

Filipino Martial Arts

Digest

Mini Issue
2009



2009 FMA Gathering
Blays - Halla Battle Academy
February 21-22, 2009
Anaheim CA.



Dexter Labonog - Bahala Na Multi-Style
John Brown - Bahad Zu'bu
Blaise Loong - Patayin Estilo Eskrima



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Steven K. Dowd

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John Brown Jr.
Dexter Labonog

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this digest are those of the authors or instructors being interviewed and are not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

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

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From the Publishers Desk

Kumusta

Here you have 3 top instructors in their field of Filipino martial arts Punong Guro Blaise Loong with Patayin Estilo Eskrima, Maestro Dexter Labonog with Bahala Na Escrima and Guro John Brown with Kalis Ilustrisimo. And to add you have an issue that just does not tell you about an event, but tells how it all came together.

This was an event that if you wanted training, knowledge, and sweat you went to the right place. And just to top it off friendship and camaraderie was the attitude of the overall 2 day seminar.

The knowledge that these instructors brought to the seminar was from Leo Giron, Angel Cabales, Dentoy Revillar, Gilbert Tenio, Antonio Ilustrisimo, Yuli Romo, Gar Sulite, Jose Caballero, and Johnny Lacoste. And that is a combination of skill and knowledge that any practitioners should want in their arsenal.

If these Practitioners are in your area for a seminar it is recommend to attend and if all three Instructors come together again it would be most benefiting for any practitioner to attend. Let's hope this happens in the near future.

Please enjoy this Mini Issue as the FMA Digest is sure that you will be caught up in the spirit in which it was presented.

Maraming Salamat Po



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2009 FMA Gathering

February 21 - 22, 2009

Anaheim CA.

Hosted By: Blays-Halla Battle Academy

By Blaise Loong

It all started with a phone call...one chilly, winter's night.

I decided to drop my good friend and war brother - Maestro Dexter Labonog - a line.

Just to say, "Hi".

We'd both been extremely busy lately, working hard, providing for our families. Not to mention training and teaching warcraft full-time as well. Life was hectic. And it was high time that we got together and just hung out for some well-deserved R&R.

An hour later, Dex (and most of the Bahala Na crew) were coming down to Blays-Halla for a visit. At least that was the plan.

It would be an exchange of training, skills and knowledge amongst as many Filipino martial arts experts as we could gather. Maestro Dex and my good buddy Chief Guro June Gotico, would be teaching Original Giron Escrima, along with lessons from Serrada Escrima (Maestro Dentoy Revillar method) and the Decuerdas system of Filipino martial art as taught by Grandmaster Gilbert Tenio.

John Brown, Jr. would be sharing some of the teachings of the famed and highly respected Tatang Ilustrisimo. Amongst many Filipino martial artists in the RP, Tatang is revered, a proven fighter in WW2. A killer in pit duels and in self-defense, a swordsman without peer, Master Yuli Romo is his protégé. And Yuli's "best foreign student" (I was there when he said it) is John Brown, Jr..

And I would be demonstrating some of the battle tricks and fighting strategies of Patayin Estilo Eskrima.

After a few weeks of eager anticipation, the day of the gathering finally arrived. Maestro Dex and a cadre of his senior instructors / students would be showing up via caravan from Northern Cali. And John (aka "JB") would be flying into the OC from his Hall over in Utah. My first stop of the day was the airport. The pick-up went easy and the omens looked auspicious. An adult red-tailed hawk, perched high upon a light pole, cocked its head in acknowledgment and then took wing and glided over us as we yelled "what's up?!" to it. Yep, it was gonna be a good weekend.

A quick call to Maestro Dex confirmed that he and his troops had indeed made it down safe. They were all settled into their hotel rooms and had just ventured out to a nearby pizza joint for some chow and a few brews. JB and I were welcomed heartily with



Maestro Dexter Labonog and
Punong Guro Blaise Loong



Master Yuli Romo

hugs and handshakes... along with a cold mug and a couple of slices. It was sure great seeing my dear friends again.

An added treat was that Master Michael Giron and his brother Tommy, along with a couple of Master Mike's senior students, were down as well. Grandmaster Leo would be very proud of his sons.



Master Michael Giron (Everlast shirt) and group

After the pizza pit stop, it was off to Blays-Halla. There, we spent the next few hours merely catching up and doing a little light training. We all had to be up pretty early for the workshop the next day, so the party ended sooner than later... or did it? JB and I went back to my home and continued to train 'til about 3 in the morning. As for what everybody else did that evening... "I know nothing!"

A couple hours later we were up and readying my gym for all our many visitors. The workshop was slotted to start at 10am and my Hall was full by 9. Guests from all over the USA, multiple Filipino martial arts styles and systems represented. Old acquaintances were renewed, whilst at the same moment, fresh bonds were being forged. I remember thinking to myself as I watched the many Masters hanging out, "This is what it's all about" Relationships. The sharing of hard-won warcraft knowledge, the honoring of our instructors, the continuation of a rich Filipino martial art heritage, we were all indeed certainly blessed.



Maestro Dex and Chief Guro June started things off promptly at 10... no “Filipino time” with us. Besides, everybody was already ‘chompin’ at the bit to git goin’. Larga Mano was the lesson of the day, the bread and butter of Filipino blade and stick fighting. Maestro Dex gave a detailed contextual background for his techniques and then he and Chief Guro June demonstrated the maneuvers, absolute precision. The two of them moved like a well-oiled death machine. Their bolo cuts and intercepts were crisp and fast. Every aspect of each teaching was covered - footwork, body mechanics, striking accuracy, timing, distance - everything.



I had the privilege of hanging out with Grandmaster Leo Giron over the years. I got to bunk in his basement and we spent many quality hours simply talking about Filipino warcraft and culture. He taught me a LOT. I also got to observe and / or participate in many of his class sessions. Watching Dex and June teach and demo the Original Giron system made my hair stand on-end. It was if I’d stepped through a time

portal, back to my days up in Stockton in Grandmaster's basement. Everything was exactly as Grandmaster Leo had taught. I saw his moves and heard his words. But it was now Maestro Dex and Chief Guro June who were moving and speaking. I remembered what it felt like when Leo was alive.

Master Mike Giron was truly gracious and parceled out some of the unique insights and knowledge that he has of his dad's fighting techniques to all of the workshop participants. He was kind enough to go around and help each and every student who needed clarification or encouragement, same with Tommy Giron. He teamed up with a couple of my students and helped explain to them each lesson in extra detail. Ragnar and Herakles both asked to give a special shout out to Tom. So from them to you... "Thanks Tommy G!"

Grandmaster Leo Giron was a highly decorated combat veteran. In WW2 he was a commando who launched out of submarines and then conducted recon patrols and raids deep behind enemy lines. He also used his bolo in close quarters combat against many a Japanese invader; with many of these battles occurring in the black of night in treacherous jungle vs. multiple opponents. It was from these real-world combat experiences that the Giron system was distilled.

And now it was time to apply the drills. Functionalize the concept. Make it work. "Prove it" as Master Yuli always says. Sparring - full contact - minimal armor - light weapons.

Maestro Dex and Chief Guro June are well-known Escrima Champions. They (and their students) have either won, or placed in the top 3, in numerous prestigious Filipino martial arts tournaments nationwide. These guys are good. The weapons and armor came out and the fights were on. Specific targets and scenarios were the format. There is much to learn in Filipino blade / stick fighting. And breaking down the tools and combat situations helps to perfect the total, overall understanding of single opponent dueling or the chaos of melee. In any case, the spars went on 'til lunch, with intention. Lessons: real-world speed and impact. Nothing sugar coated. It's not part of the Giron system.

Lunch was quick.



Philippines, studying Bahad Zu' Bu specifically, amongst other Filipino martial arts styles.



Next up, Maestro John "Jotunn" Brown, Jr. JB is a good friend of mine, and a long-time pupil and training partner. And lately, my mentor in Bahad Zu' Bu Eskrima... the system of Filipino warcraft taught by the illustrious "Dakila" Yuli Romo. I've got to train one-on-one with Master Yuli, but it's JB who really breaks things down for me. He has had many years experience living and training in the

JB's lesson was on the "baiting" concept, used with great success in fights by both Tatang Ilustrisimo and Master Yuli. Every movement must be in "true fighting range" and reactions are instant and are always "situational". Battle flows from long range to close quarters in the blink of an eye. And one must be ready, aware and prepared to deal with whatever may come. Heart-beats separate a successful attack from an effective counter.



JB went over a nicely progressive regimen of attacks and defenses in some of the best laban laro (combat drills) that I've ever learned. Programming your opponent perfected. The enganyo technique expressed in simple, direct, combat application. And in real-world, live-blade struggles, being a few steps ahead of your enemy is the key to survival.

Abierta / Serrada touch and no-touch, Praktion to counter. All of these concepts were taught and expressed in vivid detail. Retreating or advancing. Trapping and / or "clearing". Graduate level stuff, a fine boon to those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

After another short break, it was my turn. I planned on going over some of the training methods that I have learned over my years of Filipino martial arts study. I have found that there are only 7 ways to practice Filipino warcraft. Every lesson that I've ever had (or had ever heard of) could be classified into at least 1 of the 7 categories.

The primary (foundational) Filipino martial arts training method is "abecedario". The ABC's of the style. The basic strikes, the basic foot works, the basic counters, the essential strategies and tactics. A Master would share with me a fundamental battle trick. I would then spend all of my training time trying to perfect said battle trick. And when I (eventually) reached a certain level of competence, my teachers would simultaneously expand - and break-down - that intrinsicity. It was this aspect of abecedario training that I was hoping to impart, particulars with a lot more nitty-gritty. A way to broaden every technique the workshop guests already had in their peculiar repertoires. I had them focus on certain ranges first. Then assorted foot-works and counter-attacks, varied timings and rhythms, specific targets, it gave everybody there a chance to represent themselves utilizing their own personal expression of Filipino martial art. It was really cool, like a giant jam session of really talented musicians.

I spent the remainder of my teaching block going over the other 6 training methods. By the time I was finished, the entire workshop population had migrated outside into the back alley behind my Hall. It was a beautiful day in So. Cal... sunny and mild. Nobody wanted to stay indoors. The day finally ended, a rusty-golden sunset, time to stand down. Yeah, right! We all hung out and continued our training for just a wee bit longer. However, food and family called out. Besides, my Northern Cali brothers wanted to explore the wild world down here in the South.

The next morning we started all over again. Promptly at 10 Maestro Dex and Chief Guro June began the day's lessons with some close quarters combat. Serrada Escrima. Lock and thrust drills using espada y daga.

Lightning fast reflexes along with split-second trapping are featured in this style of Filipino warcraft. Grandmaster Leo taught me that this way of combat was known as the "kadaanan" style of sword fighting... the "old school" method, rooted in the (now) archaic ways of traditional Spanish / Italian swordsmanship, intricate, yet bonehead simple. "Complicated" in combat often leads to failure. Simple and effective is always the way to go. Thinking can get you killed. Reactions need to be second nature, instantaneous and ingrained, and most of all, efficacious. The first style of Filipino martial arts that I ever learned was called "Serrado", a similar style to "Serrada", taught by Master John Lacoste and Dan Inosanto.



Maestro Dex then proceeded to show us all how the "decadena" or "chain" concept is used, both in Serrada Escrima and in the Decuerdas system of Filipino martial arts. Every movement automatically leads into a natural, flowing attack or counter-attack, CYA (cover yer ass) at its highest level of expression. We were then treated to some intro concepts from Grandmaster Tenio's style. Concentration was on "gap closure" to "redirect and cut", a very effective way of sword fighting. I watched it work first-hand during our many full-contact sparring sessions.

After a semi-leisurely lunch, it was right back to business. I taught the "tigre lima" or "5 tigers" of ground fighting that I learned from Ferdinand de la Cruz. He is a member of the notorious de la Cruz prison gang that operates down in the southern Philippines. Every one of the "DLC" gangsters takes on the moniker "de la Cruz" regardless of his actual birth name or tribal bloodline. The 5 tigers is a simple series of knifing techniques. Combat proven moves that promote both first-strike strategies and

battle ready reactions no matter what the circumstance. Many Filipinos sit or kneel on the ground, daily. And the 5 tigers stem from these standard life habits.

Lastly, I gave some lessons in Silat Sabungin, the Filipino-Malay art of short-knife and empty-hand fighting. I expounded on the lawi ayam (kerambit) and taught several entries and take downs.

JB took over next and continued his elucidation of the enganyo / “baiting” techniques perfected by Tatang Ilustrisimo and Master Yuli. He reviewed the previous day’s discourse and then expanded upon it greatly. From point blank range to “de campo” (long range), we worked entries and combat flows. Feinting and enticing. Luring the opponent into the death



trap and then keeping him in the kill zone ‘til he’s neutralized. Bahad Zu’Bu is all about cutlery, and in a fight to the end with edged weapons, programming the bad guy is imperative.

“Live blade” training has always been a part of my personal Filipino martial arts curriculum. My teachers all taught me (at some point) with real steel, “Sharp”. I drill with the arms that I carry in the real world. EVERY Filipino martial artist agrees that his or her particular “art” is “blade oriented”. The vast majority practice with some sort of training sword or knife. And that’s as it should be. However, mastery of a keen sword or dagger is the ultimate goal of any Filipino martial arts style, system or method. Self-defense or war always means a “neutralized” antagonist. Every warrior culture humanity; has ever produced trained with actual weapons, real clubs, sharp swords and spears, fully functional armor and war-arrows. Modern soldiers and police train live-fire all the time. Simunitions are a great teaching tool, but nothing like the sound and feel and “intent” of a real bullet.

Several guests asked about my thoughts on practicing with sharp knives and swords. So I showed them exactly how I train myself and my students. First, I demo’d some European swordsmanship (Spanish espada y daga) using rapier and main gauche with my friend “pirate” Ric (a master fencer himself). I tried to establish a correlation between Western Escrima and Filipino Eskrima. Both words can be translated as “fencing”. Next, we pulled out our razor sharp bolos and trench-sabers...weapons designed specifically for war. I proceeded to display how we practice with such tools. JB was kind enough to take up a blade and work with me. (There’s a lot of video footage.)

We completed the day with everybody training together in whatever aspect of Filipino martial arts they so desired. Some wanted to continue going over all the many new lessons that they had just downloaded. Others wanted to spar. And a few simply had a good time practicing their favorite moves and flows. The appointed time for the Bahala Na crew to begin their long trek back North came and went. We were all having way too much fun. Eventually, (unfortunately) reality set in and we all had to say our farewells.

Overall, the workshop was a great success. The lessons and legacies of many a great Filipino warrior were preserved, shared and propagated; Leo Giron, Angel Cabales, Dentoy Revillar, Gilbert Tenio, Antonio Ilustrisimo, Yuli Romo, Gar Sulite, Jose Caballero, and Johnny Lacoste. All are honored through the resolute efforts of dedicated students who love the arts and who seek brotherhood and friendship amongst all Filipino martial artists worldwide.



A Word from John Brown, Jr.:

A gathering of old friends and a meeting of new, brought together by one common interest, Filipino Martial Arts, ESKRIMA!

The event was held in Anaheim, Ca. at the Infamous Blays-Halla Battle Academy, hosted by Chief Instructor Blaise Loong.

Somehow I got stuck doing Registration for the event, but it turned out to be a great chance to network with other practitioners. My thanks to all for the joint effort and to everyone who supported and attended the event!

Thanks to my Sports Chiropractor and student Dave Bailey for getting me mobile for this event after an injury.

Thanks to all the instructors and styles who participated!

Let's make it an annual event!

Couldn't have done it without you guys!

Special hanks to June Gotico, Dexter Labanog, and Mike Giron.

A word from Maestro Dexter Labonog:

Overall consensus is very informative for the new students to Filipino martial arts, very enlightening for the experienced Filipino martial artist and very comforting to see how we share some similar traits to combat effectiveness.

There were no words of dominating styles, techniques or methods but only the display of technical reactions to situational attacks and the methods of choice to respond. This helps understand the perspective of another teaching method and concept.

We were happy to share the Larga Mano material that we learned directly from Grandmaster Leo Giron. There are many other methods and concepts that Leo taught us but his strength of core is the Largamano and the blade is unforgiving, it will cut deep. So we train for the truth so that the truth will be natural at the moment of need.

Comments on the Event:

"The Gathering held in Anaheim, CA was very informative and a lot of fun. It's always a treat to see other styles and or systems and see again that the things that makes us different are far fewer than the things that makes us the same."

Francis Thomas B. Serrano

Jr. Instructor

Visayan Legacy Association



FMASCHOOL.com

Maestro/Guro Dexter Labonog

Guro Dexter Labonog was born and raised in Stockton California, a son of Philippine Visayan immigrants.



Philippine martial arts experience:

- 1978 Trained directly under Grandmaster Leo Giron over 20 years. The most senior student and instructor of the Stockton Bahala Na Escrima Club. No other student, instructor or individual has more direct one on one training, attendance or experience(NONE)
- 1982 Also trained extensively under Master Dentoy Revillar for ten years in the blended system of Serrada, Largamano and Decuerdas also called SLD.

A certified and authorized instructor, Guro Dexter actively teaches the original curriculum learned directly from Grandmaster Giron. Guro Dexter was also given discretionary authority to teach the concepts and basics of the SLD system in Sacramento from Master Den Revillar.

Guro Dexter has participated successfully in many of the various styles of tournaments and was Grand Champion in a few. He strongly advocates support for Eskrima tournament competition because of valuable lessons a student will learn. He says, "You can still go home after a tournament and lick your wounds and think about the lessons learned, but you may not be as lucky in a real life situation". Guro Dexter has helped produce many successful tournament fighters for the Bahala Na Eskrima clubs and continues to participate as a resource in tournament promotions such as the Solo Baston tournament of Hawaii.

Guro Dexter primarily favors bladed Philippine weapons over sticks or blunt edge weapons and Espada Y Daga or sword and dagger are his favorite training exercise. His teaching curriculum follows traditional concepts and principles learned primarily from Grandmaster Giron and Master Revillar. He considers himself a lifetime student, a coach and an instructor.

His favorite saying "*All martial arts have their window of opportunity in combat*"



www.bahalana.com

For details on class locations, demonstrations, group and private lessons Contact: Guro/Maestro Dexter Labonog at (916) 601-5259.

Guro John Brown



John Brown was born in Huntington Beach Ca. Raised by John Brown Sr. and his mother Teri Jo. There are 7 kids in the immediate Brown family, 4 boys 3 girls; Johnny (as his family calls him) is third eldest.

His grandparents, Kay and James Thompson, were in the Air Force; his Grandmother was among the first Women Air Service Pilots (WASP). His grandparents were stationed in the Philippines at Clark Air Base, Angeles, Pampanga. His mother was born at the Clark base hospital. As it turns out, John has visited the base many times and has even driven by what's left of the old hospital.

It is interesting how things work out! I spend most of my time promoting

and practicing Filipino Martial arts and a part of my family history stems from the same areas I visit!



BAHADZUBUJB.COM
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For more training with John Brown visit:

www.bahadzubujb.com or www.mabisamartialarts.com
or call (801) 550-8375

Projects currently in the works:

Currently I have many projects keeping me busy. Bone Head Productions (boneheadllc.com) home of Blaise Loong's Yashai Warcraft Dvd's has 3 new DVD titles on the editing floor. Bilangguan Estilo - A simple but brutal Filipino knifing system developed and proven effective in prisons worldwide.



www.boneheadllc.com

Knifing system! I know that doesn't sound good, but put it in context. How often do you hear of 2 guys calling each other out for a fair knife fight? There are a lot more "knifings" than "knife fights" and if I know the targets and methods then it just helps me to be able to better defend it. Or in a self-defense scenario where your life is on the line or your loved ones, you better be able to pull the trigger or finish with that technique which you have already practiced. It is a great system, easy to learn, basic attacks and defenses.

The next titles that are near completion will be sold as a set, Jun Fan strikes and Jun Fan Wing Chun. These will be a must have for all the JKD guys. The awesome basics demoed in these DVDs will blast you ahead of the competition and in a fashion that the viewer can easily follow along with and not be confused (like learning a drill from video).

Jun Fan Strikes goes over the basic hits and kicks from the Jun Fan system. Jun Fan Wing Chun shows the proper way to practice and perfect your Wing Chun gung-fu, great for beginners or the most advanced practitioners.

Keep checking boneheadllc.com and our discussion forum at celticsword.com to get your copy of these must have DVDs to go along with the rest of your Blaise Loong collection!

I am currently training and teaching in Riverton Utah. I keep a busy schedule from all my work outs to personal training, mixed martial arts training, and my favorite, Eskrima training!

For the personal training I incorporate core, strength, stability, and stamina in the work outs. A lot of times I will cross train boxing conditioning with weight training to fire those fast twitch muscles.

One of my friends (and student) Eddie Pelczynski currently a professional Throw down MMA fighter out of Orem Utah, trains with me regularly. I am his stand-up striking coach as well as his strength and conditioning coach His workouts include basic boxing conditioning, Jun Fan kickboxing drills, and basic Filipino martial arts entries, not to mention some grueling strength training and conditioning. I use many of the training methods that we incorporate with my pro Filipino boxers from Sanchez Boxing Gym in Angeles Phil. (sanchezboxing.com).



Not Eddie's blood



Eddie Pelczynski

the night! His latest fight (2-20-09) was at the Energy Solution center salt lake. He fought against a decorated BJJ black belt Champion Fabio Sarreo. It was a bloody mess. Eddie opened him up in the first round and was able to defend against the take-down with strikes and won a decisive 3 round victory!

My latest thing I have been working on is T-shirt line to help promote Eskrima, ESKRIMA T's. All Eskrima styles are invited to put their logos on the Eskrima t-shirts to help popularize the term here in the states! Eskrimats.com coming soon!

Eddie's record is 9w 3l, he loves the competition; he's only been fighting a year and already has 12 fights. His last 2 fights showed his progress and what we need to work on. (9-26-08 Eddie fought Craig Ross from Jeremy Horn's camp; referee stopped it from strikes towards the end of the first round. Eddie got fight of



ESKRIMA T's



ESKRIMA T's

Blaise Loong

Blaise Loong has studied and practiced the Filipino warrior arts for most of his life. Blaise's Great-Grandfather, Simeon Mandac, was a celebrated guerilla leader in the "Kataas-taasan, Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan", better known in the Philippines as the "KKK". Simeon fought many a foreigner in order to gain total Filipino independence. Grandmaster Leo Giron, the highly decorated World War 2 commando who developed the Bahala Na system of Filipino martial art, knew the elder Mandac first hand. Felicisimo Mandac, Blaise's Grandfather, was a Major in the Philippine Constabulary stationed on Mindanao. Both Mandacs were well-known throughout the Ilocano tribal regions as experienced eskrimadors. For Blaise, the Filipino warrior arts are more than just cultural treasures. Eskrima runs in his blood.



Dan Inosanto and
Blaise Loong

Although Blaise officially started his martial arts education in 1971, he didn't get serious about his combat training until eight years later. In 1979, Blaise was personally invited by Dan Inosanto to become a member of Mr. Inosanto's famous Filipino Kali Academy in Torrance, California. For the next 13 years straight, Blaise studied the essential basics of the LaCoste-Inosanto system of Filipino warcraft in earnest. Guro Lucky LucayLucay, and Lucky's son - Guro Ted LucayLucay - were Blaise's official Academy sponsors.

Blaise Loong has been a ranked instructor in both the Filipino martial arts and the Jun Fan martial arts under Mr. Inosanto since 1984.

In 1985, Blaise set out on the first of several research trips to the Philippines. Having initially travelled to the Islands as a toddler in 1965 (and throughout the 1970's) to visit family, Blaise now wanted to make the long journey in order to further study the Filipino warrior arts. Blaise's first couple of training endeavors were spent in Cebu and the Visayas. He would visit the many chicken fighting arenas, do a little gambling, and wind up asking the locals as to where he might find an eskrima teacher. According to Blaise, he often times wound up hitting "a dead end". But, every once in a while, he would stumble onto an experienced eskrimador who was willing to share maybe 1 or 2 closely guarded battle tricks with the eager student from America.

In the early 1990's, Blaise spent many a week deep in the Malaysian and Indonesian jungles studying silat under the watchful eyes of several Mahagurus. However, on his return voyages back to the States, Blaise always made sure that he stopped off in the Philippines. It was during a stay in Zamboanga City on the Southern island of Mindanao that Blaise met a migrant Chavacano Eskrimador by the name of Hurtado Arpa. "Manong Hurt", as Blaise fondly calls him, was a World War 2 combat guerilla veteran whose particular expertise was with a razor sharp bolo (Filipino short

sword). Manong Arpa taught Blaise the "sun-moon-wind" method of bolo fighting that he and his warband used successfully against both the Japanese invaders and the local gangs of Filipino "pulajans" (bandits).



Jungle patrol...hanging out in the mountains of Luzon, October, 2008

On his first visit to Jolo island, Blaise took the ferry from Zamboanga City on Mindanao to the town of Tandu Bato. From there, on the advice of Blaise's Tausug friend Saladin bin Abdullah Ismail, the lone eskrima student set out to find an elder Tausug historian - reported to be living in Sang city. Blaise never did find the Tausug historian, but he did meet the oddest Filipino martial arts teacher he's had so far. Ferdinand de la Cruz was born a Samal - a serf class Moro tribe. He, and many other "secularized" muslims, adopted Spanish Christian names and led sometimes shady lives. Samals are a water people, living either in ocean villages of stilt huts or on their crusty, leaky banca boats in smelly boat ghettos like those in Hong Kong harbor. According to Blaise, Ferdinand was a "gambler, fisherman and smuggler". It was often rumored by the locals that the old man was a gang boss in the infamous de la Cruz prison

gang. Every member of this gang took the surname de la Cruz as his identifying mark. Blaise worked on Ferdinand's boat for a couple of weeks - in return, the old man showed Blaise what he called "Bilangguan Estilo", the knifing method used by the de la Cruz gang. When asked directly about his supposed criminal affiliations, Ferdinand always smirked and whispered through beetlenut-stained teeth, "Maybe, maybe not". Ferdinand also showed his eager trainee some "taritari" (short knife fighting) and the Samal's unique brand of suntukin (boxing) that utilizes double ice picks. Manong de la Cruz also paid Blaise in pearls.

Another Filipino elder to leave his mark on Blaise Loong was the late Grandmaster Gar Sulite. Blaise had the honor of being a private student of Grandmaster Sulite from January 1991 until the Grandmaster's untimely death in the Philippines in 1997. Grandmaster Sulite spent many hours training Blaise in the finer points of sword dueling and un-armored stick fighting - traditional "old school" Filipino warcraft.

Grandmaster Gar's personal blend of several Filipino warrior arts, Lameco Eskrima, is well-known throughout the world today for its "completeness" as a modern Filipino martial art and for its proven combat effectiveness.

Blaise has also had the opportunity to train one-on-one with the legendary Filipino martial arts Masters Yuli Romo and Tony Diego.



www.blayshalla.com



Blaise Loong, Master Yuli Romo, John Brown

Upcoming events

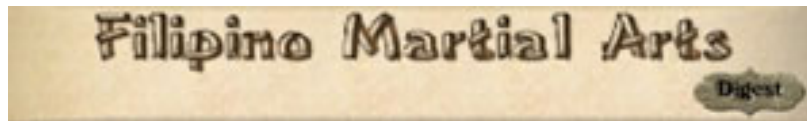
- **April 4, 2009** - Bahala Na Muti-Style Meeting
- **April 4-5, 2009** Bahala Na Multi-Style Workshop
- **May 9, 2009** Annual BBQ picnic and workshop gathering at Wilton, CA.
- **June 6, 2009** Vallejo Pista Sa Nasyon Tournament Festival
- **June 27, 2009** Eskrima Coalition Tournament Stockton, CA.



Maestro/Guro Dexter Labonog - Bahala Na Multi-Style
Guro John Brown Jr. - Bahad Zu' Bu
Punong Guro Blaise Loong - Patayin Estilo Eskrima



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