

# FMA

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## *The Unknown and Buried Roots of Modern Arnis*

**Truth?**

**Fact?**

**or Fiction?**



*Maxwell "Max" J. Maun*

**Interview with Romy “Bebing” Lisondra**

FMA Digest Vol No4 - 2007

**The Unknown and Buried Roots of Modern Arnis**

Rapid Journal Volume 13 Number 1 \* Book 47 - 2008

While the FMA Informative was in the Philippines 2015, visiting Bacolod, the representative was introduced to Mr. Maxwell “Max” J. Maun. Mr. Maun said “I have a story for you that you should know.” The FMA Informative representative said ok let’s hear it.

Mr. Maun stated: “I had no intention in adding to any chaos of Modern Arnis, however, I am compelled to have this story told as a response to the piece “Interview with Romy Lisondra” by Datu Dieter Knuttel of Germany that was printed in the FMA Digest Vol.4 No.4 2007.”

This story which Mr. Maun tells was printed in the Rapid Journal Volume 13 Number 1 \* Book 47 – 2008. Just a few months after the FMA Digest issue came out.

The FMA Informative has in this issue put the FMA Digest article and following put was was told the FMA Informative representative while visiting Bacolod and is also on the Visayan Filipino Martial Arts blog – ( [visayanfilipinomartialarts.blogspot.com](http://visayanfilipinomartialarts.blogspot.com) ).

So you the reader, can make your own judgement in believing or not believing what is in this issue. So keep an open mind!

**Maxwell “Max” J. Maun**

Is formerly the Negros Occidental Commissioner for Arnis Philippines, Inc. and is the Founder/Chief Instructor of the Bacolod Aikido Enthusiasts (BAE). The Bacolod martial arts community recognizes him as a Master of Herada Pigada Arnis. He has studied Aikido, Arnis, Judo/Jujitsu, and Karate.

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## Interview with Romy “Bebing” Lisondra

By Dieter Knuettel



This article was in the FMAdigest quarterly issue Vol4 No4, 2007. An interview with Master Bebing Lisondra done by Grandmaster/Datu Dieter Knuettel while he was visiting the Philippines.

Master Lisondra was born 1946. He was a very early student and later instructor under Professor Remy Presas. Master Bebing Lisondra and his brother Rudolfo “Rudy” Lisondra received Black Belt in Modern Arnis in December 11, 1964 at San Agustin University, in Iloilo. They were the first Arnisadors ever, who received their black belt from Professor Remy Presas. Master Lisondra received Lakan Apat, 4th Dan from the Professor in 1970.

His brother, was the 1st to partner Grandmaster Remy sparring with the live Machete/Bolo at University of San Agustin Gym at Iloilo City December 1964.

Master Bibing Lisondra was the first Martial Arts teacher of Senior Master Samuel “Bambit” Dulay. To do this interview, I visited him in his house on the evening of the 23rd of July 2006 together with Grandmaster Rene Tongson, Grandmaster Cristino Vasquez, Senior Master Bambit Dulay and several others who helped during the interview, like his son, who did some of the translation, when Master Lisondra said something in Ilonggo that I could not understand. But mainly the interview was held in English. Due to a grey star his is blind and soon to be operated on both eyes, if he has the funds.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *When did you start to learn Arnis under Grandmaster Remy?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** I started in 1958. But I started with Judo in 1954 at the age of 8 years then I shifted to Arnis in 1958. Then I became an assistant instructor under Remy Presas in 1968. In the middle of 69/70, Remy transferred to Manila. He left me alone to teach Arnis at the UNOR (University of Negros Occidental).

Then Mr. Presas hired me to go to Manila to assist again in his Arnis. This was under the name of NAKO, the “National Amateur Karate Organisation”.

And then 1971 before the martial law I am going back to Bacolod. Remy Presas stayed in Manila. Some years later I heard Professor Presas going abroad.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *When did he start to call it Modern Arnis?*

If I am not mistaken, in 1968 something like that. But I cannot remember. (A big discussion in



Dieter Knuettel during interview with Romy “Bebing” Lisondra.

Ilonggo followed between Master Lisondra and Grandmaster Rene Tongson and Grandmaster Cristino Vasquez)

**Grandmaster Rene Tongson:** He cannot recall. Because the problem before, most people was doing Arnis with Remy Presas, but would not know that it would be called Modern Arnis later.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *What techniques did you practise with him? Did you do single stick, Espada y Daga, doublestick, Sinawali what did he*

*teach by that time?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Double Sinawali, double stick. Double stick and... because the sinawali, that is the old name. But the Arnis it was called Baston and not Arnis. And the Arnis in this time the tapi-tapi was called Corridas. (Ilonggo discussion again) It was dikititan, close quarter. Defense and offense, close fighting.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there already done disarming techniques at that time or more striking or sinawali. What were the main things that were trained at that time?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Disarming? No. Before the fundamentals, and then the basics

**Dieter Knuettel:** *What did the fundamentals and basics consist of?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Fundamentals and Sinawali. Fundamental form of Arnis. Stances, blocking like that, defense and offense.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was it mainly single stick then?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Single and double.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Did you do knife as well in those days and Espada y Daga?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Doublestick, long.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How about knife defense?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Knife defense is combative style. That is part of Jujitsu. And disarming tactics of disarming the knife.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How many students did Professor Presas have, when he was teaching here at UNOR or at his club?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** At the start there were only few. If I am not mistaken it was only 10. My brother Rudy, me, Mr. Presas, 2 brothers Doromal, Rologo, Nelson Canada. More I cannot remember the others.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was that at the beginning of the University here?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** No, no, before. That was at the beginning at his club.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Later, when he left to Manila, in 1968 or 1969, did that increase? Did he have many more students then?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Plenty, plenty of students. Besides the university. These were not a member of the

students, of the university. There you only took it as physical education or as combative sports. In the gym only that is qualified as a member. In the gym almost 50 to 80 students. Except the privates.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *When did he start to use the belts as ranking system? Was this already in Bacolod or only in Manila?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** In Bacolod.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Did he use different colour belts and Lakan for the black belts?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** No, no. Here in Bacolod it was not for the Lakan. The belting was only for the colour. Color coding only. He adapts the Lakan grading only in Manila. I can remember.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So you went through the student levels and then you were instructor, or how was that?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Of course

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How long would it take at these times, when you begin to become an instructor? Would it be one or five years?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** As an assistant instructor of Professor Presas, I call him Professor I started in Arnis in 1958 and was instructor in 1968.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So you started in 68 to become an instructor and before you were only a student right?*

Again a discussion in Ilonggo and then his son explained: Before he was officially considered an instructor, he already assisted Professor Presas.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So when did you start to assist Professor Presas in the teach-*

*ing?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** That was 1962. But this was not in Arnis only, but also in Karate. Before doing Arnis I was doing Karate. Also tournaments.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there also Arnis tournaments here in Bacolod at that time?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** No, not yet.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there challenges? Were other masters coming to Remy to challenge him?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Oh yes, plenty. Doromal is one of the base instructors here in Bacolod. He was a Col. Commander at the Negros College, ROTC. Mr. Presas was only demonstrating his Arnis. But Mr. Doromal challenged first, before Mr. Presas’ demo. And then Mr. Doromal loses against Mr. Presas. So that was the first challenge at that time.

**Mr. Lisondras’ son** explained, that Mr. Doromal was considered as one of the best fighters in Bacolod at that time. So Mr. Presas beat him and that was the time, when Mr. Doromal became one for the first members of Mr. Presas club. Everybody laughed and somebody said: if you can’t beat them, join them.



Grandmaster Tongson, Master Lisondra and his son.



**Dieter Knuettel:** *What style did Mr. Doromal come from? What did he study before he learned with Professor Presas?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** I don’t know.

Everybody talking. Someone said: at that time, no numbers, no styles. It was called Wedo: We do this and we do that.

**Rene Tongson** Because before, there were no names. It was only systematized during Remy Presas’ research already. That was the time, when they called it Modern Arnis. It was already systematized; it was already numbered.

**Dieter Knuettel:** So that was when he was already in Manila, end of the 60s?

**Cristino Vasquez:** He moved in 68.



*Master Lisondra and Grandmaster Vasquez*

**Dieter Knuettel:** *You followed him to Manila. Did his teaching change from the time he taught you end of the 50s to beginning of the 70s, when you returned from Manila to Bacolod?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes, there were changes.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *What happened? What was different?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** There was many. tapi-tapi, disarming, so many. From traditional to Modern to his own style.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was it a stick-oriented art or was it a blade oriented art what he taught?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Stick and blade.

**Rene Tongson:** There was no difference between stick and blade. Anything you hold is a weapon. That is why we wanted to remove that concept especially in western area, even in Europe.

If it is a stick or a blade, it is still a weapon. Sometimes there are students who say: “What if I do this I will cut here” So I ask “what are you holding” “A stick” “Well that’s a stick. You cannot cut with a stick.” When you hold a blade it is a blade. When you hold a stick it is a stick. We have to remove this concept. If you hold a stick or a blade, it is a weapon.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *The question was did he teach also: now we do Bolo or now we do blade?*

**Rene Tongson:** We were instructed that we started to teach the blade because it was already the combat method.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was the training more oriented to stickfighting, or self-defense or more military orientated?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Stick and then combat. He was teaching the army during this time, during martial law.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was there also empty hand techniques involved, or dulo-dulo for example?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *The teaching in the 70s in Manila, did that gear more towards education compared the combative modes that he had before? Did he change the way of teaching because he was teaching students compared to teaching soldiers?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes educational. Purely educational at the Universities. The combative was exclusively at the gym.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So at university he was teaching more fundamentals and basics probably?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes

**Dieter Knuettel:** *And when he went to his dojo he was teaching more advanced techniques, more combat oriented techniques?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Combative and self-defense.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Did he tell from what teacher he got his techniques? Like from his father, his grandfather etc.*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** No, he did not say.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were his brothers involved in the teaching or in the Dojo as well, Ernesto or Roberto? Were there as well?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Ernesto was more a runner, track and field, walkathon.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there different stick used in challenge fights compared to training? Like other wood, Bahi or Kamagong, where they flat instead of round, yantoks?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Challenge fights? Kamagong. And Bahi

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Ah that’s nice and in training?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** In training, it’s only Rattan.

**Grandmaster Rene Tongson:** But in fighting Kamagong or Bahi.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Did they use round stick or flat sticks?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Round.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How long did the fights last? Was it a thing of 10 seconds or of several minutes?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** It was only

a thing of bang bang bang. Not 5 seconds.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Well with bahi or kamagong sticks I can understand that. And Remy was of course fighting left-handed.*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Left, yes.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *That was not fair*  
Laughter.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** He can fight left and right. His main was the left, but he could also fight with the right.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *But it was single stick fighting right?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Single stick.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *What were the rules of the fight? When was the fight finishes? When one was on the ground, when one runs away?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** No rules, just fight to the finish

**Dieter Knuettel:** *When did you know the fight was finished?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** When the other one surrendered. When the opponent says “I give up” then it is finished.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So physical condition was not really important, when the fight only lasts for 5 seconds.*

**Cristino Vasquez:** When Professor Remy fought an opponent with single stick who was using Espada y Daga. He disarmed the Daga and the Espada and said to his opponent: “With only a broomstick I can disarm you.” He really had fighting spirit.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes he had heart and fighting spirit.

**Rene Tongson:** When Mr. Yanson from the Bacolod, who was very well known stickfighter at that time, lost against Remy in the late 50s, he gave him all his students.

He even send his son to study under Remy. So he even surrendered his son.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Bambit (Dulay) started martial arts under me. He studied Karate, Judo and other arts, and when I left Manila back to Bacolod, I endorsed Bambit to Remy and Ernesto. He is very good in martial arts; you just have to polish his Arnis (laughter).

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Well, they did.*

**Grandmaster Rene Tongson:** That was long time ago.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Did Professor Remy teach Sinawali already in the beginning? In the 50s and 60s or when did he start wit is?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Double sinawali yes. 6 strike standard double sinawali. From the beginning.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Where did the Double sinawali come from?*

**Rene Tongson:** We don’t know. He just came out with it and teach it.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Do you remember, when the single sinawali came in?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** I cannot remember.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How long was the training in those times? Was it an hour or 1 ½?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** In those times it was almost 3 to 4 hours.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was it very few techniques with high repetition?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Just a few techniques. He would only give 3 to 4 techniques and then it would perhaps take a month, until he taught a new technique.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *How often would you train a week with him?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Daily.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Daily 3 – 4*

*hours, wow.*

**Rene Tongson:** Later, when he was not living in Bacolod any more, he gave you a technique and you had to work one month at this technique and then he might give you an new one, if he remembered to call you when he was in town. So sometimes it was 2 months before you learned a new technique. So by the time we moved to another technique, it was already very, very polished. It’s perfection. Not quantity.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *So it was quality not quantity. Were there formal examinations for a belt or would he just say now you are the next level?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** When he sees you are good he would say, “Yes you are good” No formal exams during that time.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *When you trained with him in the beginning, were the blocks done on the arm or the hand or on the sticks?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** To the sticks.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Was there grabbing the sticks of the opponent well?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes, grabbing the stick.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *That’s interesting.*

**Cristino Vasquez:** The secret of Modern Arnis is grabbing.

**Rene Tongson:** When he made contact, you could not move any more. When he grabbed you, you could not go away. He had control. So that is the secret there.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there other styles jealous of the success that he had with his style?*

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes, that is natural.

**Dieter Knuettel:** *Were there a lot of injuries in the training at that*



time? In the early days?

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** We only had one accident one time. Then only a lot of bruises.

**Dieter Knuettel:** What was so special about the Professor at that time that the people wanted to join him and to learn from him?

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** It was his style and his techniques what attracted the people. Very effective.

**Dieter Knuettel:** Dr. Lengson and Master Chiuten was before?

**Rene Tongson:** No that was already in Manila. That was already named Modern Arnis.

**Dieter Knuettel:** That is interesting. Because in the US there is a discussion, that Remy got his Sinawali from Dr. Lengson.

**Rene Tongson:** Wrong-wrong

**Dieter Knuettel:** But when Master Lisondra already trained sinawali in 1958 with the Professor that is wrong then.

**Rene Tongson:** In these days there was only double sinawali, No Single.

**Dieter Knuettel:** When did he train with Dr. Lengson?

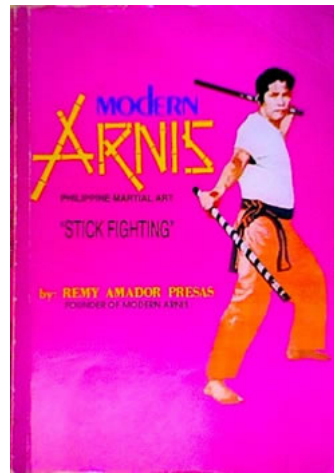
**Rene Tongson:** That was already in Manila. It was a few years before Rodel. Dr. Lengson and the Professor were training partners. They were doing television programs at that time. Double sinawali was very spectacular in the Television, especially when it was done very fast.

But for us, double sinawali is the basic technique. But it is very effective as a basic. It is already a fighting technique. In the time when they were doing it in Manila it was for the purpose of television production.

**Dieter Knuettel:** He did the drawing for the Modern Arnis book.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** I drew that. The first volume from Presas

**Dieter Knuettel:** The pink book?



**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Oh yeah, the illustration.

**Dieter Knuettel:** Wow, so you were the artist who drew it.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** I drew that in 1968 during the instruction in UNOR, in the University.

**Dieter Knuettel:** So the first book was prepared, when he was still teaching in Bacolod, right?

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Yes

**Dieter Knuettel:** When was it first issued?

Discussion in Ilonggo and then his son said, that he couldn't remember.

**Dieter Knuettel:** Was the book published before he trained with Dr. Lengson?

Discussion again. Nobody knew exactly, but it was assumed, that Dr. Lengson started with the Professor around 1970.

**Dieter Knuettel:** When did Professor Remy start using uniforms?

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** 1968 at UNOR. It was red pants and white



Master Lisondras Karate and Arnis uniforms.

t-shirt. That's the original uniform.

**Dieter Knuettel:** Was that also the time when he started using the belts? The black belts or the Lakans? When he started to use the uniforms?

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** Not yet. There were grading's but not yet a lakan.

**Dieter Knuettel:** But in the book it was already.

**“Bibing” Lisondra:** It started when he was in Manila.

**Dieter Knuettel:** I see over there your bolero of your Arnis uniform hanging there. When was the bolero introduced for the Arnis uniform? In the 70s?

**Rene Tongson:** No, no, it was already Modern Arnis then. It was only white t-shirt and red pants.



Master Lisondras Arnis uniform patch

Before there was no elastic waistband. Now it is easy, you only put it on. But before you had to tie it.

**Dieter Knuettel:** The red pants and the white t-shirt came from the Katipuneros?

**Rene Tongson:** Basically it was the Filipino fighters before, the freedom fighters. They used the red and white. Only red pants and t-shirt. Very standard.

**Dieter Knuettel:** Thank you very much for your time and for all the answers you gave me. I wish you all the best for your operation on your eyes. - Salamat po.

**About:** Senior Master Dieter Knüttel began his Arnis Training in 1978. He is one of the 6 Arnisadores, who received the Datu title from Professor Remy Presas. He lives and instructs in Germany but teaches Modern Arnis also in seminars all over the world.



www.modernarnis.de  
German - English

## The Unknown and Buried Roots of Modern Arnis

By: Maxwell “Max” J. Maun

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The Hidden Roots of Modern Arnis By: Maxwell “Max” J. Maun pg. 24 - 27

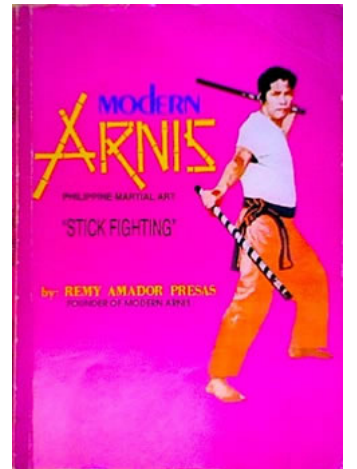
The history of Arnis/Escrima in the Philippines has posed many controversies, differences, and questions that have remained unresolved until the present times. Incessant bickering, internal strife, and power struggles among practitioners have significantly grown within different styles and even among belonging to the same style because of self-serving interests of some practitioners.

I have no intention of adding to this chaos. However, I was compelled to write this article as a response to the piece “Interview with Romy Lisondra” by Datu Dieter Knüttel of Germany which was published in the FMAdigest Vol.4 No.4 2007. I and the others who know the real story have kept silent for years so not to tarnish, discredit, or destroy the reputation of the late Grandmaster Remegio “Remy” Amador Presas and the Modern Arnis he had left behind as his legacy. But because of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the article, I am coming out in the open to straighten the record. A lie mixed with half of the truth and retold several times over will eventually be perceived and accepted as the truth.

This revelation is in no way a disrespect for the interviewer Datu Knüttel, who is only limited by the details given him, and the interviewee Mr. Romy “Bebing” Lisondra<sup>[1]</sup>, who is only limited by second hand information and/or a poor memory.

### Note:

1. Romy “Bebing” Lisondra and his brother Rudy Lisondra head the National Judo Karate Jujitsu Association (NAJU-KAJU-A) based in Bacolod and Iloilo Cities respectively. Romy Lisondra is primarily known as a Karate instructor in the Bacolod martial arts community and is now retired from teaching after losing his sight from diabetes which was aggravated by alcohol intake.





I am the nephew of the late Philippine Army (PA) Col. Pedro “Pete” P. Doromal Jr. and Philippine Constabulary (PC) <sup>12</sup> Capt. Nelson P. Doromal <sup>13</sup>. They both introduced and guided me in the study of Arnis, Judo, and Jujitsu. With their blessing and encouragement, I learned Aikido in 1978. I have learned from my uncles and their close associates first-hand accounts of how Modern Arnis came to be today.

I was an elementary grade pupil at the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos (UNO-R) <sup>14</sup> in the 1960s, the same time when Tito <sup>15</sup> Remy Presas was teaching Judo and Karate as PE elective subjects in the university’s college department. My mother’s family and relatives were close friends of the family of Rosemary Pascual, who was the first wife of Tito Remy.

#### **According to Mr. Lisondra,**

1. He and his brother Rudy received their black belts in Modern Arnis from Grandmaster Presas on December 11, 1964 at the University of San Agustin (USA) in Iloilo City.
2. He received his Lakan Apat (4th Degree Black Belt) in Modern Arnis in 1970.

#### **Note:**

2. A now defunct section of the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP). Most of its former members and personnel were absorbed by the Philippine National Police (PNP). Others opted to join the regular armed forces, particularly the Philippine Army (PA).
3. Capt. Nelson P. Doromal had trained several personalities in Arnis such as 1970s movie producer Levi Ignacio, 1970/1980s action star and martial artist Ernie “The Samurai” Ortega, and action star Bernard “Palos” Bonin among others. Capt. Nelson P. Doromal has also been assigned as Camp Commander of Camp Catañeda, Tagaytay and PRO-VOST Marshal for Region 6 of the now defunct PC Command.
4. The first university in Bacolod City and Negros Occidental.
5. Tito is a title of respect which roughly translates to “uncle” and used to call biological uncles and non-relatives but older in age. In the Filipino culture, it is bad manners to call somebody older by their first name. Tita is the feminine form of Tito.
6. Now known as the West Negros University (WNU). It became the third university in Bacolod and Negros Occidental in 2008.

3. It was sometime in 1968 when Modern Arnis was established by Grandmaster Presas.
4. In the middle of 1969 and 1970, Grandmaster Presas left for Manila and then hired him to go to Manila and assist in teaching Arnis at the National Amateur Karate Organization (NAKO).

If Modern Arnis was established in 1968 as stated, how could the Lisondra brothers earn rank in that system on December 11, 1964 or 4 years before it was founded?

If Modern Arnis was established in 1968 as stated, a 4th Degree ranking by 1970 would mean that Mr. Lisondra was given at least two degrees each year, which is quite fast and unusual practice for existing martial arts systems at that time.

If Modern Arnis was established in 1968 as stated, why was the name used National Amateur Karate Organization (NAKO) and not Modern Arnis?

Mr. Lisondra also stated that he went back to Bacolod in 1971 while Grandmaster Presas stayed in Manila. Why did Grandmaster Presas stay in Manila? Who were the known people associated with Grandmaster Presas during that time period? What

things transpired from 1969 to the early 1970s in Manila? On page 52, Mr. Lisondra said that there were two Doromal brothers who joined and studied under Grandmaster Presas. Who were these Doromals and what were their backgrounds? Where and with whom were the Doromals associated with? Were the Doromals really students of Grandmaster Presas or was it the other way around?

On page 54, Mr. Lisondra said that Col. Pedro P. Doromal Jr., then an ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Course) Corp Commander, a known student leader at West Negros College (WNC) <sup>16</sup>, and who had established himself as the best Arnis fighter at that time, challenged Tito Remy Presas, who was said to be only demonstrating his Arnis. He further said that Doromal lost the fight and joined Presas as a student later.

Why would somebody who had a reputation to protect and maintain offer a challenge to someone who is virtually unknown and risk damaging a superior status? Common sense will tell us that any person will try to avoid confrontation and always protect the integrity of a good reputation in an institution where he is regarded as a leader.

Another matter in which Mr. Lisondra had grossly missed is that when he said that the Doromals were practicing Arnis without a system and even made fun of it by calling it Wedo (we do this and we do that). On page 51, Mr. Lisondra admitted that their group was practicing a system of techniques called Corridas that was later renamed to Tapi-Tapi. What then is corridas? How did it become to be called Tapi-Tapi by Grandmaster Presas? Who were the original practitioners of Corridas? And most importantly, who were the real originators of Modern Arnis as a system? Who prepared the original manuscript of the book Modern Arnis? What happened to the original manuscript? These are questions that need clear answers.

#### **Unknown Roots Revealed**

To understand and put things in proper perspective and give answers to the several questions, allow me to share a story from the past, which was revealed to me by my uncles and confirmed by many of their associates in the course of my study of Arnis with them.

Let me start in the mid-1960s when I was still an elementary pupil at UNO-R in Bacolod City. Professor Remegio “Remy” Amador Presas of Hinigaran was employed as college PE instructor at the university, teaching Karate and Judo as PE elective subjects during that time. I would frequent his classes and watch from the sidelines his instructions and sessions. Two of his primary and well known Karate students and



*Remegio Amador Presas  
(1936 - 2001)*

junior Instructors at UNO-R were the Sancho twins, Winnie and Willy, with whom I was later closely associated with.

During that period, Professor Presas was popular and known as a Karate and Judo man, rather than a stick fighting instructor. However, I would see him integrate some stick techniques in some of his instructions as part of their Karate classes. His daughters, Mary Jane and Mary Ann P. Presas, were former classmates of my younger sister in UNO-R during their elementary days.

Just about the same period, I would often get to be with Col. Pedro Doromal Jr. or Tito Pete as we would call him. Tito Pete was by then connected with the Araneta Group of Companies and was the Chief Security Officer of several companies owned by the Progressive Development Corporation (PDC) owned by the Aranetas. He was assigned as the Chief

Security Officer of the Bacolod Murcia Milling Co. <sup>17</sup> and Talisay Central Milling Co.

Tito Pete instructed me in Arnis and Judo/Jujitsu. He was later transferred to Manila at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao. At that time, I was also attending high school in Manila and had the chance to further my studies with his brother, the late Capt. Nelson P. Doromal. Those sessions were on and off because of the nature of their work assignments. However, during the middle part of 1970, I again got the opportunity to continue my training with them at Cubao, where they would also meet with their other brothers, namely Tito Douglas, Tito Morad, Tito Remy (Doromal), and Col. Robert “Pete-max” Doromal, who at that time was connected with the now defunct Presidential Security Group of the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos, under Maj. Erwin Ver, son of the late AFP Chief-of-Staff Fabian Ver <sup>18</sup>.

One late evening after a tiresome day of training, Tito Pete narrated to me that in the 1950s he studied at West Negros College (WNC).and that he stayed at a rented room in Burgos-Cometa St., which was a walking distance away from the school. During weekends, Tito Pete would go home to his hometown in Barrio Sicaba, Cadiz City, about 50 KM north of Bacolod City.

Tito Pete came from a very large family, most men of which were skilled in stickfighting techniques handed down to them by their late father, Pedro Doromal Sr.

#### **Note:**

7. Presently leased by Lopingco of Noah’s Ark.
8. Also the first President of the National Arnis Association of the Philippines (NARAPHIL), then the Government recognized National Governing Body of Sport Arnis in the Philippines.

Pedro Doromal Sr. is the first degree cousin of my maternal grandfather. This makes Pedro Doromal Jr. and my mother second degree cousins.

According to Tito Pete, the stickfighting system of the Doromals was a fusion of the Sicabanhon style with the Bayoneta Karada of WWII Army Infantryman Benito Agui, who was a known close-in bodyguard of the late Cong. Armin Gustilo, a politician and sugar planter and close ally of then President Marcos.

The Doromals had a particular training drill called Corridas which consisted of a series of patterned strikes and blocks prominently pressing and close quarter, employing hand checking, weapon grabbing, base hitting, and point thrusting. Tito Pete Doromal Jr. taught their brand of Arnis with some his younger brothers, particularly Nelson and Petemax, who later joined the military service. During that early time, they had a core circle of practitioners and propagators coming from the Parreño Clan, who were their maternal cousins.

The Doromals were very cautious on taking on students and closely guarded their following. They would only accept people whom they believe were trustworthy and had good character.

Also about that time, Tito Remy Presas was starting his martial arts career and was extensively training in Judo and Karate, which was gaining some popularity in those years. He tried to join the group of the Doromals but was rejected by some of the members of the core group because they doubted his motives and loyalty to the group. Tito Remy Presas trailed Tito Pete Doromal Jr.,



*Remy Presas in America*

persuading him to accept him but he was told that the group was refusing to take him in.

Out of sheer frustration, Tito Remy Presas challenged Tito Pete Doromal Jr. to an Arnis match. Tito Pete had a reputation to protect as corps commander and as an Arnis instructor of repute. He plainly told Presas that the stakes were not that good for him. But Presas was unrelenting and followed Doromal around ceaselessly offering the challenge. Tito Pete finally accepted the challenge when the pressure became unbearable and Presas had gotten his ire. He, however, set three conditions. First, the match will not be in the view of the public and must be done discreetly. Second, both groups were only to bring with them ten of their followings to witness the encounter. Third, to prevent undue injury, one who gets disarmed or dropped his weapon thrice loses the match.

Presas agreed to the conditions and the match was done late evening in a secluded place inside the school campus. Tito Remy Presas was disarmed by Tito Pete thrice and the bout was over in a jiffy. Tito Pete kept mum about the match to protect his and Presas'

reputation. He thought that the matter was already settled but Presas kept tailing him around asking to be mentored and accepted by the group.

One rainy Friday evening, in his boarding house at Burgos-Cometa St., Tito Pete heard a loud knock at the door. The downpour was heavy. He was surprised to see Tito Remy Presas dripping wet and heavily intoxicated. Again, Presas started pleading to be accepted by the group to learn Arnis from them. In order to avoid making a scene and prevent some people to speculate and get the wrong idea of what was happening, Tito Pete told him that he would ask his brothers and his group to accept him just to silence Tito Remy.

Tito Pete requested Tito Remy to leave and meet them the following day at a designated meeting place. A blood compact with the group ensued to seal their bond and loyalty to each other. Tito Remy Presas finally made it as a student of the core circle of the Doromal Group.

Several years after these events, the Doromals started to work on a manual/manuscript to be used as a standard guide for Arnis instruction for the academe. Tito Nelson Doromal, the primary proponent of the project, drew sketches of the techniques and outlines of instruction for the purpose of presenting it to educational institutions. The manual/manuscript was a joint effort of seven people in which three were from the Doromals, two from the Parreños, another being a priest, and the last one a trusted member of the group. The group would meet frequently to discuss the development and evolution of

the presentation of the said manual/manuscript for Arnis.

At first, the content of the manuscript was coined as "Automatic Stick Fencing" and was not given its final name (today it is better known as Herada Pigada). During the latter part of the manual's development, Tito Remy Presas offered and suggested that it would be best if the book was to be presented in Tagalog, the National Language of the Philippines. This was to put some nationalistic essence on its presentation. His wife, Rosemary Pascual Presas, was a Pilipino<sup>[9]</sup> subject teacher and he offered for her to translate it to Tagalog. Remy Presas was able to convince the group and was entrusted to borrow the original manuscript to have it translated by his wife.

Unfortunately, the original manuscript never came back to the group. During the early 1970s, Tito Remy Presas stayed in Manila to take up his Master's Degree in Physical Education at the Philippine Normal University and this was about the same time when he met some influential people who

played a vital role in the publication of a book entitled Modern Arnis in 1974, which consisted of about 80% of the original manuscript he had borrowed but did not return. The remainder was based on the teachings of his other teacher, Grandmaster Rodolfo Mongcal of Balintawak Escrima.

There were also other things revealed to me by my uncles which I personally believe should not go public and must be kept and buried in order not to destroy the legacy of today's Modern Arnis. It is best kept in secret to preserve the good memories of Col. Pedro "Pete" P. Doromal Jr., Capt. Nelson P. Doromal, and Professor Remegio "Remy" A. Presas. These three people are no longer with us today. They have worked hard and gave their share and sacrificed much to develop Arnis for the academe and education. It is only a sad thing that there were people left out and were not given due recognition for their contributions.

There are still people alive today who know the story and could vouch for its authenticity.

Mr. Julio Euraba and Col. Atty. Grandmaster Marcelo "Pope" C. Jalandoon, Ph.D., of Talisay City, Negros Occidental are just two of them. I would rather not mention the names of the other people to respect their privacy. However, I could easily refer anyone who wishes to check with them in private.

I once asked my late uncle Col. Pedro "Pete" Doromal Jr. why did they not do anything to confront Remy Presas, His reply was, "The others did try but it made things worse and widen the rift that people could no longer see each other eye to eye. I told my brothers to let it be and let it go, the ball has started rolling for Modern Arnis. Eventually, it will stop and the accounting will begin sooner or later."

Let me again say that I am not putting anyone into the bad light. I am merely correcting an error which has continued for decades. Let history be right and truth prevail about Modern Arnis. Mabuhay ang lahing Filipino! Mabuhay ang Arnis!

**Note:**

**9.** *Pilipino was the accepted spelling at that time but was later changed to Filipino when letters from the Western alphabet were introduced into the native alpabeto.*



### ***School Submission***

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

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Finished manuscripts should be accompanied by color or black and white photographs. Though we take care of materials, we can not be responsible for manuscripts/photographs and accept no liability for same. Every photograph or graphic must be accompanied by a caption Carefully key photos to caption information with a letter or number.

We reserve the right to use any photo(s) as cover material or additional compensation. We also reserve the right to edit material and to crop photographs.

We reserve the right to use articles or parts of articles that are given and approved from time to time as needed to promote the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines.

Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff - to submit material for either the FMA Informative Newspaper or an Issue [Click Here](#)

We welcome your article, ideas and suggestions, and look forward to working with you in the future.