The continuing story of Jeet Kune Do

Through

Dany Insoanto

Story and Photos by: George Klouvatos

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'The Majority of Today's Full-Contact Fighters are at the Point that we (JKD) Were at in 1966. They are Discovering that Most of the Techniques that are Taught in the Dojo are Unrealistic for Full-Contact Because they are not Practical."

In 1964 at the International Karate Championships, in Long Beach California, the martial arts got its first glimpse of a man that was to become a legend in his own time, Bruce Lee.

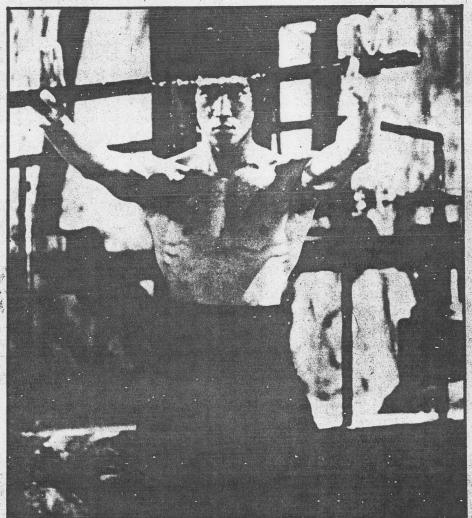
His demonstration at this event brought him instant recognition amongst the martial artists that were fortunate enough to witness his prowess. This demonstration also proved to be a stepping stone into an acting career. as his performance was filmed and later shown to William Dozier who was impressed enough with Lee's talents to sign him up as Kato in the television series the "Green Hornet".

The rest is now history. The Kato role brought him to the attention of thousands of kids who immediately wanted to take some form of martial art so that they could be like Kato. Even at this early stage of his career. Bruce Lee was instrumental in promoting the martial arts.

After the Green Hornet Series was cancelled, Bruce could not find a suitable acting job so he continued training and teaching. He gave private martial arts instruction to many Hollywood personalities, as well as to many leading black belt instructors who were interested in learning from Lee.

One of these private students was Stirling Silliphant (award winning screenwriter and producer), who helped further Bruce's acting career by finding him a role in the movie "Marlowe" and an important part in the opening episode of the T.V. series "Longstreet". Shortly after his role on Longstreet, Lee was contacted by Hong Kong film producer Raymond Chow. Chow wanted Bruce to star in a marttal arts film entitled the "Big Boss". This film was released as "Fists of Fury" in the States, and suddenly the name Bruce Lee became a household word not only to martial artists but also to all the people who saw the film. The second film that Lee starred in was "Chinese Connection" and this was so successful in Hong Kong that it outgrossed the "Sound of Music".

Since Lee's contract stipulated that he make only two films for Chow. Bruce was now free to do what he wanted. Bruce immediately decided to write, direct and star in a film he produced in association with Chow. The film was called the



hoto of Bruce Lee from 'Enter the Dragon'. Photo Credit: Keystone Press Ltd.

"Return of the Dragon" and it became the most financially successful film in Hong Kong history.

Although Bruce Lee was at this point the most recognized movie star in the Orient, he had his sights set on world-wide recognition.

His chance to achieve this recognition came when Warner Brothers approached Lee to star in "Enter the Dragon". When this film was released it became a hit around the world. It was the second biggest money-maker for Warner Brothers. (the first was "My Fair Lady") in their foreign distribution history, grossing over 14 million (U.S.) dollars.

Unfortunately. Bruce Lee was not able to witness the full impact of his accomplishments, for on July 20, 1973 a cerebral edema (a congestion or buildup of fluid in the brain) ended his life. During his lifetime. Bruce Lee was many things to many people; philosopher, writer, martial artist extraordinaire. innovator, actor, idol to millions of his fans and finally his own man. Although the man has died his spirit lives on in part for he left a legacy that continues to grow and flourish.

This legacy is Bruce Lee's philosophy on the martial arts, based on things he observed to be true which he named Jeet Kune Do. The man that is destined to preserve Jeet Kune Do is Bruce Lee's premier disciple and long time friend, Dan Inosanto. Dan Inosanto first met Bruce Lee during the 1964 Int. Karate Championships and was literally captivated by the skills of the man who was to become his mentor and spiritual guide.

Before this meeting Inosanto had studied under many people and had experimented with many styles, including: judo, jiu-jitsu, numerous styles of karate, kali, escrima, arnis and kung fu. Nothing in his past experiences had prepared him for his initial meeting with Bruce.

"When I first met Bruce" reminisces Inosanto, "I couldn't sleep that night. The theory and principles he showed me were something I had never had any prior exposure to. He was able to counter everything I threw at him without really trying. Before meeting him, I had been striving to learn all these different styles. After meeting him, I felt that my search had ended."

The system of fighting that Lee introduced Inosanto to, was not JKD but a devastingly modified form of Lee's original style: Wing Chun. Jeet Kune Do had not vet been conceived although the principles and techniques that were to become JKD were already evident.

Bruce Lee at this time had two schools hat were teaching his method of martial arts. One was located in Seattle and the other was in Oakland. The kwoon (school) in Seattle had been started by Lee when he first came to the States from Hong Kong and had been left in the capable hands of Taky Kimura (who is still currently teaching a few private students at this school). The one in Oakland wa run by James Y. Lee and was in fact called the James Lee School. James Lee (no relation) had met Bruce in the early Sixties and the two became the best of friends. (James Lee died of terminal cancer only six month's before Bruce's untimely passing).

It was at 628 College Street in Los Angeles Old Chinatown, however, that the term and the school Jeet Kune Do came into being. This school was started by Lee in 1966 and like the one in Seattle bore the name Jun Fan Institute. Like all of Lee's Kwoon's it bore no identifying marks or signs whatsoever, and like the one in Seattle bore the name Jun Fan Institute. Like all of Lee's Kwoon's it bore no identifying marks or signs whatsoever, and like its spredecessors there were no visitors allowed in the Institute (Bruce once said to Inosanto "If knowledge is power, then let's pass it on discriminately). The membership in this exlusive school was limited

people that Lee had screened forehand. The emphasis at the school was on physical fitness because Lee believed that if an individual was not fit.

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he didn't deserve to be in the Institute. The classes were always small so that Lee could train his students according to their needs and body structures. He didn't believe one could benefit from too large a class because each student would have to keep up with the rest of the class rather than developing at his own speed. Lee taught his students that to win a fight one must do everything in his power to win, rather than relying on certain techniques or methods, because for him the whole secret behind the martial arts was efficiency, i.e., anything that scores.

To get his students ready for realistic confrontations on the streets, he advocated full-contact, all-out sparring with protective equipment to minimize injuries. This type of sparring was the testing ground for any techniques that were used in Lee's style because if they weren't effieicnt you quickly found out about it. Inosanto interjects that "the majority of today's full-contact fighters are at the point we were in '66. They are discovering that most of the techniques that are taught in the dojo are unrealistic for full-contact



Photo from 'Enter the Dragon'. Credit: Keystone Press Ltd.

because they are not practical enough." To improve the punching and kicking skills of his disciples Lee had them striking heavy bags, top-bottom bags, air shields and focus gloves. The reason behind this was to develop the feel of actually striking something with force. The heavy bag was used to develop power in kicking and punching, while the top-bottom bag (a circular air filled ball that is attached by two rubber cords to the floor and ceiling) was used to make the practitioner aware of broken rhythm, since if you didn't hit the bag squarely in the center its return is very unpredictable. The air shield was em-ployed in order to maximize the penetrating power of kicks. One student would hold the shielf for his partner who would kick it full blast trying to generate enough power to penetrate the air shield and still knock down the person who was holding it. The person who was holding it could either brace himself for the kick or move away, providing a moving target for his partner. It is a well known fact that Bruce Lee had such a powerful side kick

that he had trouble finding someone willing to hold the air shield for him, because invariably the unlucky person holding the shield would find himself projected through the air only to have his free-flight come to an abrupt finale when he connected with a wall. Bruce had some very singular ways however, of showing his students how to achieve the same amount of force in kicking as he possessed.

To quote Mr. Inosanto, "Once we were sidekicking and Lee said, 'Dan, throw a side kick? I threw a sidekick and he said, 'You're just posing; throw me another like you mean it. So I kicked again, this time he was hodling the shield. He said, 'No Dan, kick it hard, like it's something you hate.' So I kicked it, but without really thinking of something I hate. Then he just walked over to me, and slapped me across the face! For a second I forgot who he was and I wnt toward him. He laughed, 'Okay, now kick the bag; that's what I want.' When I kicked it I found out he was right."

The focus gloves were instrumental in cultivating different punching and kicking combinations as the gloves could be moved to different heights and positions by the person holding them, providing a constantly moving target whose rhythm had no fixed pattern.

Besides sparring, and working with the equipment all the members at the Institute were taught "trapping hands" or hand immobilization techniques. The basic idea behind these techniques is to neutralize or immobilize an opponent's hands, while positioning yourself at an angle that would permit a simultaneous counterattack.

Lee developed the "trapping hands" as a substitute for conventional blocking methods, which he believed were the least efficient means of countering an attack. According to Lee trapping your opponent's hands is more effective than merely blocking, because there is less wasted motion and the opponent's motion is immobilized rather than deflected. This theory is a direct offshoot than merely blocking, because there is less wasted motion and the opponent's motion is immobilized rather than deflected. This theory is a direct offshoot of Bruce's original style Wing Chun, whose practitioners believe that the best form of defense is a good offense. In Wing Chin the conventional sequence of blocking then countering is rejected in favour of simultaneous blocking and counterattacking. #

Lee took this theory one step further and invented "trapping hands". This ability to create new and more functional ways of combat from existing systems or styles was typical of Bruce Lee. He was forever doing research into the various self-defense methods, absorbing what was useful, while rejecting what was useless. He had no prejudices as far as where a specific tehencique came from, providing the technique was efficient. Lee was always questioning, searching, modifying and improving whatever knowledge he accumulated. This knowledge came drom many sources: martial arts books, boxing films, discussions with other martial artists and finally, sparring. The beautiful thing about Bruce however, was that he was willing to share any knowledge with his students so that they too could benefit from it.

He appreciated it if his students questioned him about any of the methods he was demonstrating, for only in this way could he discover if the students were thinking for themselves. rather than blindly following his every command. He encouraged his students to question so sthat they cjould develop self-knowledge, and in so doing create their own particular ways of learning and training. In short, he wanted all his followers to be creative, for he felt that only through creativity could one attain enlightenment.

By 1967 Lee had combined all his knowledge and past experience s together and had come up with a pulverizing modern method of combat which he baptized Jeet Kune Do (Way of the Intercepting Fist). JKD differed radically from all other methods of self-defense of the time in its footwork, stance, rhythm and lack of passive blocking t techniques.

JKD uses all ways and means to serve its end (efficiency), but is not bound by any of these means, and is therefore free.'

The footwork of JKD resembled that of a boxer, who is constantly shifting and bobbing, therefore making it very hard for his opponent to set him up and deliver a telling blow. The JKD stance is southpaw (right hand leading, if someone was lefthanded the left would lead) since Lee believed that it's wiser to hit your opponent with your strongest weapons immediately. To improve mobility (which is essential when in combat with a more powerful adversary), the left heel is raised. The JKD rhythm can be best described as "broken", as it does not move to one specific beat but presents an un-predictable tempo to confuse the opposition. Passive blocking was rejected in favour of the more efficient "trapping Hands" which permits the JKD man to strike his foe with every block.

Many of Lee's contemporaries of the time criticczed JKD saying that it was not really an art but rather a form of "streetfighting". Bruce Lee answered his critics by stating that "JKD uses all ways

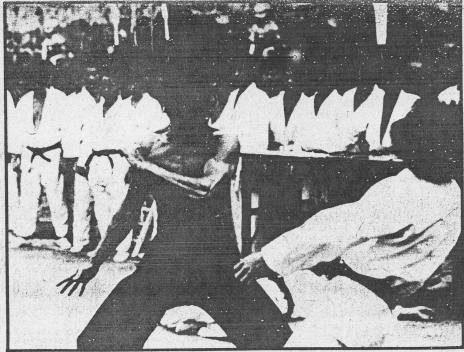


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and means to serve its end." (remember that one of Lee'S mottos was that efficiency is anything that scores) "but is not bound by any of these means, and is therefore free." The truth that Lee was trying to point out. was that "JKD possesses everything but is in itself possessed by nothing". It is ironical to note that these same critics are now praising Lee'S methods and trying to adapt them for use in full-contact Karate matches. Dan Inosanto gives a clearer insight to JKD by explaining that, "there are three states to it (JKD). The first is the primitive stage, where a man punches, kicks. bobs and weaves naturally, since he knows nothing of combat. These movements may not be scientific but they are fluid. since the man is performing them witthout thinking about them. He then progresses to the second part, or sophisitication stage, wherein he learns the different modes of punching, kicking, standing and moving. He knows the difference between right and wrong as far as techniques go, but his mind freezes for calculations before actually executing any technique. The third stage, providing a person gets to it since most people stay at the second, is when a person returns to the primitive or fluid stage but at a higher level of technical profficiency."

These three stages hold true for any vestem or style and explains why JKD is a form of liberation, or as Bruce so lucidly stated "in order to discover the truth, one must hack away at the unessentials." One of these unessentials according to Lee were fixed forms or katas, since they did nothing but impart a false sense of security to the student. In real life, confrontations are sometimes sudden and unexpected and one rarely has the option of choosing his opponent, let alone the time and place. Once the fight starts, nobody can defend himself using a fixed ppattern of moves since there is no way of knowing in advance what type of attack the opponent is going to launch. This is why JKD training advocates full-contact fighting, in order to prepare its followers for the uncertain ties of actual combat.

Lee believed that anyone who practised kata and not full-contact was similar to someone "learning to swim on dry land". Only when the person enters water will he find out if he can swim, or not.

Bruce often used the element of water to describe the adaptability of JKD, for like water JKD has no shape or form, but is ready to fit into any container. Similarly, a JKD man is ready to handle himself against any opponent, whether he is a boxer, judoist or wrestler.

This is why the program at the Institute contained aspects of many styles, but was tot bound by any of them, thereby nabling the students to adapt to any uttack and instantly retaliate.

By 1969 Lee was so involved in the ventertainment media that he had very little time to devote to teaching. He therefore closed the Institute at 628 College Street, but suggested that Inosanto pick a number of the most dedicated students and continue to hold regular training sessions at Inosanto's home. It is important to note that the bulk of instruction had been shifted to Inosanto way before the close of the Institute, since Lee had so many commitments that he could only drop by the school once or twice a week.

Lee was by now constantly commuting between Hollywood and Hong Kong, but he kept in close touch with Inosanto and his students and visited their workout every chance he had. During these visits he would check each student's progress, commenting on areas that still needed more work.

With Lee's sudden death in July 1973, the future of JKD was passed on to Dan Inosanto. After a year of deep soulsearching Inosanto decided to open up his own school in Torrance, California. The name of Inosanto's school bears no reference to either JKD or Bruce Lee for it is called The Filipino Kali Academy. Although JKD is indeed taught, the main emephasis of the Academy is the promotion of Kali, Escrima, Sikaran and Arnis which are all indigenous Filipino arts. Although Inosanto could have realized a substancial financial profit if his school openly advertised JKD training, he chose not to do so for he felt a sincere desire to propagate his own cultural arts. KALI and JKD both are taught as advanced courses once the student has reached a certain level, for they both share common similarities. In both arts the lead hand and foot are emphasized, as well as

broken rhythm and evasive footwork. While JKD has "trapping hands" the same theory is called "checking" in Kali, but the end result of both terms is similar: the neutralization of an opponent's limbs.

There are nine classes in the Academy's curriculum. Four of these classes emphasize the Filipino arts, while four others deal with a modified version of Wing Chun which is tempered with the basics of JKD. The ninth class is the main JKD class, and it is held twice a week. In addition to their JKD training, all the members of this class are taught the stick-fighting arts of the Philippines, because one complementes the other very nicely.

A basic JKD class starts with ropeskipping and some stretching exercises, which are followed by training on the different apparatus (heavy bag, speed bag, air shield, focus gloves, etc.) with a partner. The class then engages in full-contact sparring, which is of prime importance in JKD training. Inosanto sometimes pairs one person against two or more opponents so that they can learn to



Photo from 'Enter the Dragon', Credit: Keystone Press Ltd.

respond to thistype of situation effectively. Sparring is followed by "trapping hands" techniques, and then the class proceeds into the grappling stage. Grappling is term that covers the joint locking, throwing, and takedowns of close range fighting. The last segment of the class is learning how to employ the dif-

"Lee often used the element of water to describe the adaptability of JKD, for like water JKD has no shape or form, but is ready to fit into any container."

ferent weapons of the Filipino arts.

Inosanto believes that Kali will be the next art "to come out of the woodwork, so to speak." It is his feeling that Kali is the onlqiart that makes good combative usage of weapons in a realistic way.

"Unfortunately," he explains, "all the so-called 'weapon men' in the U.S. ever do is perform elaborate katas and split watermelons: that's not combatively usisng the weapon, as far as I'm concerned."

Inosanto feels just as' strongly about other topics, among them: full-contact competitions. "Most of today's competitors are looking into boxing more and more. The next stage that they have to go through is how to join or combine the kicking into it. because if they don't. they'll be all hands, and that is a partiality. Then they'll discover that boxing can be offset by grappling, and that grappling can be offset by trapping hands, and then they'll see that trapping can be overcome by boxing. etc. You see none of these techniques is superior to another, it's understanding when to put each into play that will make you superior to the guy that is partial to only one way of fighting."

Having seen more of Bruce Lee's methods than anyone else, Inosanto feels very irked when he hears of individuals who claim to have taught Lee certain techniques. "For example," he says, "there is one instructor in this area (L.A.) who stated that he taught Bruce all his high kicks. That's ridiculous, because the way Bruce kicked and the way he taught us to kick his own way, and it didn't follow any particular line."

"Or this other prominent instructor," he continues, "from Pennsylvania who says he taught Bruce about the nunchakus. That's really interesting, because when I showd Bruce The 'chakus back in '64 he was alreadyd familiar with them." Inosanto's views on teaching have been greatly influenced by his late instructor and this comes across when he speaks about martial arts in general.

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"All a sayle-system, method or whatever you want to call it does, is provide an individual with a means of expressing himself. As Bruce said, 'the individual is more important than any establishmed system', therefore it is possible for any individual to make a system superior providing he is creative. Since the only authority behind what is functional is the individual himself, he should never be bound by any method or technique but should strive to liberate himself from any boundaries found within any style. Too many people are looking for "secret moves". if there are any secrets within the . if there are any secrets within the arts, they are timing rhythm and angling. All a system or teacher can do is point out these truths, which are within each person for you see. martial arts are a journey within oneself, and the journey is different for each individual."

"Bruce Lee", continues Inosanto, "helped me find the truth, and now I'm striving to do the same for the younger set in this organization, for it is they who are the future of JKD."

The Academy already boasts of a boxing team and will shortly have a wrestling and f encing team that will be entering competitions in the near fluture. When queried if his students were about to enter full-contact karate competitions, Inosanto replied "When the rules of contact karate get better we'll enter that too. But right now, my students and I would prefer to watch a basketball game rather than a contact karate match due to finesse of the basketball players. But the karateka will eventually acquire the skills and finesse for there has to be a progression in all things."

All the members of the JKD class spar at every opportunity, and the results of some of these matches are quite amazing. According to Inosanto there are a few karate black belts who are part of the JKD classes, and they are sometimes matched against a newcomer who has only had three or four months experience at the Academy.

"Generally" emphasaizes Inosanto, "the newcomer gives majority of these black belts a hard time and sometimes even bbeats them. Since there are no belts worn here, the newcomer doesn't care if his opponent is a third or fourth degree black belt, nor are they in awe of his degree. They just go in and do their thing: full contact. The reason that the black belts have a hard time coping with this situation, is that their past training has not prepared them for someone coming at them in this way, and as soon as they get hit their training is completely erased and they're fighting for real."

It was an incident like this that eventually persuaded Inosanto to get out of tournament fighting and into full contact... "It was a little after I had met Bruce for the first time" remembers Inosanto. "and I had just come back from a tourney in Utah. where I had taken second place in black belt division. I was really feeling good. because I was thinking the more tournaments I won the more experience I'd have. Then Bruce and I had an informal match, where I was wearing gloves and was allowed to attack Bruce with both hands and feet, while he was limited to conly punching me with his left hand. Although he wasn't even going full speed, he literally destroyed me and he was calling his shsots on top of it all! Afterwards he explained that jtournament fighting was a long range type of affair and when the contestants got close enough to each other. the ref's usually broke it up. That minade me realize way back then that contact is a whole new ball-game, and only now is the karate world experiencing this."

Although there are no visible references on the outside of the academy to Bruce Lee. on the inside it's a different matter. His philosophies sprevail h and his pictures adorn the walls, and at the end of each class everyone bows in front of a picture of Bruce as a sign of respect.

It is quite evident that his spsirit lies on in this school and that the style that he introduced to Dan Inosanto and the rest of his disciples a decade ago continues to grow and flourish.

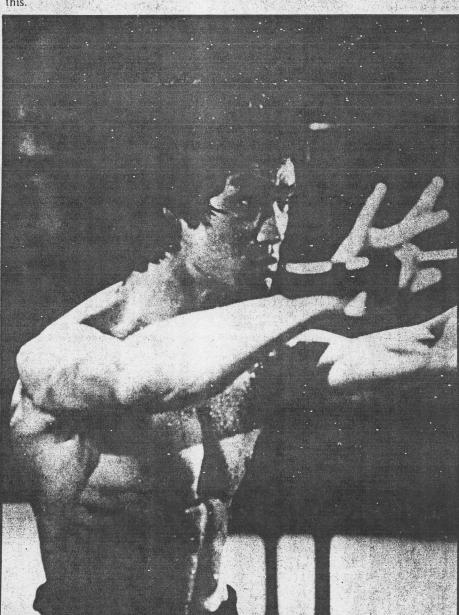
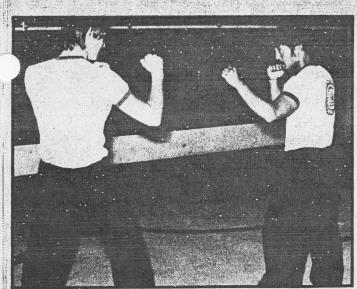


Photo from 'Enter the Dragon'. Credit: Keystone Press Ltd.

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Inosanto (right) and Nudds facing off. Nudds is in the typical JKD stance: strongest hand out.



Inosanto attempts a left jab which Nudds deflects and counters by poking Inosanto in the eyes.



Inosanto tries left uppercut which Nudds deflects with his right hand.



Jeet Kune Do Technique 1

As Inosanto retaliates with right cross, Nudds continues with a palm heel smash.



Nudds traps inosanto's hand with his left hand anu backfists him to the face.



Inosanto moves back out of range while Nudds continues attack with a low roundhouse kick.



Nudds fakes a low blow to Inosanto's ribs: blocked.



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Stepping down, Nudds attempts a right backfist which inosanto counters with his right forearm.



Taking advantage of Inosanto's position, Nudds traps his hand and simultaneously throws a backfist to his face.



Inosanto pushes away backfist with his left hand.



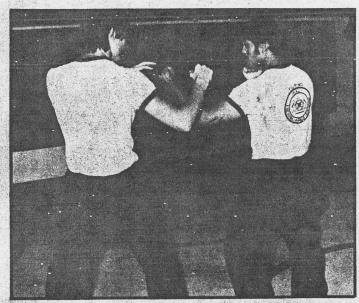
Again taking advantage of opponent's positioning, Nudds traps both of Inosanto's hands and continues his back fist motion.



Confrontation: Nudds [left] takes his strong side forward stance.



Nudds opens up with a right jab which inosanto starts to deflect.



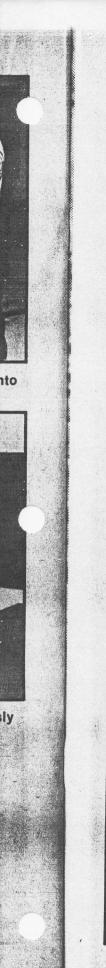
Nudds withdraws his hand while inosanto still has his blocking hand in place.



Nudds traps inosanto's hand simultaneously completing his blow.

Note: This technique is typical of JKD:

always taking advantage of your opponent's movements.





Jeet Kune Do Technique 3

Note: Inosanto made it plain that he would not let an opponent get him into such a position but that if he was caught in such a way this is what he would do.

Combination choke and armlock

Stepping back and using the momentum of his body, Inosanto forcefully hits him in lower ribs.

Inosanto grasps Nudds' elbow and pulls down to alleviate the pressure on his throat; he lifts his leg.

Inosanto continues attack with a blow to the groin.

Bending down slightly, Inosanto drives his heel into the arch of Nudds' foot.

Inosanto pushes Nudds with his shoulder to get away from him.



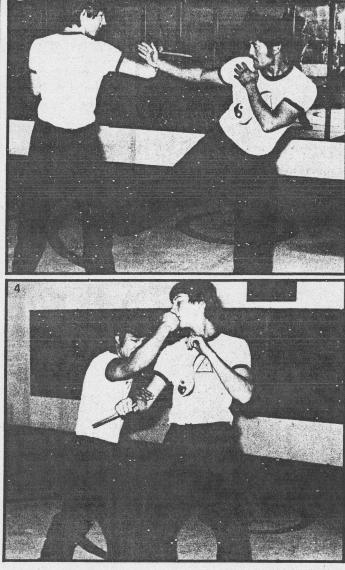


JKD Defense vs Knife









Note: The knife attack must be unexpected in order for Inosanto to fight against it: had he seen the knife he would have run from the attack.

PHOTO 1 While Nudds slashes at Inosanto's face, he moves back and kicks him to the knee.

PHOTO 2 Inosanto then deflects the knife hand

PHOTO 3 Stepping down from the kick, Inosanto traps Nudds' hand and prepares for a punch.

PHOTO 4 Inosanto drives his fist into Nudds' face.

PHOTO 5 Inosanto finishes the technique by smashing his hand down on Nudds' wrist - convincing him to drop the knife.

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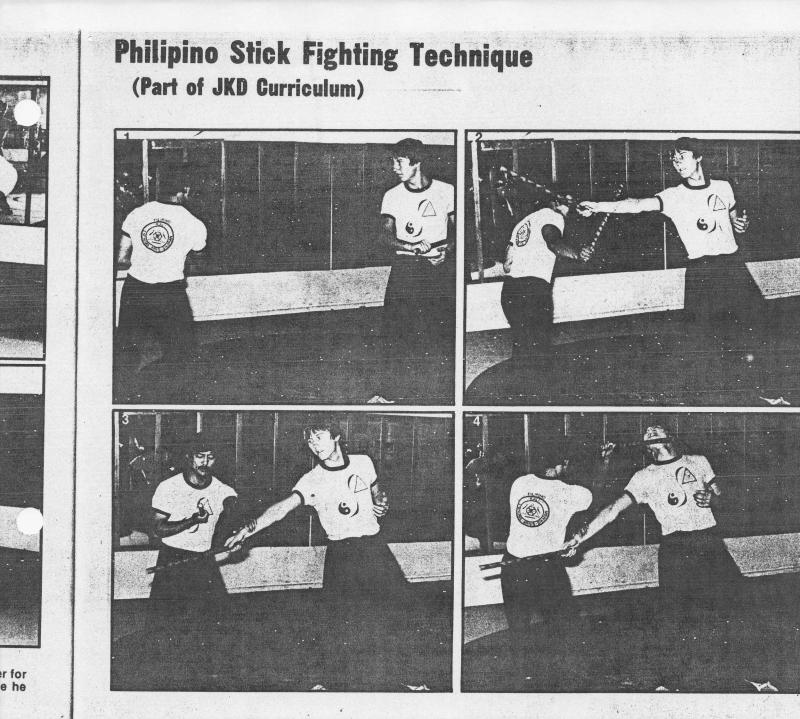


PHOTO 1 Confrontation PHOTO 3 Inosanto then checks Nudds' hand

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PHOTO 2 Nudds attempts to hit Inosanto in the head, but Inosanto steps away and hits Nudds' elbow.

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PHOTO 4 Still holding Nudds' arm, Inosanto twists his body, whipping the stick into Nudds' throat.

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