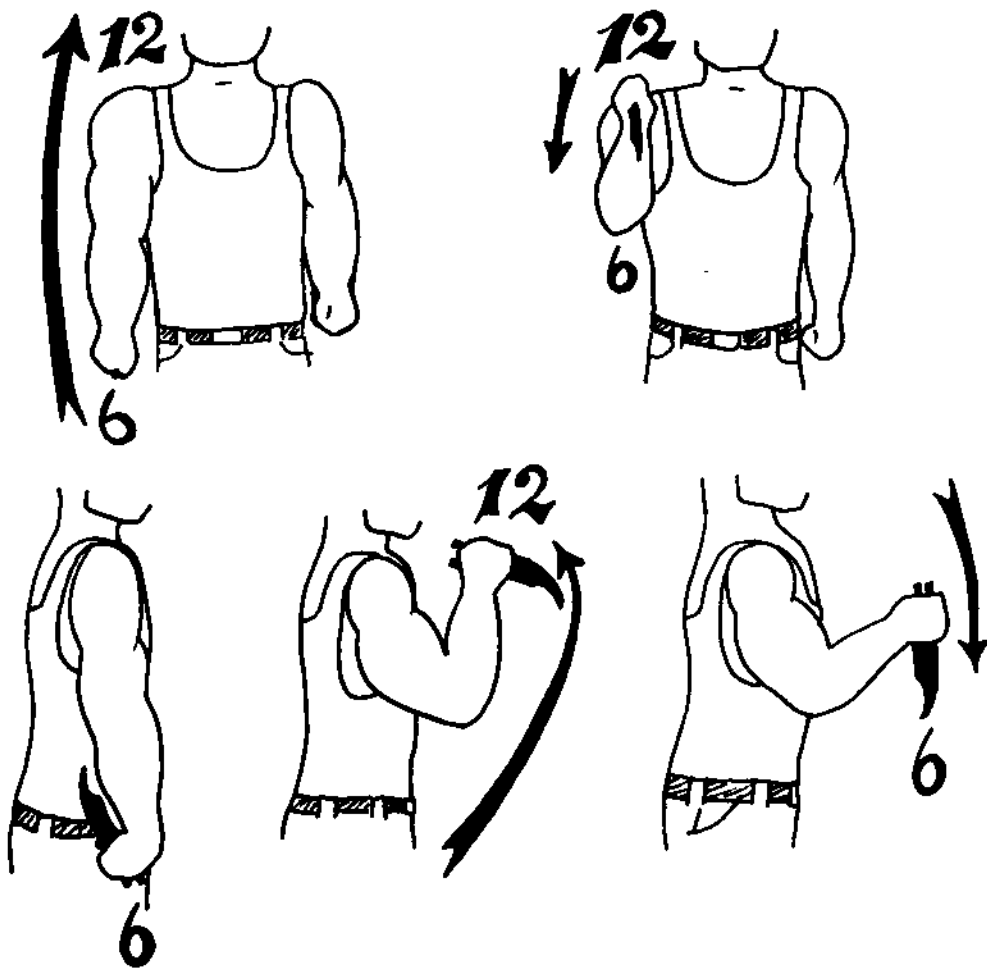
Hold knife in grip # 3 (hammer grip, edge downwards, blade at littlest finger side of hand). Start with the knife at right hip. With a cross punching movement, punch the knife from 5 o'clock to 10 o'clock in a small curve. At 10 o'clock, at the top of the slash-curve; the blade is stabbed out in a hooking action to 3 o'clock.

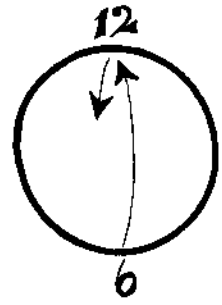




Slash, Stab # 8 - ocho

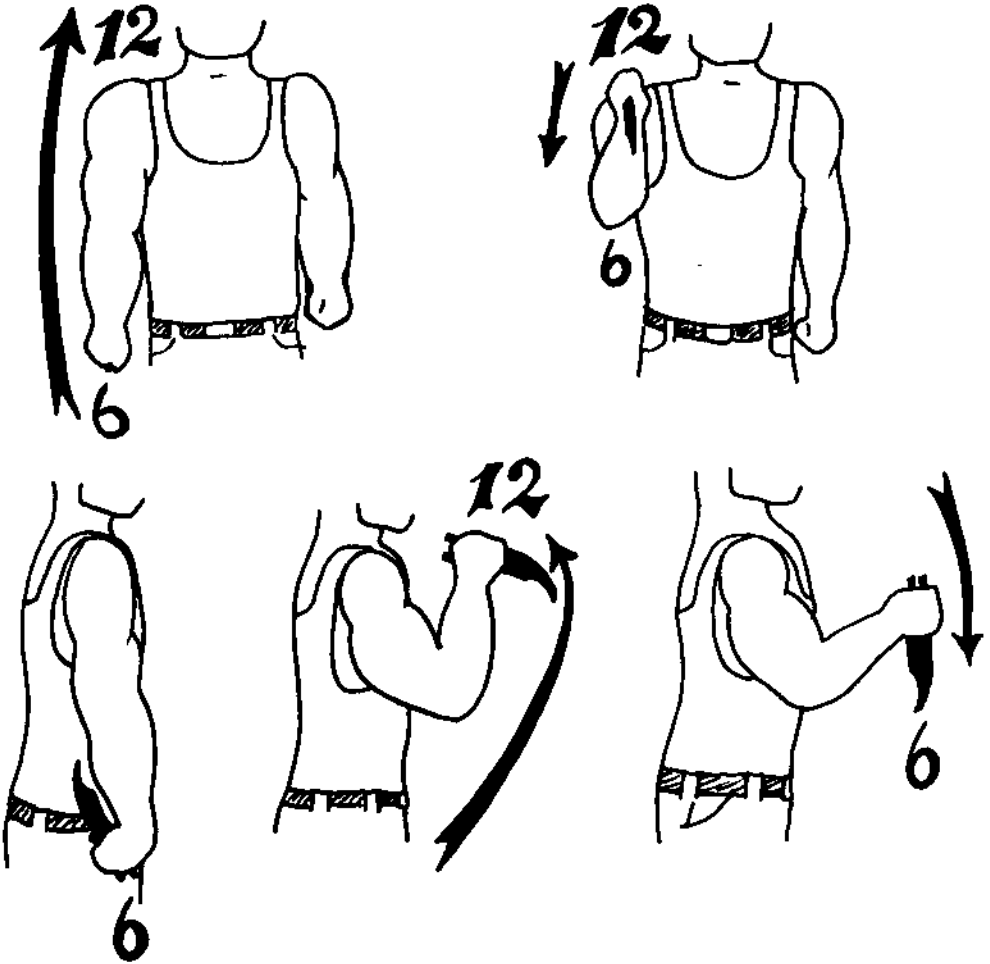
Again the knife is held in grip # 3 (hammer grip, edge downwards, blade at littlest finger side of hand). This starts with the hand and arm hanging naturally at rest at the side of the body. From the front, little or nothing can be seen of the knife. Simply swing the arm up from 6 o'clock to 12 o'clock. The stab down comes as a short, three to six inch stab at shoulder height. By turning the hips on the upswing, the blade can impact on either side of an attacker.

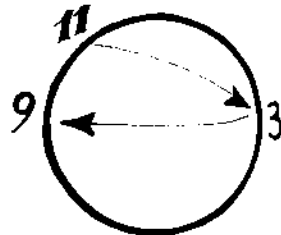




Slash, Stab # 8 - ocho

Again the knife is held in grip # 3 (hammer grip, edge downwards, blade at littlest finger side of hand). This starts with the hand and arm hanging naturally at rest at the side of the body. From the front, little or nothing can be seen of the knife. Simply swing the arm up from 6 o'clock to 12 o'clock. The stab down comes as a short, three to six inch stab at shoulder height. By turning the hips on the upswing, the blade can impact on either side of an attacker.

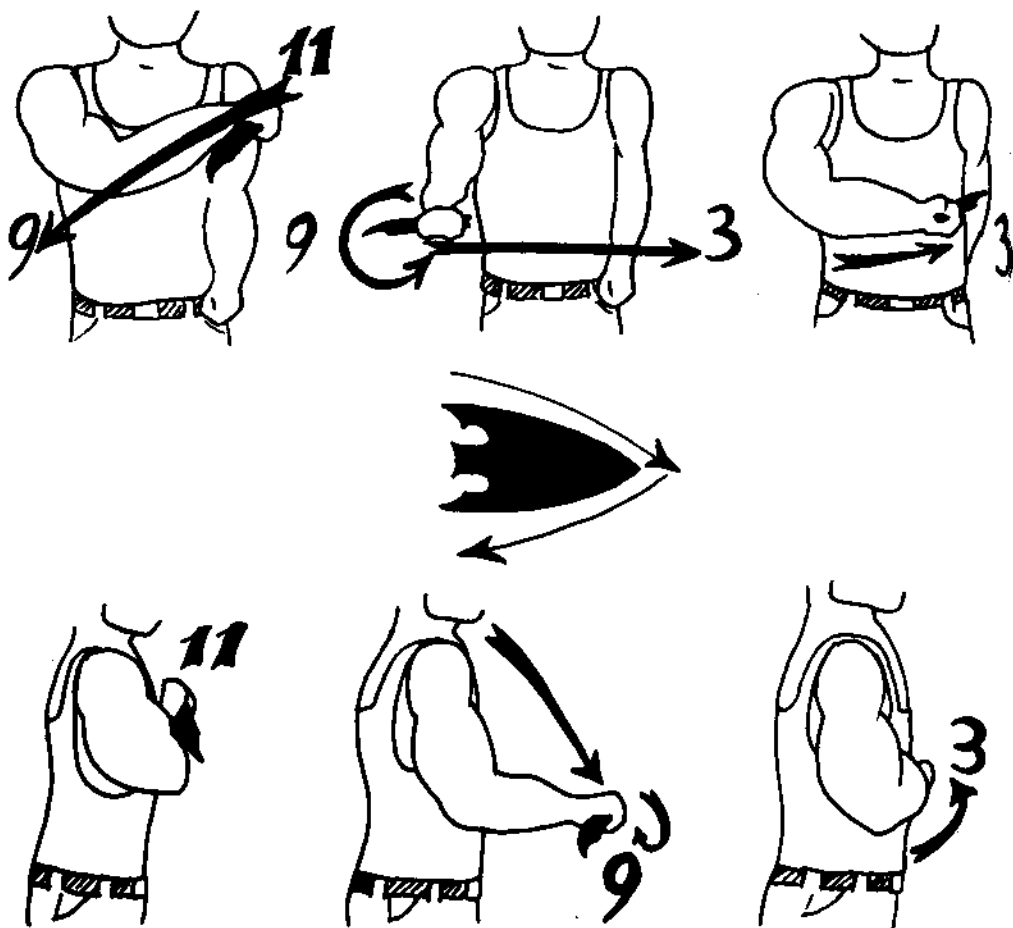


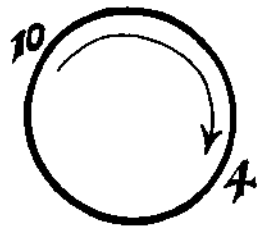


Double Stab # 9 – nueve

This time, the knife is in grip # 4 (hammer grip, edge upwards, blade at littlest finger side of hand). This is not as complicated as it may seem at the outset. Picture an arrow shape. The cut just follows the form of an arrow head.

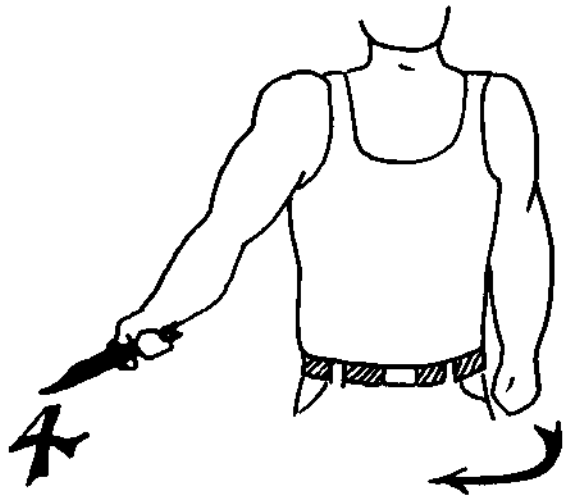
Begin with the right hand, knife ready at left shoulder. Stab from 11 o'clock to 3 o'clock. turn the hand so palm is uppermost, then stab from 3 o'clock to 9 o'clock. The palm uppermost is a vulnerable position, so this 3 to 9 stab must be quick, then covered back to a safe position.

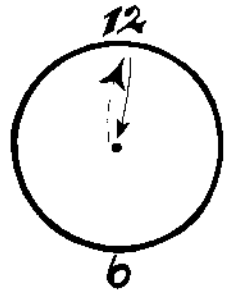




Cut # 10 - diez

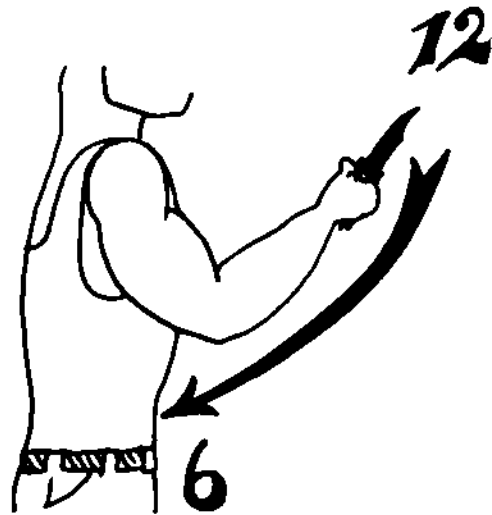
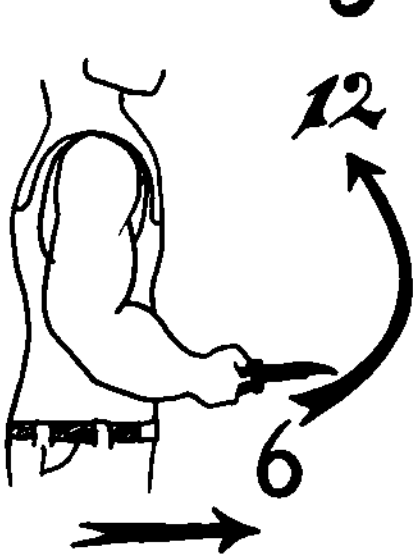
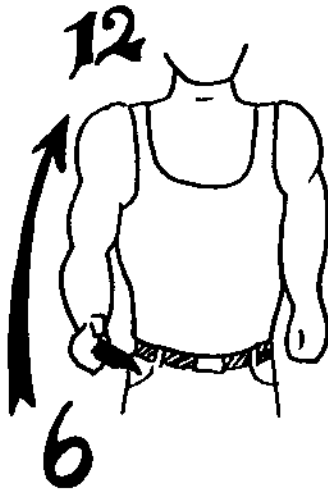
This cut takes into account that not all attacks come straight on. Far from it; in a man to man fight, then yes, but if it's a coward fighting; then watch out at your back and sides. Use this technique to give a breathing space, to turn and fight for real. Hold the knife in grip # 5 (file grip, edge downwards). Make like a clock-hand and cut around in an arc from 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock, then turn to the direction of the attack.

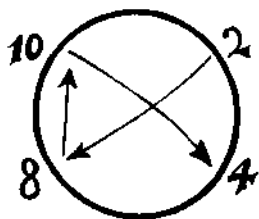




Stab, Cut # 11 - once

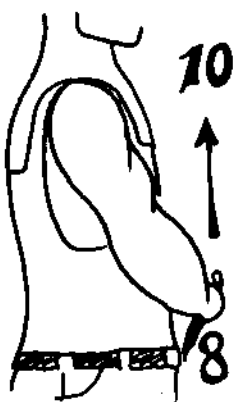
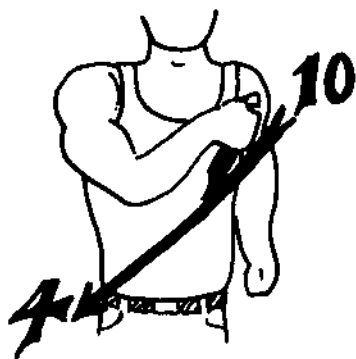
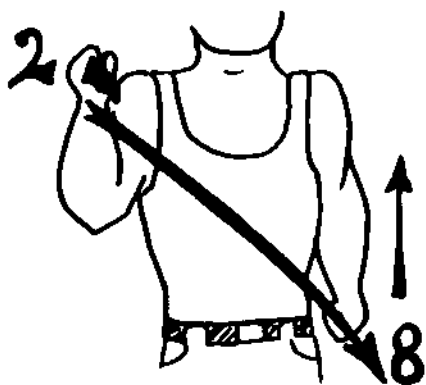
Using grip # 6 (file grip, edge upwards). Hold the blade at right hip. As the knife is stabbed forward, step in, then cut up to shoulder height; 6 o'clock to 12 o'clock. This cut is a similar rip-like action to # 4. At the top of the rip, pull the knife straight down back to hip.





Stab, Stab # 12 - doce

Hold the knife in grip # 7 (reinforced hammer grip, edge downwards). If you think of the letter X, then this will give a good idea of how this is used. Say for example, you start with the knife held at right shoulder height. Stab across 2 o'clock to 8 o'clock. Then bring the knife up to the left shoulder and stab from 10 o'clock to 4 o'clock. So the timing is - 1, 2, - 1, 2, - 1, 2, stab, stab - stab, stab. This is another good one for close in, perhaps a corridor, or some such tight place.



O.K. That is really enough, because the feel of the knife is there. From just twelve basics, any number of variations will come.

Bit like life really, isn't it!

Moving to Attack



You watch a baby move; with no thinking about it. That's the way to be with Balisong. Remember what I said back in the introduction to this book, about trying to make a martial art out of it. It's like going down to the ocean with a bottle and trying to scoop up a wave, you put the cap on and go home. You say, "hey look, I've got an ocean wave in this bottle". You pour it out and what have you got – water you cannot even drink. To my mind, it's the same with making up a lot of fancy names and stances for movements. You cannot recreate an individual fight like the Japanese try to do in their sword dances. (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez is here referring to Kata and not Kembu.*) It's the spark of the moment and that moment is different each time; it's shallow thinking that tries to put these moves down to a formula, like a scientist.

But, like if we're going on a journey, we've got to have a sign post. But there's no point in carrying that sign post with you to the end of your journey. When I first began, Master Bimba gave me some advice as to how to stand and how to move to become fit and supple. Then when you are experienced, you can develop in your own way. You know, in our class, all with one master, we all moved in different ways, that's the truth of real fighting movement. There's no point in making like some people would, like a "clink, clank" man, (*Ed: literally a chain man, a robot.*) everybody working out and walking the same way.

You know, Master Bimba used to step heel and toe, heel and toe on the attack. One day, I tried to copy this method. Master Bimba noticed and came over, we were sparring, double stick style. He stepped in and started to increase the pace. His sticks whirled and clashed, vibrating up my arms until my head shook. I was concentrating on my new heel and toe movement. As the pace got even wilder, I started to stumble and fall about; I was getting a sound beating, so I forgot about the heel and toe stepping and just started to fight; trading blow for blow with Master Bimba. Abruptly, he knocked both sticks out of my hands and stepping heel and toe, closed on me, pinning me up against a wall. "Now listen"

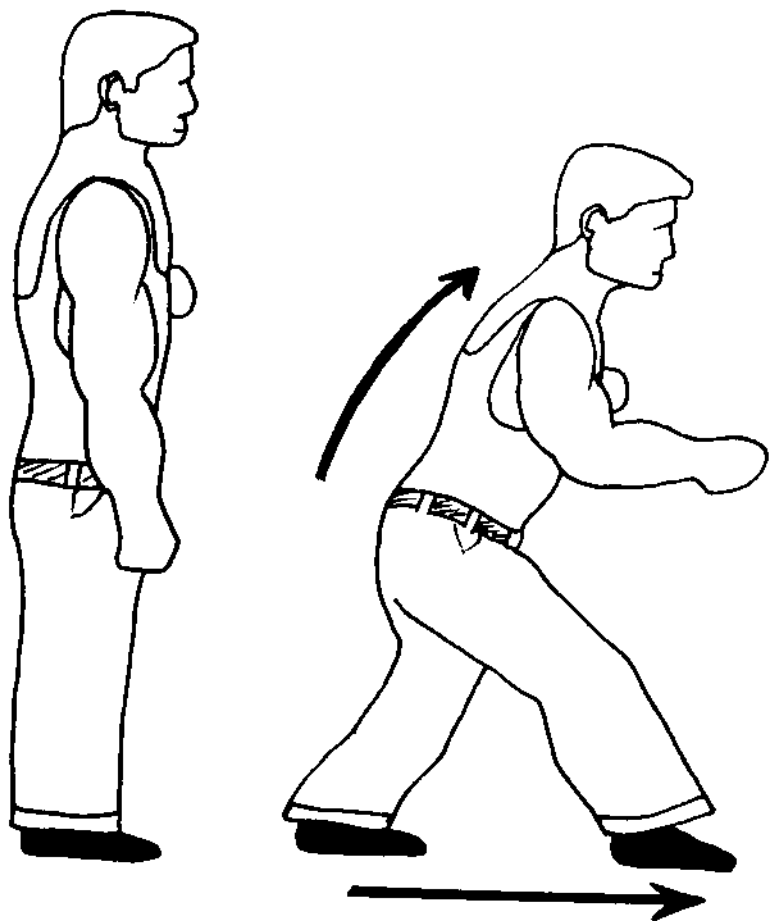
he said, “every animal moves in a different way, every man fights in a different way. Observe but don’t copy! You’ve just found that out. Now in order to fight me, you had to stop copying and step naturally for yourself. You’ll only find that, by fighting and forgetting everything else.” That was over thirty years ago, and I still appreciate the simple sound sense of it.

A point comes to my mind – after learning the catches and retrieves; the grips; and cut; slash; and stab; moving to attack must just come easily and naturally, like night following day. Master Bimba used to practice a little jig, (*Ed: dance-like movement*) which he said kept his joints loose for the attack. He called it something like “Mainit Tubig”, but I don’t know what he meant by it, or where it came from (*Ed: literally “hot water” in Tagalog*). He used to jump back and forth, landing with one foot. Quick as a flash, he would bring his other foot up to touch. Then he would jump off in another direction. This he continued for about five minutes. There was no set form to the exercise, just move, move, move, like Tiepada (*Ed: cockfight*). Anyway, the basic that I learned which became my footwork is simple. Just like this:

Move # 1 – uno

From normal way of standing, step forward with one leg. Push hip in to back up whatever knife action is used. Don't make any fancy low stances; it just opens your privates to a kick. One point that is worth knowing, is to bend the top of your body over a bit, like as if you were leaning on a big barrel. Don't lean too much or you get slow. The reason is simple – it keeps most of the vulnerable bits of your body safe. But be careful, watch out for neck and face.

Move # 1.

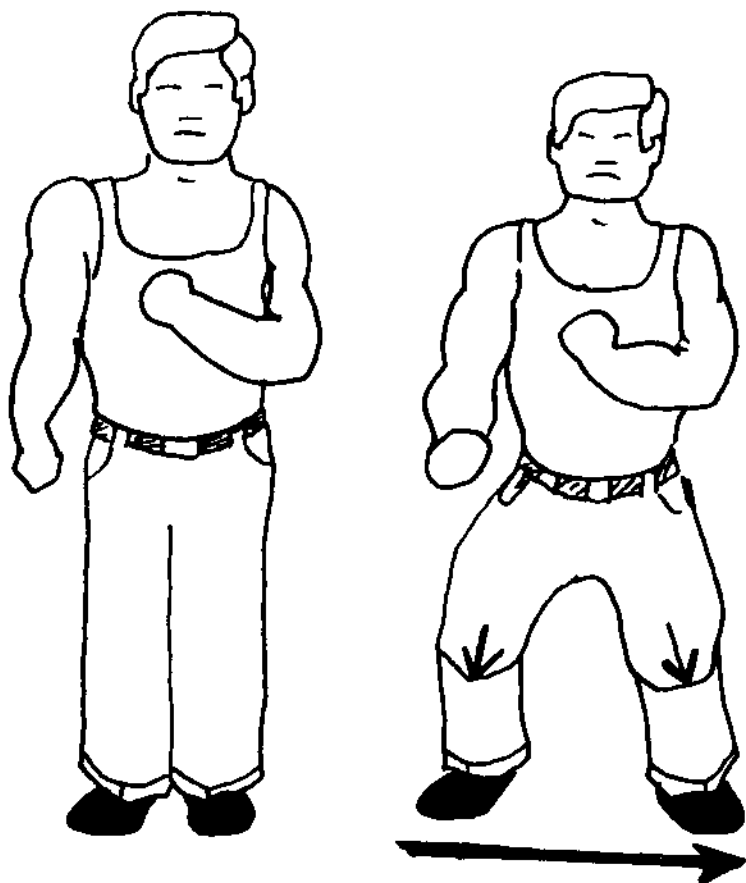


Move # 2 - dos

If there's one stance I cannot recommend, it's got to be the horse stance. For my mind, it opens up a lot of trouble, unless a guy is some sort of Olympic athlete, it won't work.

There is a side-step which has some use with a Balisong for real. In my basic, it was just to stand natural, then side-step and drop in to that barrel feeling. It's not an attacking position, but just a way of making distance. Figure eight cuts are good from it, but don't take my word for it. If it doesn't come together, then Master Bimba said, "Bahala Na" (*"whatever happens": Ed*). So experiment.

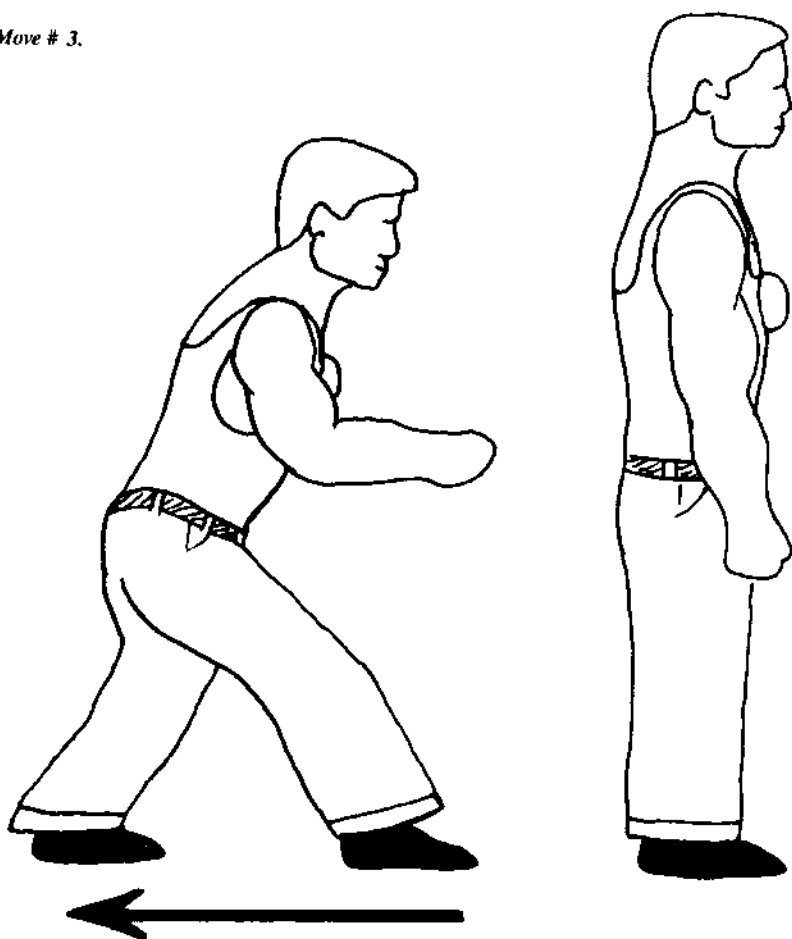
Move # 2.



Move # 3 – tres

Well you've stepped forward and sideways, now think back. It's a preparation feeling. When an attack comes, depending on the moment; you've just got to step back. Understand me; I know I said never step back, but if you've stepped up to a situation and a fast attack comes where you might get gutted, you have to step back. Your body slips back but your mind, your aggression, everything is forward. Trade distance for the right distance. Then parry, step forward and attack!

Move # 3.

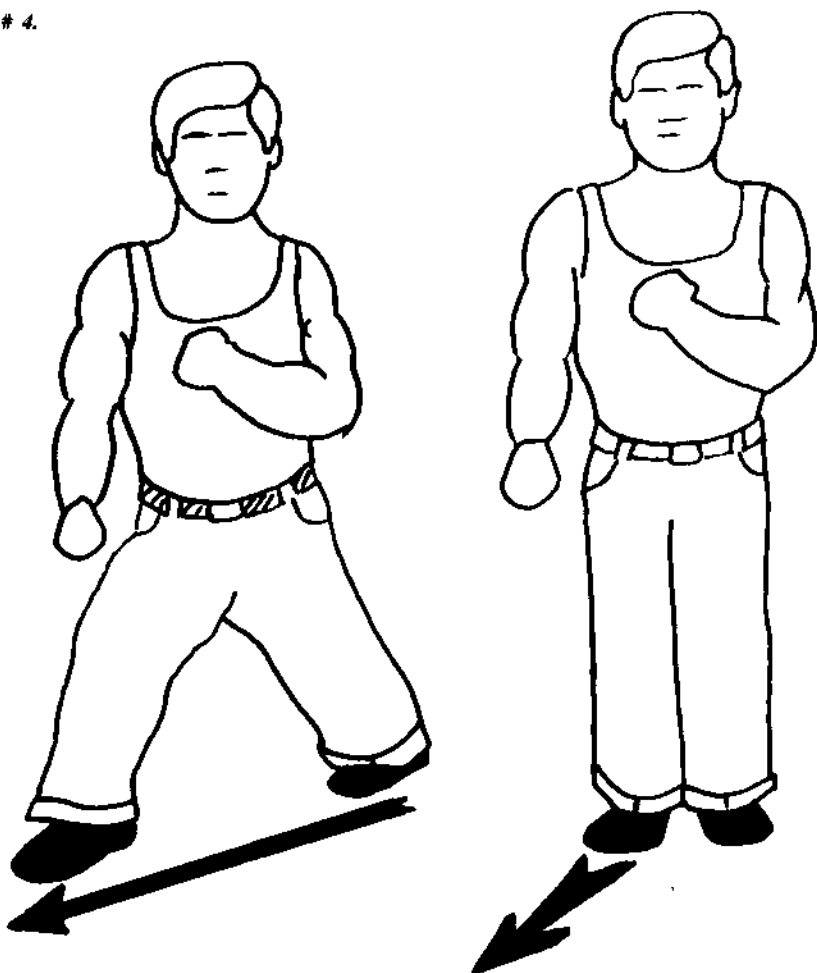


Move # 4 – cuatro

Now think about it. With all that's gone before – forward, sideways, back. Think diagonal; either side, front or back. Don't be too fancy; straight back or forward. No nonsense. I bear the scar still, where I tried to make a fancy, side diagonal step. But as always, my master had not missed my stupid move. He just walked over and stood there. I waited for the hit, but it did not come. He just sighed, "Hernandez, you've got a lot to learn, a real fighter would eat you for breakfast if you chose to make a stupid move like that".

You know it was hard, but if you're going to really be good, you must lose your pride. Scars aren't just from knives!

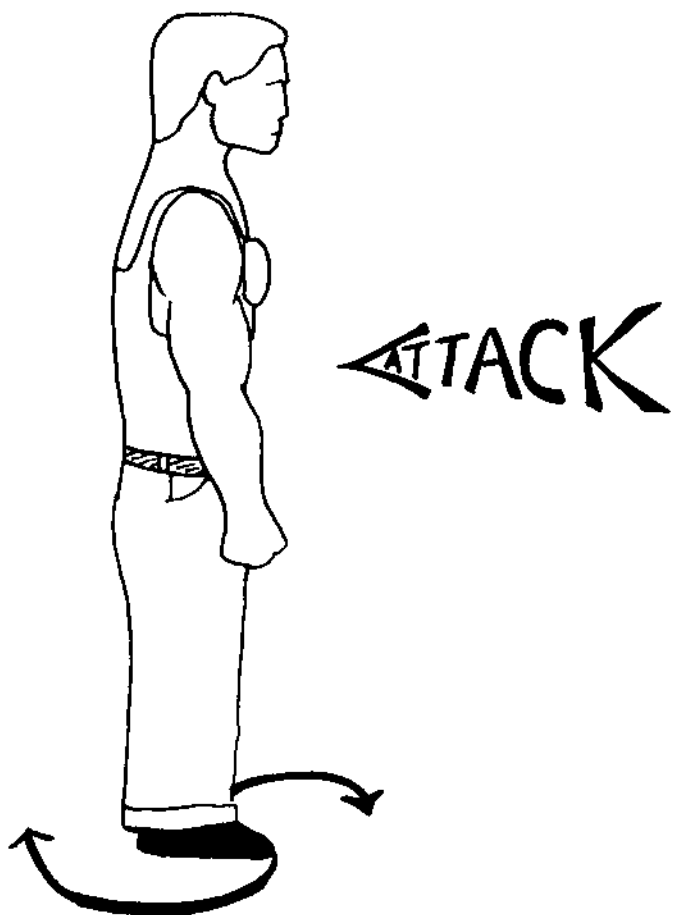
Move # 4.



Move # 5 – cinco

As an attack comes, which you cannot strike away, it's important to note this – you have to safely ride the attack and, I stress the way you ride it, depends upon the angle of attack. Make a circle action around the attack, this attacker usually does not expect this type of counter. But be careful, unless you keep your full attention to the attacker, the defence cannot hope to succeed.

Move # 5.

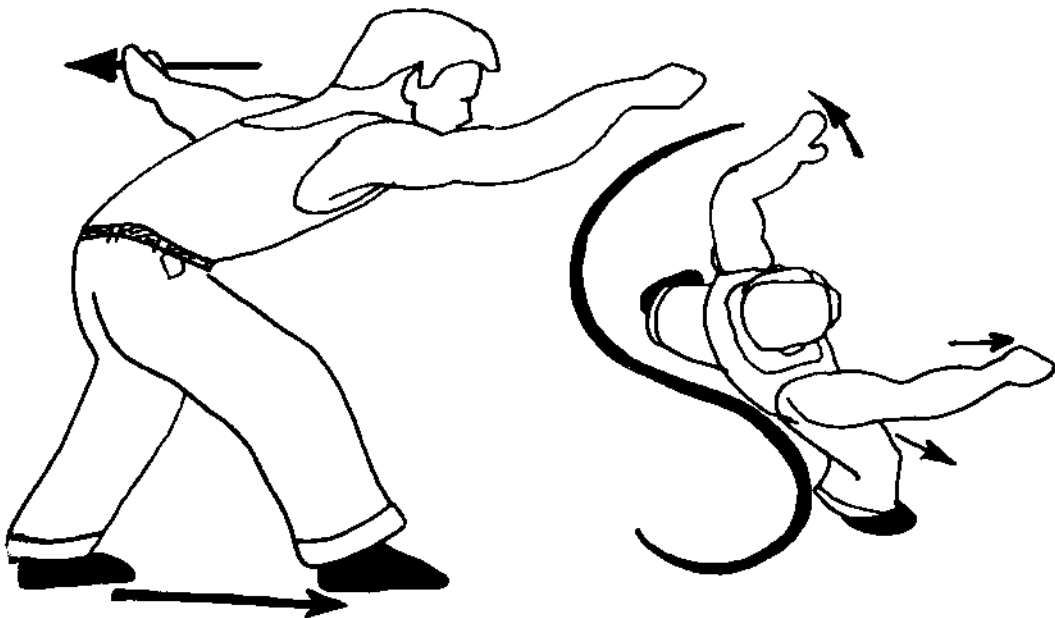


Move # 6 – seis

If an attack comes straight, then be quick and half diagonal step. Now roll your body round and round – like a corkscrew, so one hand snakes out and the other hand, holding the knife, corkscrew strikes – think of the letter ‘S’ and you have the feel of the movement.

That’s all there is to it. From this basic, everything comes. That’s why there are no fancy names in my system. How can you stop in the middle of a fight and say “hey, this is a good stance, I’ll call it ‘the double reverse dragon,’” or something just as dumb. That’s when the knife hits. No, what I mean is, the fight is the moment of truth; different every time. How can you put a name to something that existed only briefly?

Move # 6 Side & Top Views.



Advanced Catches and Retrieves



Really, this chapter is not necessary. By its very nature, Balisong is only as good as the man. As a man progresses in the fighting skill, the catches and retrieves become more and more skilful, and here I don't mean flashy. I really must say that my understanding of Balisong is of a fighting skill, not to show off how smart you are; or get you a job in a film or something. It's like putting a hat on a monkey; really everybody laughs and says 'great', but in the end, it's the monkey that's worst off. *(Ed: Mr. Hernandez, it must be remembered, is of a generation born and brought up in circumstances of great austerity.)*

Please just regard this as a signpost for more skilful work. You know, I was seven months, eleven days practising just the basic catches and retrieves, which I described in chapter two; day in, day out. After my Arnis de Manao class, a few of the seniors stayed behind whilst Master Bimba went through the advanced double stick and Balisong. I was the baby of the class then. Set to stare at a blank wall and drill myself in the catches and retrieves, fighting grips and cut, slash and stab. All the while, I could hear the advanced work going on behind me, but was forbidden to look around. Then, as I say, after over seven months, Master Bimba calls to me and says I should show my technique.

So, proud as a stallion, I turn and show catches, retrieves, fighting grips, and cut, slash and stab. I show him how clever I have become by demonstrating first everything with right hand, then left hand. I was sweating as I finished. I stood waiting for his praise. "Well Hernandez" he said, "do you really think you are suited to Balisong? Maybe you ought to give it up now whilst you're ahead." I was almost in tears, but I straightened my back. I am a man, I hold my head high and look straight at Master Bimba. "Good" he says "good you have passed my test. Now watch carefully." With this, he showed me the catches and retrieves which enable a right hand cut to become a left hand slash and so on.

O.K. Now for the techniques. You know, there's only one basic way to show how to pass from one hand to another, and from it, with skill

and determination, all else grows. I guess you could call this the one technique of a thousand techniques. Don't get me wrong; I don't mean just flashing and waving it about, I mean for real.

The Right Hand, Left Hand, Catch/Retrieve

1 The butt of the Balisong rests in the flat palm. With the little finger, stroke the latch. It should spring open.

2 With a squeezing action between thumb and forefinger, let the bottom handle go. It will start to swing away, carrying the blade with it.

3 As the handle continues in its circle, bringing the blade to its lock out position, twist the wrist, so that instead of meeting with the held handle as is normal, it; if you like, doubles back on itself slightly.

4 Now bring your left hand up, twist it so that your knuckles just lightly brush, not touch, the heel of your right hand.

5 With a slight flexing of the right hand, send the swinging handle into the palm of your left hand.

6 Your left hand is now the "boss" hand, so grip the Balisong between thumb and forefinger. What was the free swinging handle, is now the held handle so let the right hand handle go.

7 The handle will start to swing away to meet the blade at lock out position. Notice that now your grip is opposite, i.e. blade is at littlest finger end.

8 With a flexing feel, twist your wrist, so that the Balisong pivots in your fingers. Keep a firm thumb, forefinger pinch on the held handle.

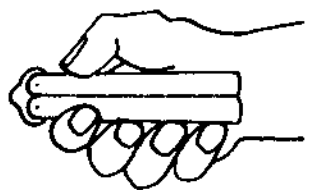
9 Open the other fingers and allow the free swinging handle to come to rest against the held handle. Close your grip on it and you are ready.

Retrieve

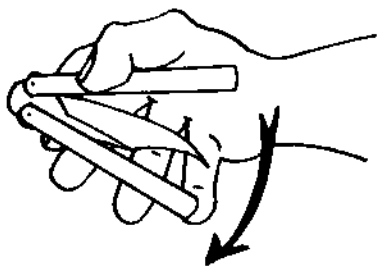
10 From the same grip, place your thumb against the held handle at the halfway mark. Press the handle in firmly between your thumb and palm.

11 Now open ALL your fingers. The free swinging handle will start to drop away to the blade's lock out position.

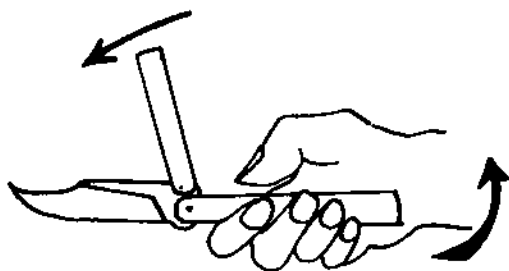
12 When the blade and free swinging handle meet; quick as you like; change grip on the held handle.



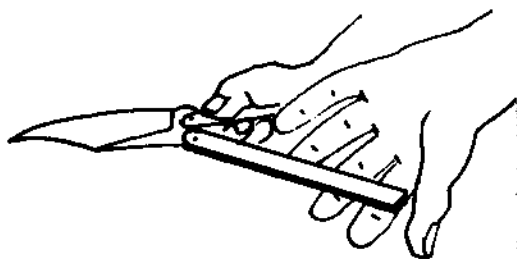
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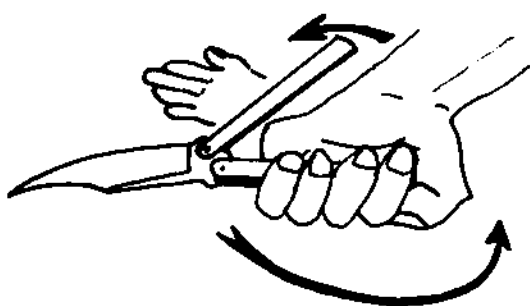
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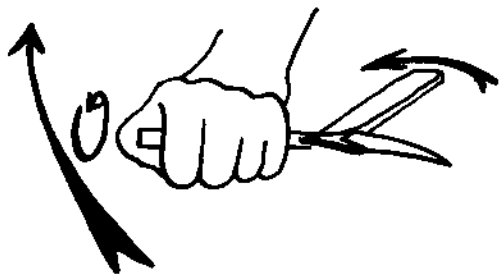
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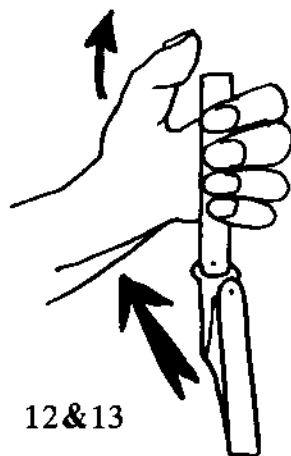
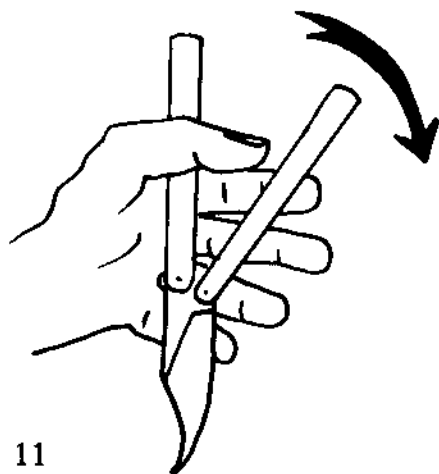
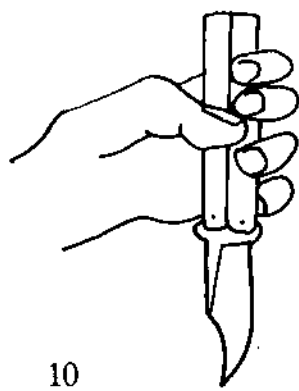
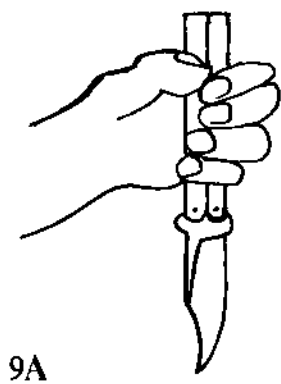
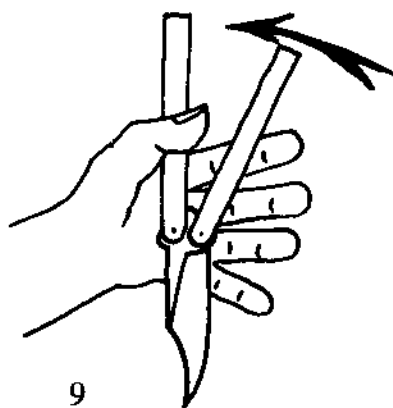
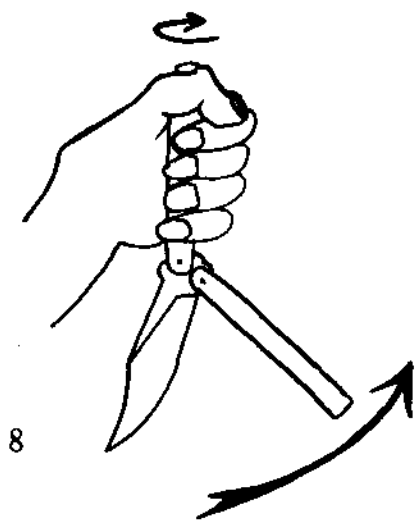
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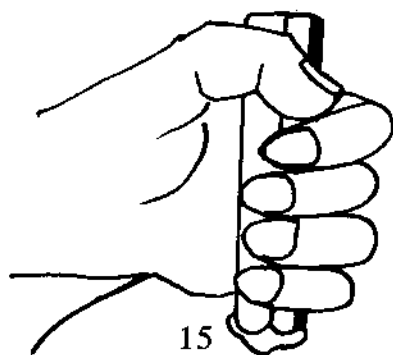
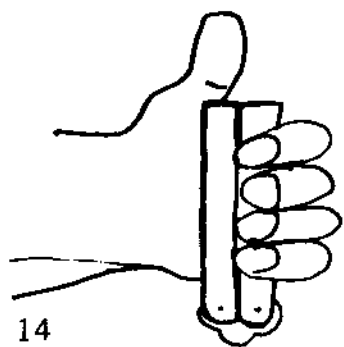
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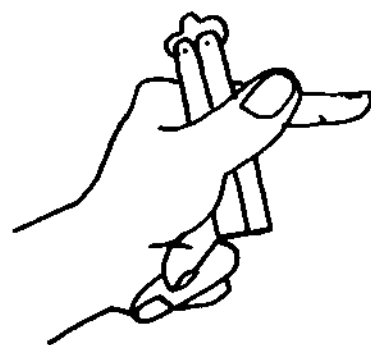
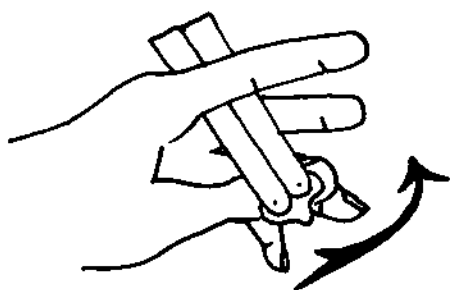
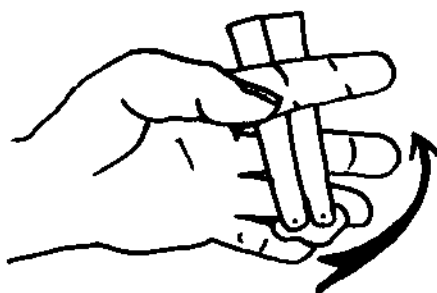
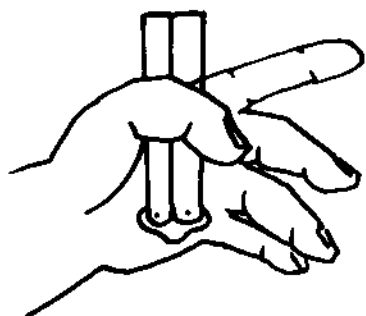
6&7



Advanced Catch and Retrieve.

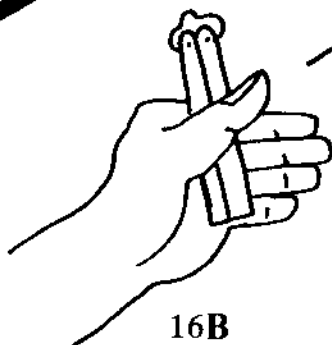


Advanced Catch and Retrieve (Returns).



16B

16C



16B

- 13** Grasp the held handle with the tips of all four fingers – pressing it into the top of your palm where the fingers join the hand.
- 14** Get your thumb out of the way fast! As both blade and free swinging handle spin up to meet the held handle.
- 15** As they meet, close your fingers around them both and with your thumb, gently stroke the latch closed.
- 16** To return the Balisong to the right hand can be accomplished in as many ways as can be imagined. But for a starting out drill; simply reverse the Balisong in the left hand so that the butt rests in the flat palm and simply repeat moves **1** through **15**.

That's it, no more to it. It was given to me by Master Bimba with the strict order, not to try any variations until he had checked me out. So I practiced and practiced. Six, seven, eight, nine months, before he would allow me to try variations. It was hard not to, but now I see the wisdom of his instructions. Because, when after all that time, I began to try variations it was as though many roads opened up to me. Think of a problem, and behold the variation was there to solve it.

Now, as we were talking advanced work, let me say a thing or two – a few tips which Master Bimba gave me, if you're a fighter, you know what I mean. There's more to this than just words; so if at first, it doesn't make much sense, ride it out a bit, answers come in many disguises:–

"Cut for man, not knife."

"Look at whole man, not part."

"Hold your breathing down as you cut."

"Make armwork like waterwheel."

"Listen to the back of your neck."

"Let the strength of the attack teach the strength of the man."

"In a big fight (many fighters) think as one."

"A dull blade is dangerous."

"Don't be fooled by a fool."

"An arm's length is dangerous. From elbow to wrist is safe."

"Watch out for a man who is heavy on his heels."

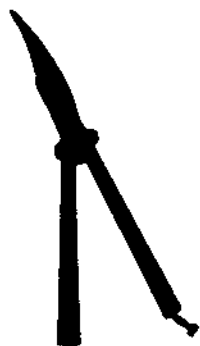
There are many more but I haven't got the space to write them – maybe in my other book.

Message from the Author

Well, you know what they say, about all work and no play making Jack a dull boy; so we'll take some time out and let me tell you of some of my experiences – I hope they will be of interest to you; because in chapter eleven, I will be returning to the serious side of Balisong – fighting for real and protecting yourself.

(Publisher's Note:– due to the volatile nature of much of the action described in chapters seven through ten, on advice, certain names and details of place etc. have been changed. We hope that this will in no way impair the understanding and enjoyment of this section.)

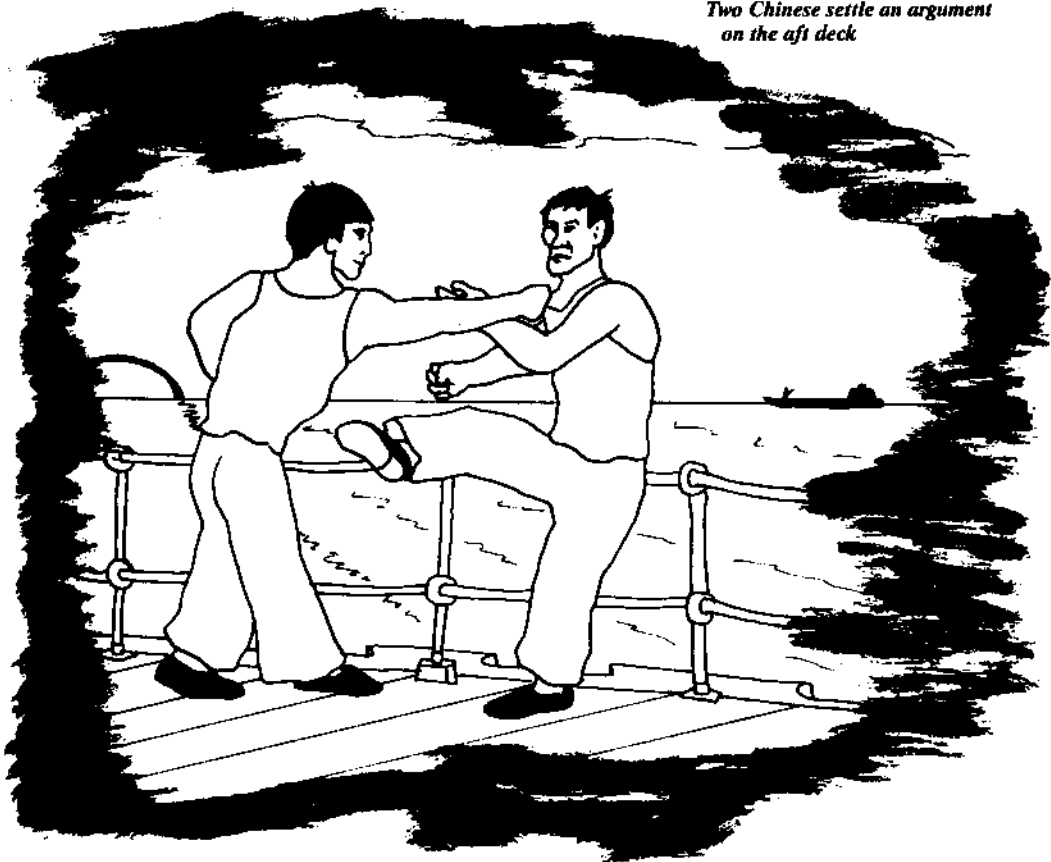
The Knife Master of Hawaii



I want now to go back to 1950 when, as I told you, I had to leave the Phillipines. I worked as a deckhand aboard the Liberian freighter "*Tou-saint*". The crew were a mixed bunch, a lot of them in the same straits as me, if not exactly "on the run" then certainly lying low. To say that they were from the four corners of the world was no exaggeration – tall Norwegians, black-eyed Frenchmen, Lascars, Chinese and Hawaiians.

I saw the Chinese fighting amongst themselves once – on the aft deck. Two were in the middle of an argument and were standing toe to toe, punching seven bells out of each other (*Ed: possibly Ving Tsun style?*). Anyway to me, brought up on a quick, hard fight, it seemed a bit

Two Chinese settle an argument on the aft deck



flowery; but then I never faced one of them so I can't say. I tended to keep my nose clean (keep out of trouble), but the guy who maintained the propeller shafts, a six-two Norwegian, took an immediate dislike to me from the outset – I knew it was only a matter of time before it would come to it for real.

I was passing the galley when the cook, a native Hawaiian known simply as 'Hank' called out to me. Something like, "The big Haole (whiteman) is good and drunk. Better watch out!"

I didn't understand the Hawaiian at the time but the feeling behind it came out strong enough. I winked at him and continued on my way. It wasn't long before the iron corridor boomed to the drunken roar of the Norwegian as he charged around like a crazy dog. Like Master Bimba said, never reject a challenge and never step back. I must be honest – for a brief moment I thought about turning tail like a rabbit, but I remembered Master Bimba. He was gone now, but I held his memory, it was honour. I stepped forward. I knew that if I drew Balisong, it would be for keeps – we were halfway to Hawaii with no place to jump ship. So I gritted my teeth and made the "Tiger Eyes" come (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez later explained: he 'psyched himself up!*). When we fought back in Manila

*"Never reject a challenge
and never step back."*





*"I reached for my Balisong
and drew it circle style."*

port, we were all pretty much even for height and weight, on our diet you couldn't grow fat if you tried. But here I was now, walking towards six-two and two, twenty pounds plus of mean machine. At the time my English was not up to much (the Spanish slang Patois of the docks was Hernandez's spoken tongue), so when the Norwegian shouts and calls me names, I don't react, because I don't understand him. This makes him even madder and he lunges towards me. Well, I'm between a rock and a hard place, so I step in and knee him good and hard where it hurts most. I follow up with a one-two Dempsey style, to the jaw. He wasn't out, but dazed, he topples forward a bit, I duck under his arm and punch hard at the back of his head. He flies forward – Bang! Right into a bulk-head. Out! A check shows he's still breathing O.K. so I stamp on his hand. The bones crack, he won't be giving any trouble for the rest of the voyage (*Mr. Hernandez wishes to point out that "fair play is for 'fair fight'."* Ed.)

I turned to see Hank the Hawaiian cook watching. He must have seen the whole think. I reached for my Balisong and drew it circle style, but Hank shook his head and said "Akamai" which means "smart"! He beckoned for me to follow him back to the galley. I sensed that he didn't

mean any harm so I palmed my Balisong and followed. He poured a coffee from the pot on the stove and gave it to me. Although we could not fully understand each other, he had a little Spanish, and we made ourselves understood. I learned to speak American that way, with a sprinkling of Hawaiian. What about the Norwegian you say? Well, the mate found him and docked him two week's money – drunk and incapable.

As the weeks passed, Hank and I became firm friends. He was Ehu, which is red-headed Hawaiian. I never told him anything of my past and to his credit, he never asked. He was not a fighter but a friend. We docked at Honolulu on Oahu Island. I was amazed by the sight of so many boats, I thought Manila port was busy, but this was something else (1950). There were cargo freighters from all over the world and a fair sprinkling of fishing sampans. I could not go back to the Phillipines and I could not stay here for long, not without being an illegal immigrant.

*"Hank the Hawaiian cook"
(taken from an old photograph).*





(though at the time, Mr. Hernandez was not aware of the state. Ed.). Hank said that I was welcome to stay with him – so I went. We travelled on a bus out of Honolulu to where his family lived. Family! What a word. I thought we in the Phillipines were closely knit but on Hawaii, it was like coming home. Hank introduced me to four generations of his family. I was the Malihini, the stranger to the islands, but as Hank's guest, I was a brother. He called me, Akamai Hapu Haole – the smart half-white, which made everyone laugh good-naturedly. It was good to be in such company again.



"The stub bladed machete."



There was a big feast, "Luau", prepared with steamed suckling pig, butter fish and fruit Oh yes, and the "Okolehao", two glasses of this spirit and every man was my brother. So much food. Hank's family weren't rich, no, I'm wrong - they didn't have much money but they were millionaires in happiness; so they were rich in kind. Hank introduced me to his brother-in-law, Ernest. He was a Ginaca machine-operator from the pineapple cannery at Iwilei Road (*biggest fruit packing company in the world. Ed.*).

Ernest was a huge man, but he had a gentle glint in his eye. After a few more glasses of "Okolehao", Hank asked my permission to tell the story about the Norwegian on board the ship. I said in my broken American that it was O.K. So, pausing to fill everyone's glass, Hank started to tell the story. I could follow a bit of it, but sometimes Hank spoke too quickly. I managed to pick out "pilikia" which meant trouble and "Hoomalimali" which meant stupid, oh yes, and "Paakiki Haole" which I knew is what Hank called the stubborn Norwegian. There was a round of applause when Hank played out both me and the Norwegian - so excited with the telling of the story, that he fell flat on his backside.



With good-natured amusement, his relatives shouted out, "Okole!" which I think may be a bit rude (*literally, "bottom". Ed.*). Anyway, it was getting dark by now and I remember looking out into the bay and wondering at the sight of the bobbing lights of the Lama Lama boats as they fished by torchlight. We ate huge portions of pig fresh from the underground oven. We ate with our fingers, the steamed pork melted like butter in my mouth, the starchy Poi which complemented it was washed down with yet more Okolehao. By this time, the music from guitars played into the starlit night.

Hank excused himself and went off to find his Wahini, leaving Ernest and I by the fireside. Ernest surprised me by speaking in the sort of language that I knew best. It seemed that he had been in U.S. Marines throughout the war. Part of it being spent on Samar and Mindoro Islands, with the special forces. He looked long and hard for a moment, then, offering a 'Lucky Strike' cigarette, he said,

"How good are you with Balisong?"

I must say, because of the good nature of the evening, I did not react as I might have done in the Phillipines. I said, how did he know about

Balisong, and he smiled and said that an old man had given him one on Samar Island. I asked to see it. It was too much of a coincidence to be true, but they say that it is a small world! It was one of Master Bimba's, I knew from the way that it was made. I was in two minds whether to be cautious or not, but then I thought, in this word, an opportunity only knocks once; so I related as much of the story as I knew.

Ernest said that he regretted Master Bimba's death, but added that he (Master Bimba) was one of the many scores of partisans whom he had dealt with during the war. But it's strange; a fighter's bond grew between us from that moment. I had stayed with them as a family for about a week when Ernest came by again. He called me over and said that he would like me to come and meet a friend. The man was a Luna, a plantation overseer, not normally someone who would be friendly with a Ginaca machine operator. But the Luna was a fighter, and birds of a feather truly do flock together. We met and talked, there was much care and procedure – for safety's sake. The Luna said that he had never seen Balisong. Then I understood Master Bimba better and why he had never shown me the knife until I had proven myself – I was green then, no more to it. But here, in the presence of Ernest and the Luna, we three were fighters. I cautioned that I would not fight with Balisong, because there was no sport with it. But I would go through the moves with them. They agreed and I showed them, Uno to Diez. They seemed to really appreciate it. Ernest went and got his marine survival knife, he showed the special forces' method, which was very good. I told him, how years ago I had broken one – he said it must have been a fake – maybe! The Luna, who it turned out, was of an ancient line of Kahuna (*priest/wiseman. Ed.*) seemed to like all of this and said through Ernest, that I had much Mana (spirit, power). I said something appropriate and the Luna drew a stub-bladed machete and proceeded to demonstrate what was, in effect, the secret art of the Islands. Apparently, before the war, he had journeyed around the Islands in a series of secret challenge matches. But that, I say again, is another story.

Far too soon, my stay had to end. I had managed to get passage on a freighter bound for Liverpool in England. My American had gotten

much better and they taught me what is the classic Hawaiian pidgin argument:— it is funny, and it goes like this:—

“Whassamatta you?”

“Whassamatta me? – Whassamatta you
Whassamatta me? – You whassamatta!!”

(ED: It was impossible to translate the feeling behind this statement, we have therefore left it as Senor Hernandez said it).

With man’s tears in my eyes, I boarded the ship with the kind memories of Hank, Ernest and the Luna Kahuna *(Ed: this may not be polite in Hawaii, but Senor Hernandez insisted on it being written this way).*

To all of you and your kind islands, I say, “Mahalo Kakou”, thank you one and all.



Sparring in the open air.

The Blood Boat for Liverpool



The old freighter, "Otley", on which I left Honolulu bound for Liverpool, was a rust-caked hulk, thirty years too old. It is 4,711 miles to the coast of Panama, where the ship would navigate the Panama Canal. On such a long journey, it's very easy to stiffen up, so before the dawn watch, I would go the aft deck and drill in the *Arnis de Manao* every day. Rain or shine, calm sea or rough, I would be there. It's strange, but in a way it was like meeting with Master Bimba again; just me and the sea and sky. I also worked on the Luna's machete form – I used a piece of wood to avoid any questions. It was good; it suited my style well.

Through the long voyage, not much happened; but if something is sweet, then a fly will always come to spoil it. I remember, we were about three days out of the gulf of Panama; it was about 5.30 a.m. I was as



*"Training in the dawn light
on the aft deck."*

usual, on the aft deck quietly drilling in the Arnis de Manao. When I train, I train until the sweat pours off like water. I was practising a double-check movement when I became aware of someone watching. I stopped and turned. I saw the chief stoker, O'Halloran, with three others. They were all the worse for the bottle that they passed around. I knew that there was going to be trouble, so I stood my ground and let them come on. It was O'Halloran who made the first move. He was making a lot of threats. The few American words that I knew, left me in



"O'Halloran and his friends."

no doubt of my first feeling – he was calling me ‘monkey’ and getting good laughs from his buddies. I sensed that they were no threat anyway. O'Halloran moved closer and made a horse stance. He said something like “Come on Joo Jitsee man”. So, given the invitation, I just stepped in and slapped him hard, twice, across the face. With his sort it always works. He just burst out crying – real cry baby tears. I tell him not to foul-mouth me. He doesn't say anything because of the tears. One of his friends makes to move forward, I tell him to keep on coming if he wants a taste of the same or worse. He stops and steps back. You know that's worse than anything – not for a real man to do. If a man steps forward, he must never step back, better to be beaten senseless – that way both



know each other and respect! At the moment, the officer of the watch called down asking what was going. I just played dumb Filipino, it works when a man has gold braid on his hat. Don't ask me why, it just does, something to do with them not wanting to get their hands or their nice white uniform dirty, I guess. Anyway, the upshot of this was nothing came of it – we drifted off to our bunks or to work.

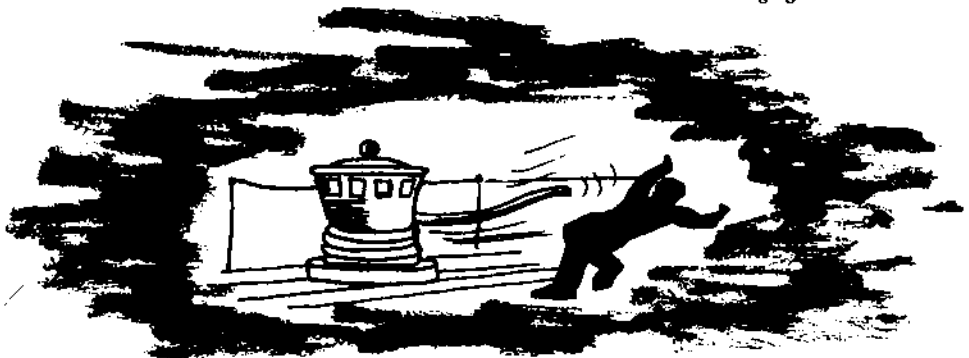
The days passed without incident. We navigated the Panama Canal through the many locks, under the blistering sun. A couple of times I caught O'Halloran looking at me in a strange way, but I just put it down to hard feelings and let it go.

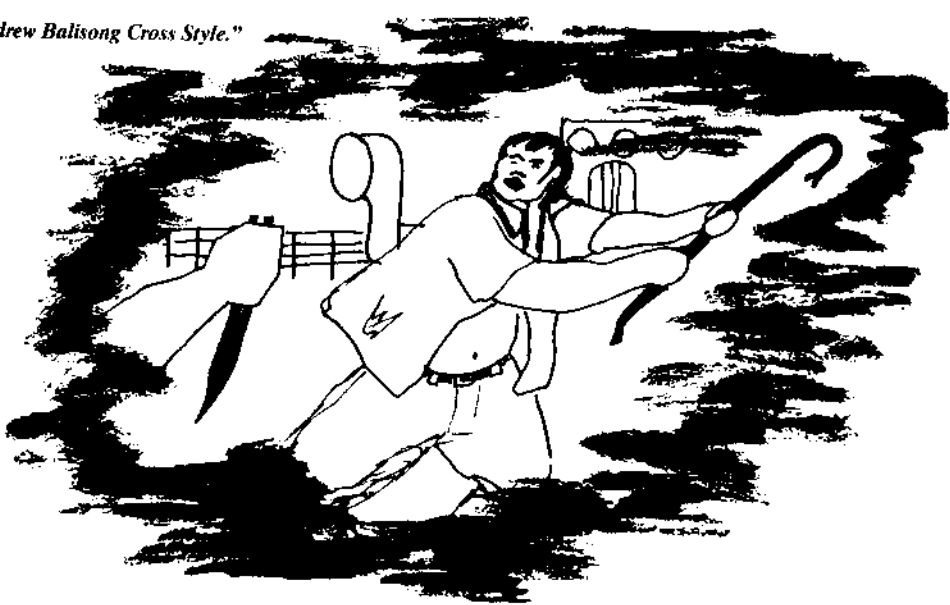
We had just navigated the last locks near Colon and out into the open sea. I was working near the chain locker next to an old steam winch. They're wicked things – old and unpredictable. A steel hawser, thicker than a man's thumb was wound around it, with about two foot of

slack hanging loose. When the steam winch was operated, the slack was slowly taken up, then like a scorpion, it would whip around.

Anyway, I was working near this, when out of the corner of my eye, I saw O'Halloran mooching around near the steam winch control console. Next moment, I heard the familiar sigh as the hot steam coursed into the catch chamber. O'Halloran had switched the steam winch on. The slack took up, then the free end of the hawser whipped around in excess of 210 M.P.H. Had I not been trained for so long and so well, I could not have hoped to escape it. As it was, the free end slashed my left leg, mid-thigh. The blood flowed immediately from the jagged wound. I saw the grin on O'Halloran's face disappear as he saw that the trick which should have cut me in two had failed. Fire was in my blood and in my eyes. I drew Balisong cross-style and leaped at O'Halloran. He picked up a crow bar and swung it at me. I dodged, it hit the rail, sending puffs of red lead paint and rust into the air. Two steps and I was on him. My Balisong cut twice. He dropped. He wasn't dead, but he would be out of the game for a long time. I knew that if it came to a sea-court, O'Halloran's white skin would go a long way. So I just stepped to the rail. Remembering Grandfather Hernandez, who was torpedoed in the first war, I jumped, not dived; better to break a foot than break a head. The warm water accepted me kindly and I struck out as hard as I could to get away from the tow wave which would pull me into the twin propellers. The stinging salt water on my leg wound spurred me on and soon the ship was small on the horizon. Whether, no one had found

"Dodging the steam winch."





O'Halloran yet, or they thought it not worth turning back, I don't know. Maybe O'Halloran got thrown over the side to save an enquiry. You think not? Let me tell you – in those days at sea, the Captain's word was law. Millions had died in the war, what use were a couple of sea scum? That's what they thought of us.

I swam on with my Balisong held firmly between my teeth. I swam hard and regular. As the hours passed and the sky darkened I saw the yellow glow from Colon on the horizon. At least I was swimming in the right direction. Soon I felt the pull from a rip tide and I struggled hard to keep my head above water. After hours of this, there was suddenly sand beneath my feet. Just in time too, I'm no dolphin; a bit longer and I would have been under for good.

I walked ashore about 4 miles down from Colon. I lay down by some rocks and slept. The warm sun awoke me the next day and I surveyed the damage. My leg was just a flesh wound – the sea had cleaned it so I didn't worry too much. I checked out and cleaned my Balisong, I had my papers and some money in my belt pouch. I learned very quickly that aboard ship, if it's not bolted down, it goes. I carefully opened my papers and sun-dried them, the ink had run but it would be O.K. Question was, what to do and where to go. I did not think there would be any trouble from the Captain of my ship. No point really – no reward in it for anybody.

Well I guessed there was only one thing to do – when you don't know what to do or where to go – get up and follow your nose. That's just what I did. Straight into Colon, when I say straight in, you've got to under-

stand what every sailor knows – in a port, there are places you just don't go. Not because you're afraid, but because you don't fit. Even in those days, I don't mean colour of skin, let me tell you things are worse now, not better. No! Let me explain – a sailor's needs are basic – he wants good food and drink and good women. No nonsense and he usually wants all of this as quick as possible, and he knows wherever in the world he can get them. It didn't take long for me to find my feet. I knew that my money would not last long and I had better keep away from the dock-side just in case of trouble.

I worked out my plan. I would let the dust settle for a few months, then try a ship. Of course, I had to eat. There's something to be said about the direct approach, so I decided to be direct. It took me two tours of the streets where sailors stayed, to work out which was the best angle. You see, I have done a lot of things in my life which you may find violent, maybe even criminal, but it's the side of the fence you're standing on which makes the difference. I checked out the bar which had the best food and the best women. Wearing my deck clothes, I marched straight in. I got up to the bar, the barman eyed me like a guy who asked for a steak and got a plate of horse-shit, Ah well! So anyway, he asks me what I want and I say "Jack Daniels' straight". He looks at me dumb, so I pull out some U.S. dollars, all I got, and put them on the bar. Money speaks just the same all the world over. Two glasses later, I say to him to get the boss for me. He asks why, so I say I want a job! He just laughs and taps his head. I mark him down for another time and return to my drink. I just wait until the moment is right. I didn't have to wait long. In one

"I jumped not dived."



corner, a game of poker is cooling down, tempers however, are warming up. One guy gets up and goes to leave, he's stopped by one of the other players and the fists start to fly. Before the bar's minders can get across from where they are; too busy with the dance girls to react quickly, I realise that this is where I have to act quickly. No Balisong and no Arnis, just bare knuckles. I step into the flailing arms of the two brawlers, one two, one two, they go down. I pick one by the waist and one by the scruff of the neck and they go like lambs outside. I walk back in and sit down at the bar, I sip my drink. It's not long before I feel a couple of guys behind me – it's the minders. They keep their distance, but wait, like good dogs. Soon I see the bossman – he's a Mexican from Acapulco. White linen suit and black glasses. He sits next to me and the barman hops to it and pours him a shot from the best tequilla. The bossman does the whole trip with the salt and lemon, then he looks at me and says I'm a smart boy, too smart and what was I up to? I have no time to fence, so I say very straight that I want work in the bar and that that was a free sample. If he wants to see anymore, then he has to pay. He looks and laughs, then he says O.K. but if I want to work, then I need proper clothes. I look at him and pull the pockets out of my trousers. He nods and pulls out a big fat bill roll. All kinds of money – U.S. dollars, British pounds. He gives the

"They go like lambs."





*"The Bossman"
(from a description).*

minder closest to him a bill, tells him to take me out and get some clothes fit for the bar. In Colon City, in a sailor's bar, the only fit clothes are those that don't tear easily and don't show the blood.

An hour later and I'm back there. A shave and a haircut, new clothes and somewhere to stay. I'm paraded before the bossman. He looks up and down and laughs. I say nothing. He chews the end of his Cuban cigar, then he speaks. He says that I'll earn my keep and sleep and a little extra. But no drugs, no women and no using the furniture for fighting. He says if I want to put someone away (*kill them. Ed:*) then I don't do it on his turf. He asks me if I understand. I think about playing the dumb Filipino, but this guy is street-wise, so I say O.K. and set to spending the next few months as quietly as possible. On average, there were about four fights a night, more on Saturdays and when the fleet was in – well imagine for yourself.

The Drunken Kung-Fu Master

You know, working a bar gets pretty boring. Everybody else is having a good time, you work. I'll tell you another thing, maybe some of you have had this experience – when you mind a bar, some call you strong-arm or if they want to be fancy, they call you a steward. Never mind the name, you fight just the same – no, when you mind a bar you get a feel for trouble. The signs are there; all over the world it's the same – a couple of drinks, and a guy tries to do what he doesn't dare do without it. Oh yes, I have seen a thousand whisky John Waynes. But John Wayne could take a punch, these boys can't. I can tell how hard a guy is going to be – some just need a talking to and come like little lambs; others – you've got to toe to toe and punch it out. The worst is the real

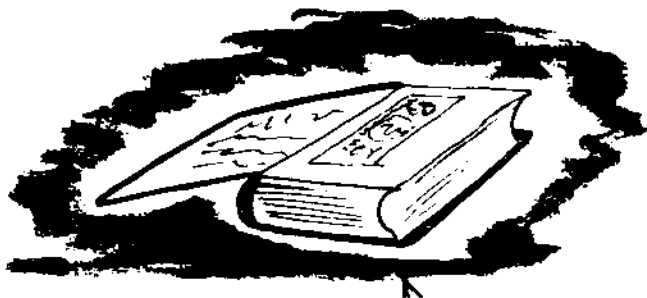




McDade (from a description).

fighter; see, it's like this – some real fighters don't know they are fighters until they're drunk; they're the most dangerous, like little time bombs. I always watch a man's eyes; a John Wayne always looks all around, hardly sees you. A hard man stares with a strong face, but a bar fighter never looks at your face, his eyes sort of dip down like a tight wound spring. His sort, you never take your eyes off and you never take risks with him. He could be palming a knife or a gat (gun). Minders usually work as a team to take him out, once he's out of the doors, it's someone else's worry. The golden rule is, never call the police in on something; they make too much fuss. (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez is speaking of a volatile situation, thirty years ago.*) It's like a big game trying to work out where the trouble will start first. For personal enjoyment, the best fight is where the whole bar-room erupts into fighting – maybe if two ship's crews are in. But this can be dangerous if you don't know the score. A knife in the back has no answer, so really you try to stop this kind of deal going down.

Let me tell you about the bar I was minding. It was called the "Balboa". As I said before, the bossman was a Mexican. I think he was unable to go back or something, but he ran the bar well enough. We had a good cook and about ten good girls. Really it's more trouble than it's worth to clip (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez refers to the practice of overcharging for poor quality*), leastways, not worth it to clip in Colon. I remember when I worked in Colon, a clip-joint opened there, by the dockyard gates, all flash and tinsel. A sailor would go in, immediately a girl would take him by the arm and sit in a quiet corner. Two drinks later, the barman would bring a bill which was about two month's money for a sailor (in present terms, as much as \$800). Some paid up and others tried to fight it out. But the bar had a lot of big bruisers – no brain, just brawn. Well, to cut a long story short, they tried the stunt on two Dutch sailors. The guys punched it out and got badly beaten. A day later, the Dutchmen went back with a gallon of gasoline and a box of matches – in all, I



The "Bank".

think fourteen people died in the fire.

Anyway, back to the "Balboa". There were four minders, including me, two were blacks – from Trinidad and Tobago, Sonny and Lenny, good guys. The other one was American, his hair was golden-blond, I think it came from a bottle, but I never got close to find out. He was always pumping iron in his breaks and I used to wonder if he carried a mirror around with him. But for all that, when the time came for real, he was good, fast and neat. Maybe a little on the vicious side, oh and one thing he hated more than anything else, was Chinese. If a Chinaman came in, he would hover around, waiting for the guy to do something so that he could take a crack at him. Most times, he would bounce them off the walls and outside into the alleyway where he would go to town on them (*Ed: seriously assault*). To see McDade, that was his name, after beating up a Chinese, was to see a really happy man. He would go up to the bar and get a bar of chocolate candy which he kept there. He would then slowly open the package and eat, quietly smiling to himself. You know, I really think he was ten cents short of a dollar! (*Ed: crazy*).

"McDade beats the Chinese."



So, as I told you, this minding went on for about four months. I had a good amount of money in dollars and when I had enough, I went out and bought a Bible. No, don't get me wrong, I'm as religious as the next guy, but there was a special reason – between its pages, I put single ten dollar bills, as many as I could afford. I then wrapped the Bible up – it was my banker. In those days, a Bible meant a little bit more than it does now, to a lot of people. I thought about sending money back to Master Bimba's widow, but I just couldn't figure out how to do it. To my shame, I must say, that in those days I could neither read or write. The street was my teacher, you could say, as a guy I know does; I was a student of the school of hard knocks and a graduate of the University of life. (*Ed: Mr. Hernandez states he was called this by a Scots bo'sun, so we conclude that it may be Scottish in origin.*) You know, this reading and writing was no big deal in those days. I was not alone. Most places a sailor wanted to go had either a picture or sign showing what it sold. You know when I talk to people now about those days, they just can't understand how a guy can get around not having any words – well all I can say is, I'm here now, so that's it! O.K.?

Well now, back to McDade. I was serving out my notice at the “Balboa”, I reckoned that it was now safe to try for a ship. On the last but one night, I'm just standing by the kitchen swing door, surveying the scene, when I notice a party come in, four Chinese; galley cooks probably – all except one, there was something odd, not aggressive, just not quite there about him – strange to say. I felt an unease about things. Anyway, McDade has spotted the Chinese. You should have seen his face. It was

“McDade gets paid back – in full.”



*"The Chinese fights like a
drunken man."*



a picture, four, yes four Chinese to play with. He moved closer, and just hovered around, watching and waiting. But no luck, they just ate and drank, drank and ate, they talked and laughed. One of them got up to go to the washroom. Like a shadow, McDade followed. I could tell what was going down. About five minutes passed and McDade came out. He looked like a guy who's just picked a winning number, he walked up to the bar and got some of his chocolate candy. We all knew what he had done, but tonight the bossman was "interviewing" one of the new girls, so nothing was said.

The remaining three Chinese sat at their table, still enjoying the good company. After about ten minutes, they grew uneasy. Two of them went to the washroom. A little later, they returned with their friend, whom McDade had beaten up. He was all bloodied, but other than that, he looked O.K., McDade had gone easy on him, probably saving himself for the other three. Anyway, they sat their friend down and gave him a drink. The fourth Chinese looked around the bar, he locked his gaze onto McDade, and watched quietly. After a while McDade became aware of the gaze of the quiet Chinaman. He strutted over and called the guy out. The Chinese said nothing. McDade got angry and made to grab for the Chinese guy's shirt. He grabbed, but the Chinese rolled off his seat and onto the floor like an India-rubber man and then swayed to his feet like a Bowery bum. McDade laughed, his eyes became glazed and he moved forward. He swung at the Chinese with a powerful haymaker. The Chinese caught McDade's fist in mid-flight, with his outstretched hand, and stopped it dead. McDade countered with a cross left. The



"McDade is out of the game."

Chinese rode the punch and staggered left, then right. He looked as though he was drunk, but I tell you; I'm a fighter and this Chinese had all the marks of a good fighter. McDade was sweating now, his usually carefully dressed blonde hair, brushed in his eyes, parting to reveal that he was thin on top. I looked across the bar to Sonny and Lenny. I caught Sonny's attention and he waved. I pointed to McDade and made a fist, Sonny understood my sign language and shook his head. We wanted to see McDade sweat a bit, and sweat he did.

All this time, the Chinese was rolling and weaving, ducking and diving. McDade couldn't get a fist near him. The American's face was bright red, then he picked up a bottle and smashed it. The jagged shards pointed murderously as he slashed at the Chinese. McDade had lost face and had then committed a minder's greatest sin – used a weapon on the bossman's turf. He stabbed chest height at the Chinaman, who entwined McDade's outstretched arm with his. Holding McDade's elbow taut, the Chinaman then fore-arm smashed to the wrong side of McDade's elbow – it snapped like a dry twig. Then, without waiting, the Chinese punched short jabs, one, two, three – McDade dropped. In the

"The Chinese fighter's farewell."



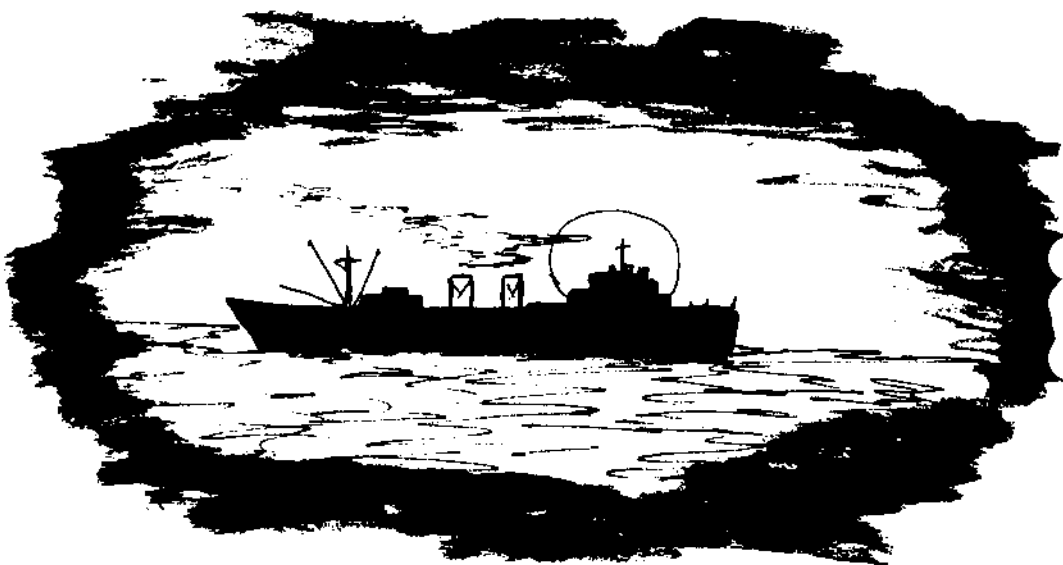
meantime all eyes were on the drunken Chinese, who suddenly sobered up. He called to his friends, who made for the door, supporting their injured friend. The Chinese fighter guarded them until they were clear. He took out a couple of bills and put them on the table, this man had class. He looked across at me. I nodded my head in respect, he made a fist with one hand and capped it with an open hand. He moved it up to his face and then down. He turned and disappeared into the night.

McDade came around. He was finished, who would employ a minder with a broken arm. Anyway, with his vicious nature, he was a liability. In a rage of loss of face and blood anger, McDade rushed out after the Chinese. Maybe he caught up with the guy, maybe he didn't, but on the strength of the Chinese guy's form, McDade would end up feeding the fishes.

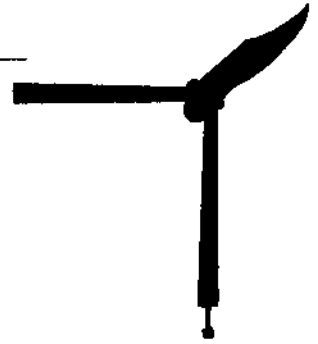
I was intrigued by the Chinese guy's fighting. It was like nothing I had seen, so different to Arnis de Manao (*Ed: on retrospect, it is possible that Mr. Hernandez witnessed the Chinese Kung-Fu form of Zuijiuquan – drunken-style boxing*).

Well, the time had come for me to ship out. There were no goodbyes. Colon for me was no friendly place, so like they say, I turned and never looked back. For a change, I ship on a happy ship – all Brazilians, bound, via Cartagena in Demerera (British Guiana) and on down to Belém port in North East Brazil.

"The boat bound for Brazil."



The King of African Knife



You know, the Spanish did not own Brazil, it was the Portuguese. There's the joke, I signed to sail to Belem in Brazil, in the hope that I'd be with a Spanish-speaking people. By the time I'd walked up the gang-plank of the "Sao Domingos" to be greeted by the friendly Brazilian crew, the two words of Portuguese I knew – "Mais Devagar" – more slowly, became my nickname for the voyage. But like in Hawaii, there was no malice so I didn't mind. The crew did not remark upon my early morning practice which was good. After four months of an average four fights or "situations" a night, I welcomed the rest.

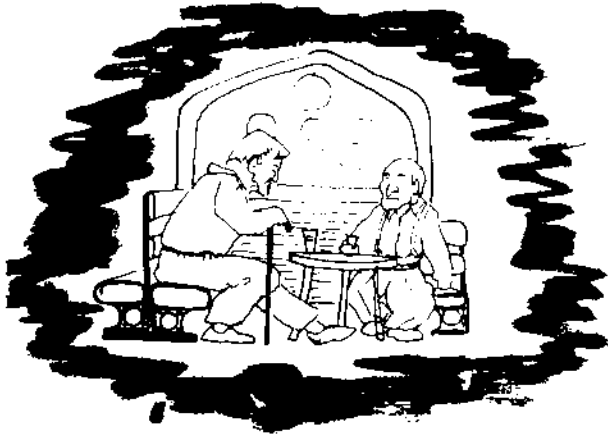
Paid off in full as we docked at Belem, I decided it was time to go and get a drink. Once out of the dock gates, it was straight into the nearest bar, I'm no tourist you understand. I walked in, the inside was only slightly cooler than the outside. The bar was almost empty, just a couple of old-timers whiling the day away over a single beer. The guys on the boat had said to try the draught beer, so try it I did. It was simply called "Chopp", pretty good name too – it was easy on the way down, then bang, it hit you. In those days I was a spirit drinker, but the Brazilian beer is the best in the world, a few of these later and I was very relaxed as I sat on the high bar stool. I noticed a black guy come in. He comes up to the bar. Obvious he's a regular because the barman reaches for a bottle off the back shelf. He shook the bottle and poured some of the clear liquid into a small glass. The black guy picks up the glass, downs the contents in one, then spits on the floor. I look around, nobody else does.

The black guy looks at me and raising the empty glass, grins and says "Cachaça". He waves the barman over to me; he sets up a glass and pours a shot of the Cachaça into it. The black guy's glass is also charged and he holds it to his lips. He signals to me to do the same, then he counts, "Tres, Dois, um" and we both down the liquid in one. The black guy again spits on the floor. I don't and the inside of my mouth starts to burn. I spit hard and the burning goes away. The black guy laughs fit to burst. A strange place this Brazil. Anyway, to cut a long story short, he

knows a little American and Spanish and we get to understand each other. He said he had been a sailor, but now he worked the docks. I got a good feeling about him, I guessed he was a fighter, but it would not be right to ask. We talked in general about Hawaii, where he said he'd been many times and liked the life and people well. We talked and smoked and talked and drank. Evening started to darken the windows and the barman put on the bar lights. The place was starting to fill now as the serious business of the day began.

Then the black guy, whose name I still did not know, asked if I had eaten or had a place to stay. When I told him that I had just docked, he said, "no problem" and invited me to stay with his family until I was

"Old timers while the day away."



*"My friend from the bar"
(from a description).*

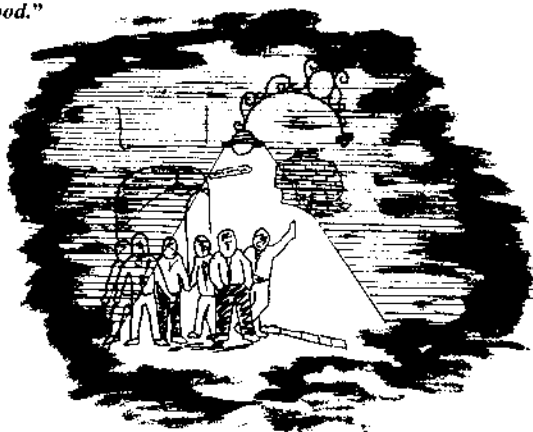
fixed up. I thanked him and we walked out. We walked the dark streets, in many places the lights were out. In the distance we saw about six guys, sailors no doubt. As we neared, I saw that they were in a foul mood. One looked at my black friend and I heard some foul-mouthing about his ancestry. The black guy just shook his head as if to say 'stupid' and laughed. Quick as a dime falls out of a drunk's pocket, we were circled. My black friend doesn't flinch. I knew it, a fighter! The roughs start goading, one draws a knife and waves it. He then does what no real knife man would ever do – like some punk in a Hollywood movie, he tosses the blade from one hand to the other. I have not sweated and bled at the hands of dear Master Bimba, to be impressed by these baby tricks. You know, when you have been scared witless by the very best, then garbage like this holds no fear. So I just stepped in, the knifeman did not know

what to do, so I punched him out and took the blade. Do you believe it, it was an Inox! I just laughed and threw it as hard as I could into the night. Meanwhile, the strangest thing is unfolding – my black friend, flips on to his hands, and walks forward a few paces, his feet up in the air at head height. He then kicks, one, two, three and three of the roughs drop. He springs back on to his feet; grinning. Just two left now. One draws a gat (gun). Quick now, I cross, draw my Balisong, flip, uno, dos and cut at the gun man's wrist. I strike lucky and the hand opens. The gun drops and I kick it away. The last guy just took to his heels – tail between his legs. I don't cut deep, so the gun man is in no danger, we just walk on. My new found friend, proved by fight, said nothing about my style and fighters' etiquette demanded that I did not ask about his style.

*"In the distance six guys –
in foul mood."*



"Cachaca."

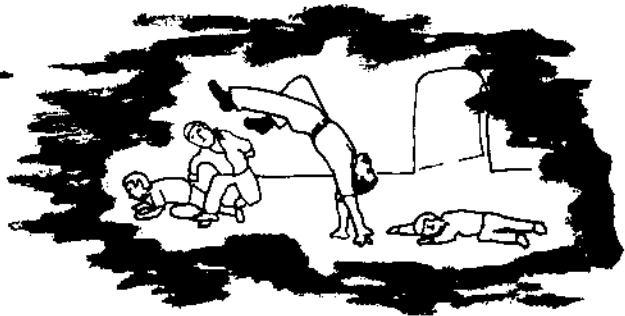


Soon we arrived at his family's home. He introduced me to father, mother, wife and sons and daughters – in that order. A few glasses of beer and I feel the same as in Hawaii. And people, I still did not know my new friend's name, nor he mine. Soon the table is set and a hot yellow soup, which my friend's wife called "Taccica" is put upon it. I tasted it, shrimp and garlic. After this came a strong spiced dish with duck, called "Paco no Tucupi". Sitting on the verandah afterwards, with a good cigar, we looked up at the starlit sky; then my friend said, quietly but firmly;

"Tell me the name of your style and your master"

I looked at him and said that I was schooled in the Arnis de Manao and Basilong by Master Bimba. At the sound of Master Bimba's name, his face hardened slightly.

"He draws a knife but he's no fighter."



"My friend fights with his feet."

"Mestre Bimba?"

I said yes.

"Mestre Bimba from Salvador?"

"No, Master Bimba from Manila."

My friend's face lightened when he realised the coincidence. In Bahia, there was a young man known as Mestre Bimba, who was most skilled in my friend's form. It turned out that my friend practised the fighting of his Angolan ancestors. He said that as the next day was Saturday, he would take me along to where he practised his style. Sleep took me and I awoke the next morning with the warm rays of the dawn sun on my face.

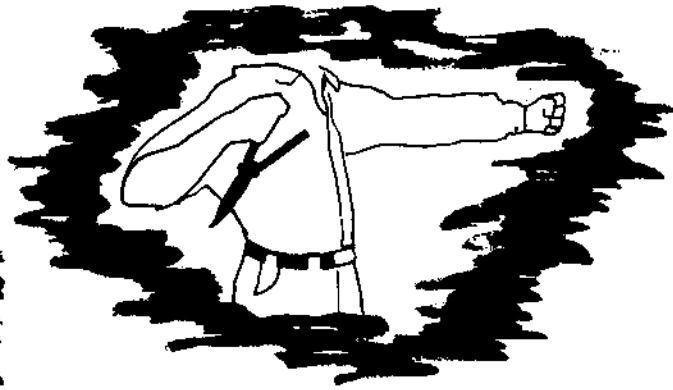
A quick breakfast and my friend and I were off across town to where he was to practice. At first I thought it was a joke because, there, for any passer-by to see, was a ring. By the side of the ring sat a little old man. In his hands he held a strange bow-shaped piece of wood with a metal wire running from one end to the other where hung a painted gourd (Berimbau). With a coin for a picker, the old man played a crazy tune, this was picked up by another playing the drums. All around, guys hooted and sang. Then into the ring stepped two guys. They jumped and cartwheeled, kicked and struck, yet not a blow landed. I marvelled

"So I punched him out."



"He draws a Gat."

"The African Knife."



"I cross draw my Balisong."

at this, almost struck dumb by their speed and skill, I managed to ask my friend what this was – "Capoeira" he shouted, half singing.

And wait, the next thing that went down was, they drew a long-bladed African knife apiece and slashed and cut at each other, barely missing. I must say, I was impressed at the exercise, but it was not for me. Then my newfound friend suggested I try my hand – I said that I could never refuse a challenge or step back from a fight, so there and then I stepped into the ring. The crazy rhythm began to beat and the Berimbau picked up the tune. My opponent turned up out of the back of the crowd. He was about 45 years old, six one and 180 pounds, half black. He starts to circle now, dodging and weaving so I find a fast 'in and out' attack impossible. Round and round, the guy circles, then up into his hands, his feet flick forward at me. I dodge back, his feet could contact me, but they don't; the guy is playing. I see red, I stamp on his hands and he drops down. I just move in and stamp on his head; he goes off to sleep. The music stops. I look around and wait for the cheers, but none came. In fact everyone present looks shocked. I look to my friend, he



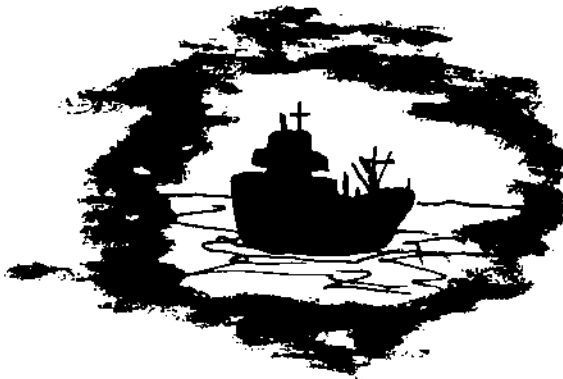
"Capoeira."

turns his back on me and walks away. Two guys step into the ring and pick my opponent up. I try to help, but they shun me. So I am left alone in the fighting ring. I cannot understand it. A challenge is laid down, I accept, I fight, I win. Nobody wants to know. *(Ed: Mr. Hernandez explains that he did not understand the concept of a "friendly" match and hopes that although thirty years have passed, there are no hard feelings. Though at the time he was very angry.)*

So there I was, my newfound friends gone, in the twinkling of an eye. But I am a man, I must make the best of things, so down to the docks and look for work. I had left my Bible with my newfound friends, but a man does not walk backwards with his tail between his legs, after all, money is only paper.

Well, I tell you, the only work going was as a log feeder on a boat bound for Santarem and Manaus up the river Amazon. So, I put my mark to the document and board the boat. We set sail within the hour – up around the Marajo Island and the score of tiny islands, to the mouth of the river Amazon. There is a bitter taste in my mouth, but I do my best to ignore it.

"The boat bound for Manaus."



Fighting Tactics



WARNING

The details contained in these concluding chapters, have deliberately been separated from the main body of the book. The techniques described, are physically dangerous. They are not expected to be practiced as an exercise.

Neither the publishers nor the author will be held responsible in any manner whatsoever, for any injury which may occur by reading and/or following the descriptions herein contained.

I know you may think that I'm repeating myself, but there is no set fighting form for every situation. There are however, certain situations which arise regularly, that may be seen as useful in developing fighting tactics.

- 1 Punch for punch.
- 2 Against knife thrust – chest cut wrist
– groin cut inside elbow.
- 3 Against stab.
- 4 Against slash.
- 5 Against club, machete or bottle strike, overhead.
- 6 Multiple attacks.
- 7 Take a cut to give a cut.

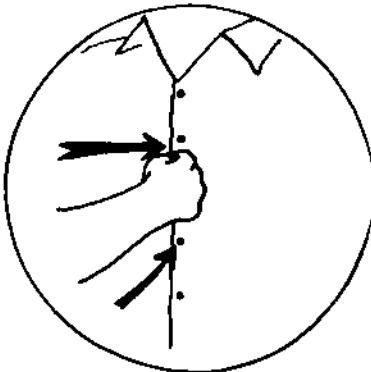
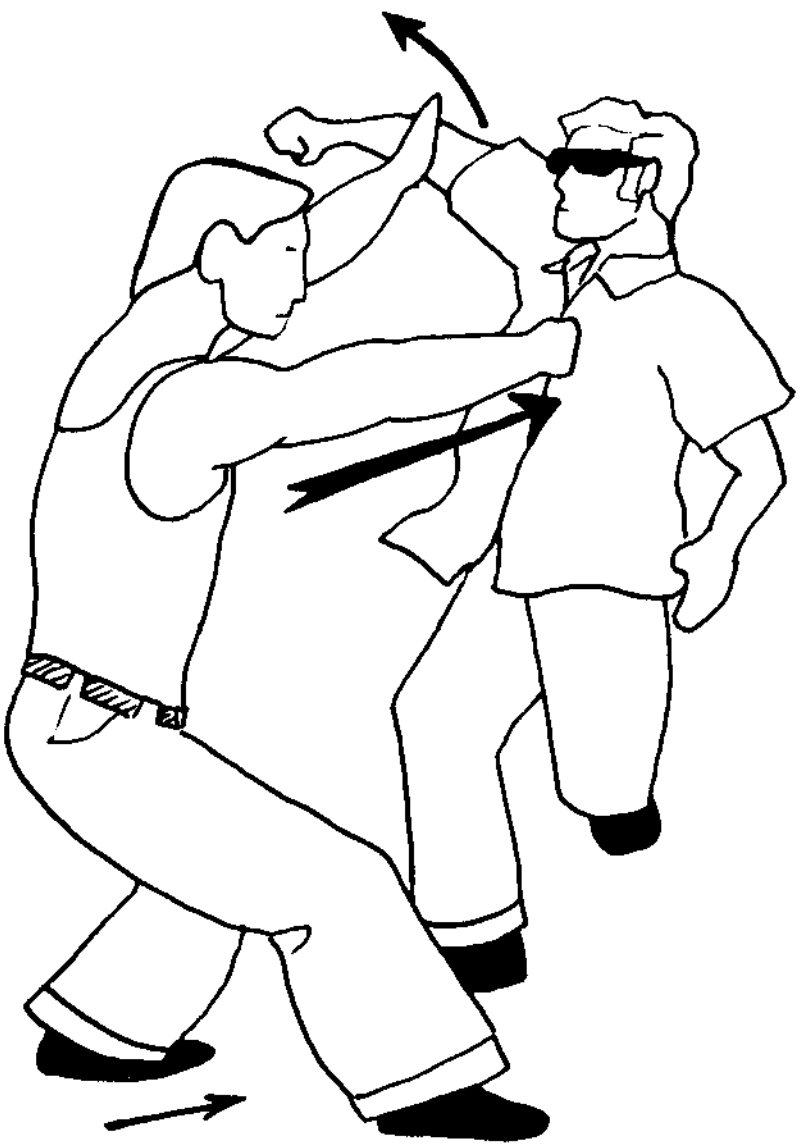
I want to show just these seven situations because any more than that, and the point I want to make about being simple will be lost.

Situation # One: Punch for Punch

Suppose a guy swings a punch to your jaw; so far, he's only punching out; he hasn't drawn his steel (knife, club, gun etc). Then to my mind it's still friendly. So he needs a little coaxing to go away and stop being a naughty boy. I say the best way is like this – say for example, he punches with his right fist to your left jaw. Think like the move # 6, way back in chapter five.

With your left hand, check his punch at his elbow, then follow sharp with your right to the stomach. Just where the ribs meet. But be quick, in and out. Don't let the guy see any opening, it's up to him to choose whether to risk it or not.

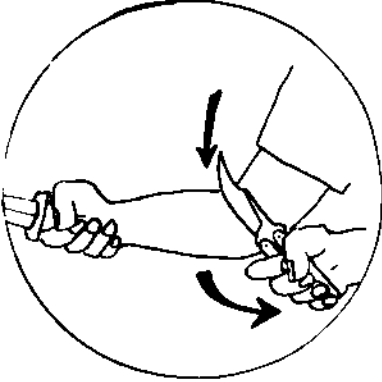
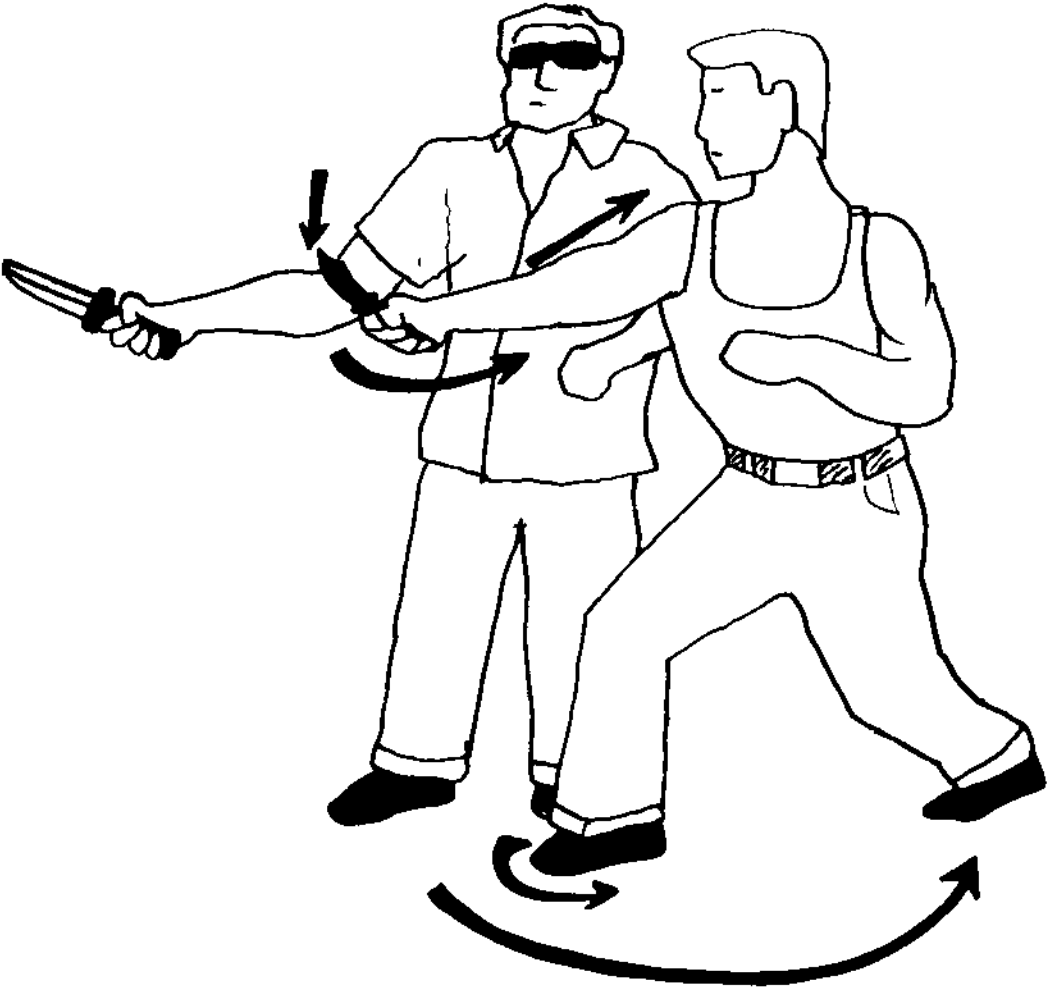
Situation # 1 Punch for Punch.



Situation # Two: Knife to Chest

Here on in, no tricks. A guy has shown steel, in this case, a knife and prepares to attack. Thrust to chest – draw Balisong in grip # 1, and as attack comes; cut, slash. First cut takes inside of arm, the slash then hits chest area. Get back for distance.

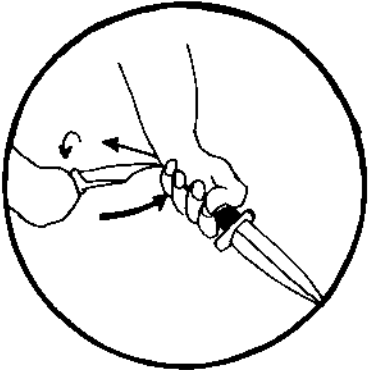
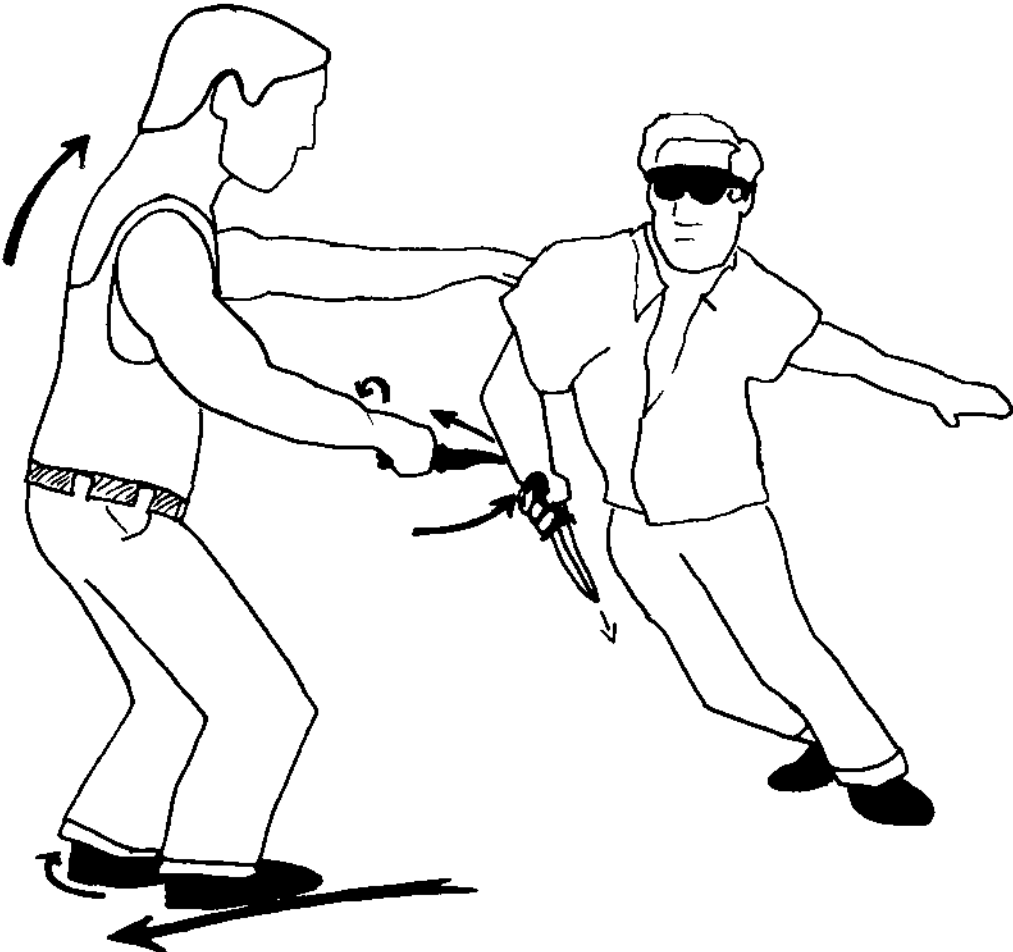
Situation # 2 Thrust to Chest.



Situation # Three: Stab to Groin

From a standing position, knife stabs at your groin. Move it, step back, hugging barrel feeling. Trade distance. Keep your aggression hard on the guy. Draw Balisong and cut, stepping diagonally. As you cut under the wrist, get back out of range.

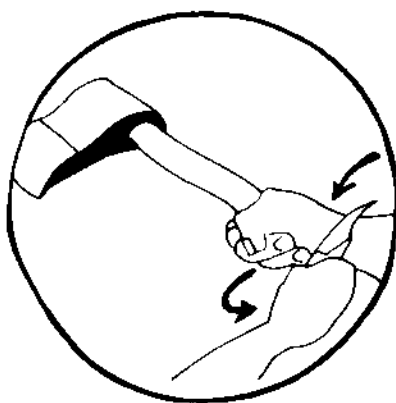
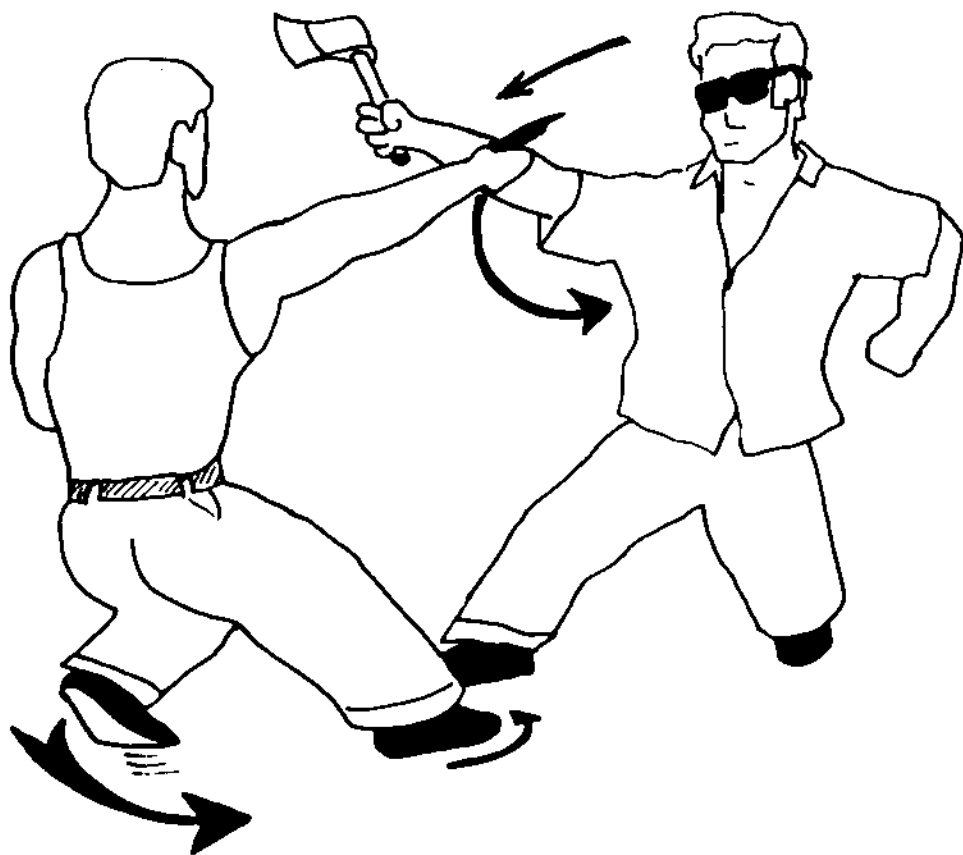
Situation # 3 Stab to Groin.



Situation # Four: Against a Slash

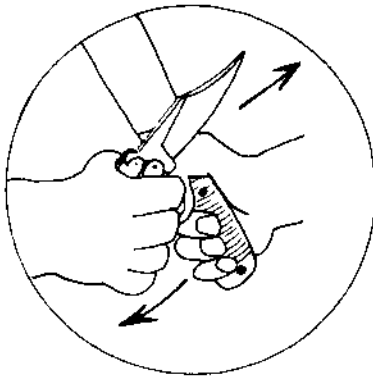
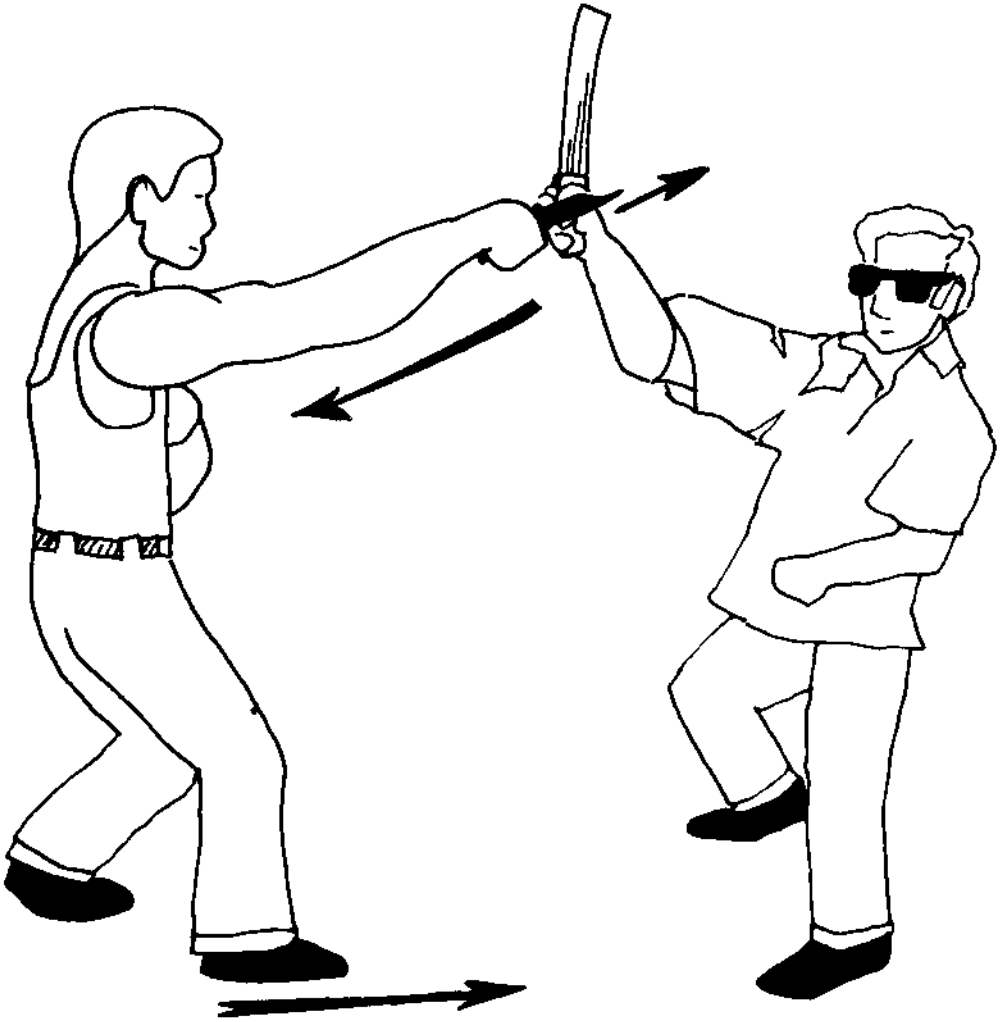
As the guy moves in with his round the houses slash move, trade him movement for movement, like the cogs in a clock. As he moves, you move, so the interval remains the same. Draw Balisong and cut either wrist or elbow.

Situation # 4 Against a Slash.



Situation # Five: Against Club, Machete, or Over-head Bottle Strike
This requires good timing – no thinking. Draw Balisong grip # 1. As the guy raises his weapon and it reaches the top of the strike arc, step firmly in and strike the thumb side of the hand. Step diagonally out of the way.

Situation # 5 Against Overhead Strike.



Situation # Six: Multiple Attacks

If there is more than one attacker, the feeling I have, is to sense the strongest fighter and go for him. If you lose, you lose. But if you win, then the rest come easy. I don't want to illustrate this one, just let the words paint the picture. It's such a personal thing – how do you draw the strongest fighter on paper? You can't. You have to actually do it, no other answer to it.

Situation # Seven: Take a Cut to Give a Cut

Sometimes when your back is up against the wall, it's down to attacking for all you're worth. You know you're going to get cut, but it's better to take a cut of one inch to give a cut of six inches.

(On advice, situations 6 and 7 have not been illustrated.)

You know, I could fill twenty books with situations of fighting, but what good would it do? – None, just maybe a cheap entertainment for dreamers. Well, I don't know about that – I don't do it. What tactics are there to be book-learned about fighting? Precious few, I tell you. You know, if you put all the books on fighting in a room and locked yourself away and read them from cover to cover and practiced what they said for a year and a day; they would not be a match for real technique. Try going thirty seconds up against a real fighter. Be warned.

If a guy has been fed a diet that what he's learning is a killer art and has duly bought his pyjamas and taken his shoes off and started fighting – pulling punches all the time – that's all he can do when the chips are down. That's not my way. I don't believe in fighting without shoes, or wearing some “uniform” which you don't wear on the street. Oh, and another thing – a lot of these judo guys teach breakfalls, by banging the mat. Try that on concrete. Fancy stepping is the same, for real; you're not strutting around on some expensive wooden floor; for real, the ground can be uneven; on stairs, in mud or on gravel, so check it out – don't just take what the instructors give out as law. For real, it don't work. You know, a lot of guys wearing black sashes and teaching fighting have never had a real fight in their lives. They may be good at fighting by rules, even be called champions by some people. But I know a few guys whose only training is lifting a glass of sour mash to their lips; who could see these “champions” off and not even raise a sweat. You want me to tell you my personal fighting tactics? You've got to be joking. There is absolutely no way, I am going to tell anybody my tactics. You know why? Because maybe the next guy to call me out has read this book!

Fighting Skills



Fighting skills are not just skills to fight, it's also about self-defence.

Self-defence? I say, be careful, no five minute method is going to work. Ever! There is no easy way, only through the fighting can you learn to fight; it can be no other way. If some guy says otherwise; he's a dreamer, not a fighter. Let him go and hold his own in the docks at Manila Port or in the back streets of Cebu City. Then I listen to him.

So, for self-defence, I say; keep it simple. Unless you're good, very good; leave the fancy tricks for the fancy boys. It's just the same as teaching a child to swim on dry land. Tell him he's a champion and he'll believe you. Throw him in the sea when it's rough and all the dry land techniques will be forgotten; most likely he'll drown.



A good sensitivity drill, using a single cane. Strike fast with Double Stick at all heights - do not break cane!"

Don't talk about what you're going to do, by the time you've wasted your breath, some other guy has gone and done it before you. Think about it.

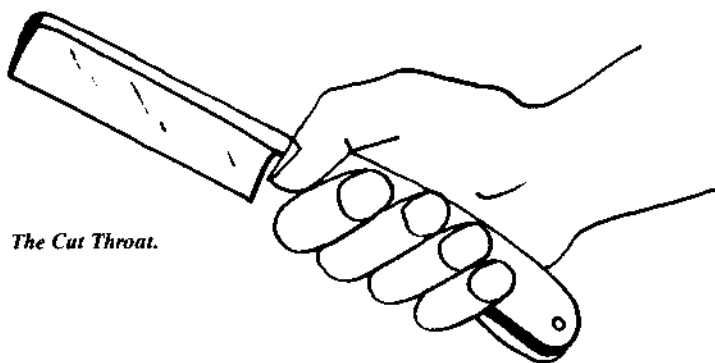
In self defence, there is one rule which you must obey: – there are no rules! always use a weapon as opposed to “fighting fair”. Sometimes a deterrent is just as good, and don't threaten to do it – do it! and threaten after. If a guy calls you out, smack him down straight away and when he's down, make sure that he doesn't get up easily.

When you're in a bar; never sit with a window behind you, or your back to a door. Always check a second way out; in case you have to leave in a hurry. Watch out for “double hustlers” – one guy sets you up, and the other takes you out of the game. Believe me, in a bar, there are



Abdomen training using automobile tyre.

no bargains to be had; whether it's watches or women. No guy comes up to offer you a bargain because he thinks you're a nice guy. He does it because he thinks you're a sucker. I won't sugar coat it, because I've seen it all over the world, same scam, only the language changes. The best self defence, is not to be where a situation is likely to arise. What I mean by that is quite simple – nobody ever won in a Bunco Booth. If you're around where the bars are and some guy starts the old shell game or as in England, 'find the lady'. Walk on by – this is usually set up by a team. It works like this:– the performer sets up his game. The stooge lays his money down and wins. He walks away, waving his winnings. The sucker sees this is easy money and steps up to the game. He puts a five down and wins. He puts a ten and loses. So he wants another shot at it. Meanwhile, the watching crowd are being worked by a "dip", who transfers what he has pickpocketed to a "walker", usually a woman, whose job is just to walk by. The "walker" then disappears and the stooge yells out "Police!" and the game folds up, leaving the sucker down fifty or more and a number of wallets light in the crowd. Oh yes, and a word about wallets – a wallet in a back pocket is a flag to every punk who has the energy to crawl out from the stone under which he lives. If you've got to carry cash; spread it around. For best, wear a money belt. Don't flash big notes around, keep to an amount in small denominations. Don't brag about it. Unless you know the score, watch our for new-found friends in bars, it could be a set up.



The Cut Throat.



"Street Knuckles."

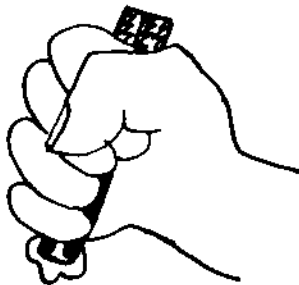
A word about walking about. If you slouch and creep close to the walls, you set yourself up. Straighten up and walk tall. Take the centre of the side-walk and walk like you own it. But don't barge, because no real fighter will pass that one by. The need for self defence is against cowards who expect an easy fight. If he thinks he's going to have a fight on his hands, then he'll think twice about it. But if he's a fighter, then it's man to man.

The object is to make the street work for you and not against you. Think about it. If you look down a street, you can see the danger points. Dark alleys, blind corners, parked cars with vapour coming out from the exhausts. Oh, a good idea is to always walk against the on-coming traffic, that way, no car can stop behind you to let out some "unfriendly persons".



"Street Deterrent."

"Fighting Chain" (usually more harmful to owner).



Balisong Deterrent.

That's a facet of fighting skills which are important to know. Believe it. I've had the experience to know that it's true. You know my fighting skill came from the Arnis de Manao and Balisong. It's no game, it's like life; no second chance. When I spar with single stick or double stick, I don't do like a lot of guys do now. I don't hit stick against stick. Some old guys back in Phillipines say that traditionally the stick has a soul; so never strike stick to stick – bad respect. Well, I don't know about that. What I do know about is this – if when you stick spar in Arnis or Escrima and you hit for the stick and not the man; you get soft – weak. Not used to taking a blow and riding it. In other words, just playing at Arnis and Escrima. No! Be a man and even if you shed a little blood; fight for real. Then in your own life, you are happy because you know that you are being honest to the skill. If not, then give it up. It's just a waste of time.

Well, I think that the time has come to wind this book up now. We've come a long way together, and I hope that you've gained something from it. If not, then, I can't say anything. What I do know, is that I continue in great depth, about Arnis and Escrima and my life from 1951 in the companion volume to this. It's called,

“Escrima – The Battle Stick”

and will be available where you bought this book.

So that's it. I finish as I started – proud. I hold my head up high and say “Farewell”.

Cacoy “Boy” Hernandez

EDITOR'S NOTE

As a point of information, it is interesting to note that Senor Hernandez is of Mestizo (Philipino Spanish) ancestry. Unlike many modern Philipinos, Senor Hernandez' language was primarily Spanish, with a curious mixture of Tagalog which formed an almost pidgin speech pattern. Add to this, the Americanised English and the native Hawaiian which he learned in his travels, and you have a most colourful speech form. We sincerely hope that we have transliterated Senor Hernandez' most original manuscript, to his satisfaction. We realise that it is doubly difficult to convey the emotion of the times (1947-51) and the excitement of the action.

From what we can gather, Senor Hernandez' mentor, Master Bimba, may have spoken an amalgam of Ilocano and Tagalog, heavily peppered with Spanish and English. But as with anything learnt third hand, our observation, must remain a supposition.

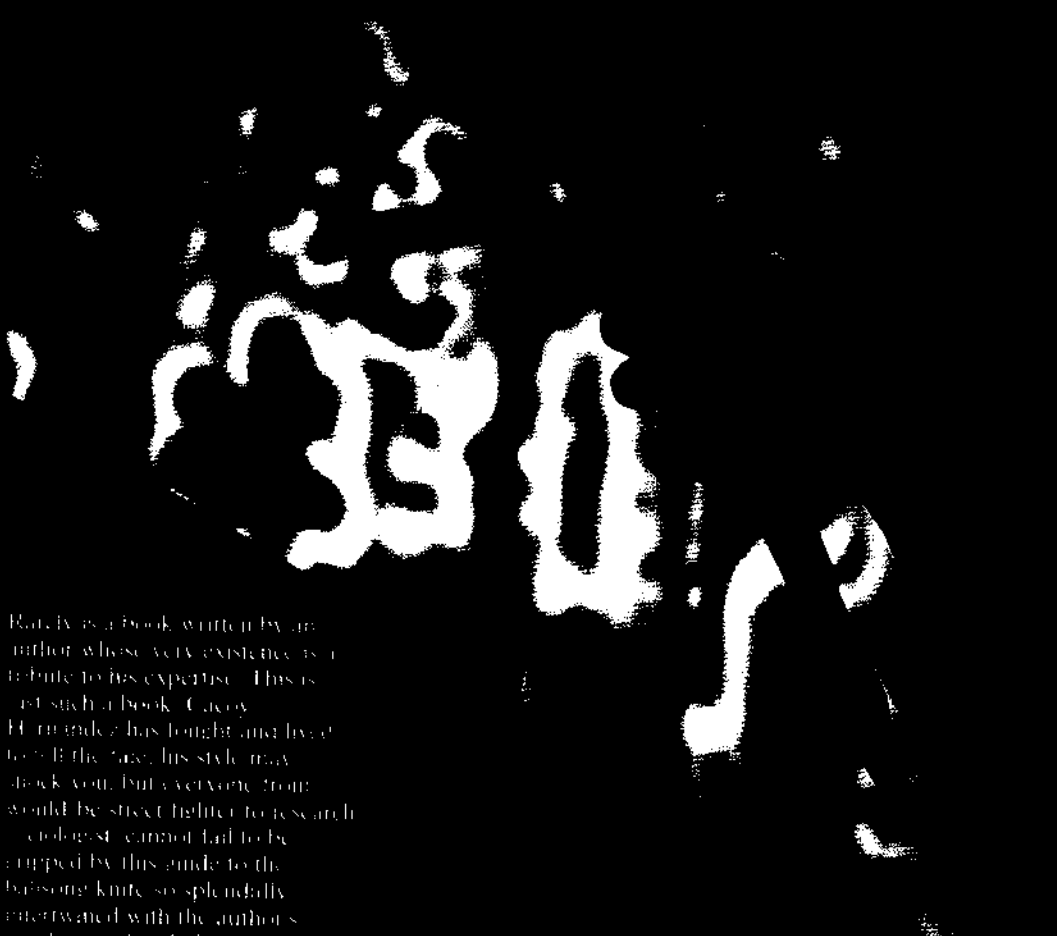
However we would like to echo the sentiments of a famous Tagalog proverb:—

*“Ang Dila ay Hindi patalim
Nguni't kung sumugat ay malalum.”*

*“The tongue is not a knife
But it can inflict a deep cut.”*

BALISONG

By Cacoy "Boy" Hernandez **IRON
BUTTERFLY**



Rarely is a book written by an author whose very existence is a tribute to his expertise. This is not such a book. Cacoy Hernandez has fought and lived to tell the tale, his style may shock you, but everyone from would-be street fighter to research biologist cannot fail to be gripped by this guide to the balisong knife, so splendidly intertwined with the author's autobiography. A devastating book that breaks new ground. *Read it once and it may affect your life, read it twice and it may save it.*