

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

# Teaching LSAI in Israel

Informative Issue No. 181 2015

Master Jon Escudero

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Lightning Scientific Arnis International Grandmaster Benjamin Luna-Lema A Complete System of Fighting The Adventure Begins Master Jon Escdero - Background Going To Israel Needed Mentality and Requirements Mentality in Teaching Changes in Teaching to Succeed Modifications in Lightning Scientific Arnis Is the Filipino Martial Arts Catching on in Israel? Final Thoughts about Teaching in Israel



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The FMA Informative while visiting the Philippines was fortunate to get with Master Jon Escudero and his wife Neta while in Baguio. The FMA Informative has known Master Escudero since 2007 while visiting the Philippines that year.

One would have to say about Master Escudero he is easy to talk with, has a sense of humor, quick minded, and fully a serious minded professional practitioner. Also it can definitely be said he is one of the top promotes and propagators of the style of Scientific Lightning Arnis. When in publication he was responsible for putting out Official Monthly Newsletter of Academia Tercia Cerrada Caderilla y Espada y Daga "SEGUIDA." The purpose of the publication was to give information on LSAI activities, events and news so it would be reported accurately as well as serve as a historical log of the activities of the organization. It was committed to promoting the Filipino martial arts and Filipino martial arts lifestyle as well as providing information and advice regarding martial arts training and philosophy.

Master Escudero has traveled throughout the world promoting and propagating Scientific Lightning Arnis and in the past few years it seems he heads out each year to the United States and England and is also open to any country that would be interested in learning and share the knowledge that he has in Scientific Lightning Arnis.

The FMA digest did an issue on Master Escudero on his exploits in Israel, however the FMA Informative thought it would be interesting to learn how it is to commence teaching and trying to get established in Israel as a Filipino martial artist

#### **Master Jon Escudero**

Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema was an "Old School", gentleman who would not face people in unpressed pants. He had an "air" of formality about him. His hair was never out of place and I've never really seen him break a sweat. He was nearly always in his "trademark" white long sleeved shirt even when teaching, and was never without his cap. He was definitely a "class-act", and a tough one to follow. He was a very exacting teacher and would make you do things over and over again... if he liked you. He loved teaching. We strongly suspect that the martial arts, was the love of his life. He'd go out of his way for a student interested in the art. He went out of the way for us and for that, we are truly grateful.

But then again, at the end of the day, we'd see more of the person behind the stories. He loved to make jokes as well as make fun of us and he loved putting us on the spot. He loved food, and was very picky with what he ate. But when he did find something that agreed with him, it would be defeated very quickly. He was an adventurer and loved going places and seeing new things. He never seemed to stop learning.

And here we are now, his students, peers, friends and family, caretakers of his memory. Some say he's not perfect, but I disagree. I'd say he was the "Perfect Human Being". A man who was great despite his humanity. He may have his own faults, flaws and imperfections but then again don't we all?

It was the desire to preserve and protect the martial arts systems of their fathers that Grandmaster Ben Lema and his contemporaries banded together into a group. It combined the systems found in the towns of the island of Panay and other neighboring islands. They named it Lightning Scientific Arnis.

It is a complete system of fighting. It was always about fighting, it is always about combat. It was always about tried and tested techniques used to survive. Lightning Scientific Arnis is practical with its definition of "Scientific." To Grandmaster Lema it simply meant that "he has tried it, and tested it, it works… therefore it is Scientific".

## Lightning Scientific Arnis International

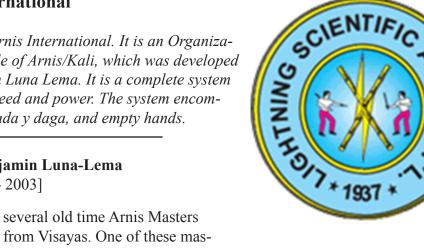
LSAI stands for Lightning Scientific Arnis International. It is an Organization promoting and preserving the style of Arnis/Kali, which was developed and refined by Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema. It is a complete system of martial arts, which stresses both speed and power. The system encompasses solo baston, doble baston, espada y daga, and empty hands.

## Grandmaster Benjamin Luna-Lema [1919 - 2003]

to teach.



Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema was born on March 19, 1919 in Mambusao Capiz, Panay Island, Philippines, and was first exposed to martial arts from his father, Juan Luna Lema, a well-respected Master of Arnis in Panay. This was in keeping with the family tradition as his father, who in turn had learned it from his father, had taught Lema Senior. Young Ben completed his elementary years in Mambusao, attended high school in Roxas City, and spent two years in college where he studied commerce. While in Roxas City, Young Ben diligently pursued the study of Karate, Combat Judo, Boxing, and Body Building. Mang Ben also studied and trained under



from Visayas. One of these masters would exchange lessons in return for sugarcane and this became an almost daily routine, resulting in Ben learning all the Masters had

Grandmaster Benjamin Luna-Lema Founded Lightning Scientific Arnis International in 1937 in Mambusao, Capiz, Philippines.

In 1937, Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema, together with 20 other Arnisadores, founded the Lightning Scientific Arnis International, in Roxas City, Capiz. It was the habit of these young men to go from place to place, seeking to learn from the best arnisa-dores they could find, and in some cases, challenging them to a test of skills. Since its inception in 1937, the association and style had grown in terms of membership.

In 1941 when the Pacific war broke out, young Ben joined guerilla forces in the island of Panay to fight the Japanese invaders. He also taught Arnis to his fellow fighters in this underground movement headed by General Macario Peralta in Panay. This training afforded Lema and his fellow guerillas the ability to defeat the Japanese with the use of hardened sticks and bladed weapons. During that war, the Japanese burned and destroyed the town of

Mambusao, in addition to executing a number of its citizens. Some of these citizens included members of Lema's group on the suspicion of being associated with the underground movement.

Of the original twenty-five (25) members of the Lightning Arnis Club, only five (5) survived the turmoil of World War II: Saturnino Pestani, Rodrigo Ponce, Carlos Villas, Rafael Ceneres, Poldo Leones, and Grandmaster Benjamin Luna Lema. These men then integrated their respective styles of Arnis into the formation of the so-called "Lightning Scientific Arnis", with Lema as acting headmaster. From 1945 until 1946, Lema became the Arnis instructor of the Manila Police Department, then under Police Chief Manuel de la Fuente. In 1947. Lema was requested to teach hand-to-hand combat to the personnel and enlisted men of the U.S. Air Force stationed at Agana, Guam. He was then appointed as Captain of the U.S. Air Force Fire Department. While stationed on Guam, Lema took the opportunity to join seminars of U.S. personnel at the Kodokan Judo Institute in 1948 while in Japan. While in Guam, he met and married his wife, Maxima Perez. They had four children, Patty

Jean, Benjamin Jr., John Edward, and Paul Anthony.

In 1959, Mang Ben returned to the Philippines and settled in Manila. Immediately upon his return, he established the Lightning Scientific Arnis International, with himself as President and Professor Agripino E. Mayuga as Vice-President.

The passing of Mang Ben, as he was known, followed by the subsequent passing of his successor, Maestro Elmer Ybañez, left a heavy burden on the shoulders of their students. In response to this situation, several of the remaining students banded together in order to continue the legacy of Mang Ben and to promote and propagate their beloved style. Thus, in 2005, the senior students started to meet

flame alive.

Currently, there are member clubs and practitioners all over the Philippines and in different parts of the world. In the Philippines, there are chapters in the different municipalities of Metro Manila, or the National Capital Region; Davao City, Davao; Roxas City, Capiz; Calapan, Mindoro; Laguna; etc. Outside of the Philippines, there are clubs in Singapore, the UK and in the USA, notably in Seattle, Washington.

It was recognized that the heir to the style and therefore the leadership of the system was Mang Ben's oldest son, Joseph Luna Jr. In the Philippines, his sister Mrs. Patty Jean L. Caballero

#### **A Complete System of Fighting**

Lightning Scientific Arnis is a complete system of fighting. It was always about fighting, it is always about combat. It was always about tried and tested techniques used to survive. Lightning Scientific Arnis is practical with its definition of "Scientific." To Grandmaster Lema it simply meant that "he has tried it, and tested it, it works... therefore it is scientific".

It is a system that is characterized by Power, speed and timing. What makes the quality of the power in the strike different is that it utilizes correct body mechanics to attain maximum power from the whole body's movement. Speed is achieved by economy of movement. Each movement is meant to be an attack. A defense is meant to gain a better position to counter attack and attack is meant to go through any defense.

It has in its repertoire is a wide range of weaponry from Solo Baston, Doble Baston, Baston y Daga, Espada y Daga, Knife, Weapon Disarming techniques and Empty-Hand techniques and is equally effective in the Largo, Media and Corto ranges. It combines the systems of Tercia, Serrada, Cadenilla and Espada y Daga making it a well-balanced, well-rounded system. Lightning emphasizes

using a stick as a stick. Other systems will emphasize that the stick is a metaphor for a blade, and that it is just a substitute for the real weapon which is the sword. For the Lightning Scientific Arnis practitioner, the stick is a REAL weapon and makes full use of the qualities of the weapon. For us it is an impact weapon made to inflict blunt force trauma, pulver-

and plan out the directions LSAI would take in order to keep the

acts as his representative and oversees LSAI activities. Ate Patty, as she is affectionately known, serves as the guiding light of LSAI. LSAI seniors and Ate Patty continue to meet on a monthly basis in order to both share and keep the knowledge alive and to coordinate activities designed to promote and propagate LSAI. Foremost among these is the Lema Memorial Cup, an LSAI-only tournament intended to foster friendship and fellowship among Mang Ben's students. Other activities include future tournaments open to all Arnis clubs regardless of style, and sharing sessions in which both older and younger practitioners share and compare what they had learned directly from Mang Ben.

ize tissue and crush bone. Blade techniques do exist in the system. These techniques are the same as the stick techniques with a shift in emphasis to reflect edge alignment for slashing, cutting and thrusting. Training with emphasis on the stick aspect and applying its qualities to the blade lend it the ability to convert a "crushing blow" into a "cleaving force". So it isn't solely about slashing at vital ligaments and sinews, but also about hacking through essential limbs.

These concepts make Lightning Scientific Arnis a formidable and versatile system by being able to address different combat situations. It has a standard repertoire of strikes in the largo range that is enhanced by combining them into a continuous flow called "cadenilla" that accelerates the speed of the weapon greatly en-

hancing its impact. The cadenilla also allows the fighter to rapidly change the direction of his strikes in response to his opponent's reactions. This particular technique gives the fighter a set of attacks and counter-attacks that let him control the long distance between him and his opponent.

In the media and corto ranges, "tercia serrada" is the favored strategy. The Lightning Scientific Arnis practitioner will want get in close to blind-side his opponent and get behind his opponent. This way all his opponents' weapons are facing away from him and vulnerable targets are exposed. This is also combined with an aggressive barrage of multiple strikes rained down on his opponent effectively blanketing him. This is done by keeping him off balance and constantly jamming his weapon arm and impeding his

# **The Adventure Begins**

#### Master Jon Escdero - Background

Master Jon Escudero was born in the city of Manila on August 26, 1975. From an early age Jon has always been interested in Martial arts. It doesn't comes as much of a surprise since his father and grandfather have always been interested in sports. His grandfather also did amateur boxing fights in his youth. He blames his interest mostly on his dad who often took him to double features of Kung-Fu and ninja movies in downtown Manila. So naturally, these fantastic features took root in his brain and kick started his desire to learn martial arts. He clandestinely tried various Japanese and Korean Martial arts this school during his childhood and teens which were

movement by using close-quarter techniques that interfere with his timing and reactions, creating an opening for a finishing blow taking the attack to its logical conclusion.

But as systems go, each one has its particular specialization and for Lightning Scientific Arnis it is Espada y Daga Serrada. Other versions of this like Baston Daga or Baston Serrada, retain the same characteristics of jamming and stealing the beat. But what really makes it special is the unique coordination necessary to make the technique effective. This is because the weapon hand isn't solely dominant. The "live" hand is just as aggressive and plays just as vital a role. Its use is primarily sense the movements of the opponent. At the corto range, the sense of sight isn't a very effective means to discern your opponents'

the ones mostly available then at

was In College at the University

of the Philippines he met his first

Benito Khu, who steered him on a path of serious training and study.

Kung-Fu teacher in 1994, Sifu

He trained in different forms of

Kung-fu with and without weap-

ons. He was the first president of

the U.P. Wushu Club that he and

He also studied some of the differ-

ent Shaolin wushu forms as well

as the different styles of Hsing-i,

Bagua and Taichi chuan, Particu-

larly Chenjiaguo Taijiquan which

In 1996, during a Mar-

he still practices today.

his classmates founded in 1995.

The turning point for him

that time.

intentions. Up close it is about feel. Up close it is about making split second decisions and reacting to things more "felt" than "seen."

Lightning Scientific Arnis also has a substantial curriculum regarding weapon disarming and control techniques. A major characteristic of these techniques is that they twist the opponent into pretzel like shapes to control the opponent and snap them when necessary. These included stick vs. stick techniques and empty hand vs. stick techniques.

Empty hand techniques are also an important part of the knowledge in LSAI. There are many punching, chopping, locking and breaking techniques in the system. Just like in the disarming and control techniques, they involve much trapping to set-up before launching a finishing blow.



tial Arts demonstration called the "School of Martial Arts" (SOMA) sponsored by one of the university fraternities, various university sports and martial arts clubs, including the Wushu Club, performed demonstrations of martial arts. He saw a demonstration of Arnis that changed his life performed by the Lema Scientific Kali Arnis Club - LESKAS led by Master Elmer Ybanez.

Greatly impressed by the demonstration that showed Filipino martial arts at a world class level, his interest and desire to learn it grew. One of the reasons behind the interest is that it was the martial art of his country and that it embodied a fierceness and energy that took his breath away. He eventually joined this group to learn Lightning Scientific Arnis. Along with

#### **Going To Israel**

Master Escudero and Neta Shermister met at the 3rd World FMA Festival in Tagaytay in 2006 where he was invited to be a guest instructor at the event. Neta stayed on in the Philippines to pursue training in LSAI under the tutelage of Jon through which they developed a strong friendship which grew into a relationship and partnership in training and their lives together.

In their discussions they found that Israel would be an excellent place to further the Lightning Scientific Arnis in which it could be established and grow. So



it this group also cross-trained in various other sports and martial arts like Muay Thai, Boxing, Wrestling and Jiu-Jitsu. Though Master Elmer moved abroad a year earlier to the United States, this group trained daily in the different aspects of the art all the way until the passing of the system's Grandmaster and Founder, Benjamin Luna Lema. Grandmaster Lema was so impressed with this group that came from Master Elmer that he took them under his tutelage, as well as training them every weekend for four years till his passing, earning them the name U.P. Boys.

it was in 2008 that Master Escudero packed his bags and accompanied Ms. Shermister to Israel to bring the art of Lightning Scientific Arnis to the country.

Master Escudero found upon arrival in Israel that the martial arts community was tight knit. So everybody knows everybody, whether it be Karate, Judo, Krav Maga and found a small Arnis community, which Neta original was a part of.

Master Escudero found that training was usually held in parks and so he also commenced



Master Godofredo Fajardo - Punong Guro Abner Anievas - Master Jon Escudero

Jon, along with others from the group, was privileged to accompany Grandmaster Lema to the Chungju World Martial arts festival in 2001 and 2003 where the best martial arts teams from all over the world were present to represent the martial arts of their country in an event that fostered and promoted brotherhood through the martial arts.

In 2001 Grandmaster Lema awarded him the rank of Master making him the youngest in LSAI to hold this rank.

his teaching in a park nearby, just inviting a few practitioners at first and as work got out little by little more practitioners join the group this was due to the current student's recommendations. This was during the first year.

Basically the first year can be thought of as "getting one's feet wet," getting to know the area and the people and the people getting to know him. And getting to know how it was to teach in Israel.



Senior Master Bert Lamaniego and Master Jon Escudero - LSAI

#### **Needed Mentality and Requirements**

Basically one must keep it in mind that a martial arts teacher cannot teach half-heartedly or half-assed. Israel is not like the Philippines in that in the Philippines it seems it is quite easy to say you are a Filipino martial arts teacher or just a martial arts teacher, go to a park and start getting students.

In Israel everything about teaching is done by the book, one needs a license to teach and a business license for a school,

#### Mentality in Teaching

Now on the subject of actual teaching in Israel compared to the Philippines Master Escudero had this to say.

A big thing to remember when teaching in Israel is to have patience towards the student and hope the student also has patience, one must remember that there is a different mind-set between what the people of Israel have been whether if one is teaching in an actual school, park, or backyard scenario. Prospective students will sometimes ask if you have insurance, and insurance companies will not grant an insurance policy unless you are a licensed teacher. This means one must be a certified competent instructor which brings it down to that one needs to go through the Israel system of certification that one is an instructor that you are qualified to teach your subject matter. So this also means

through and the way a Filipino has been use to teaching the Filipino martial arts. In the Asian community it is understood about the need to teach or passing on the traditional culture, the cultural artifacts of the martial arts and style.

In Israel they think about combat, what is useful in combat, so immediately the teacher has to find the balance between the if one is applying to become a certified teacher then one must take the course offered to prove this fact and the courses are in Hebrew. So again one must learn to speak Hebrew.

Now we mentioned backyard training which in America and in the Philippines is done quite often. This is actually discouraged, because things can happen accidentally, especially when the training gets to the advanced stages of working with the bladed weapons.

immediate application of the art and at the same time or during the teaching bring in the traditional cultural aspects of the art..

Not like let us say in the United States which is sort of like the Philippines, but a bit more professional in the methodology, which a teacher has to be able to explain in words, for if the teacher can only show the art and not



Filipinos from all over Israel came to "Venga" studio at Ben Yehuda St. to be part of Master Jon Escudero's self-defense seminar and workshop. The seminar was dedicated to meeting the risks that the Filipinos encounter living and working in Israel.

break it down into words it becomes a lot more complicated. Practitioners want to understand all the details, even the minor ones to be able to grasp the style totally.

About teaching in the United Kingdom, Master Escudero describes that it is similar to the United States but what Master Escudero has experienced is they speak less but work more aggressively toward the physical aspects of the art.

## **Changes in Teaching to Succeed**

Teaching Lightning Scientific Arnis for so many years in the Philippines, Master Escudero has had to adapt to changes that have to be made if one is to teach Lightning Scientific Arnis in Israel.

Prospective students when approaching Master Escudero usually ask "do you only teach stick in your martial art". They want knife, bolos and empty hand, in a combative type of teaching. They want to learn what they think is the practical aspects of the martial arts being offered. The correct answer is yes Lightning Scientific Arnis teaches all of that, but it is derived from working with the stick, a prospective student usually responds, "but isn't that limiting" and the answer is it is only limited by your imagination.

Master Escudero has found that in teaching in Israel there is a need to teach more of the fighting side of the art, ahead of the stylistic aspect of the art, to put it simply defense-attack, defend-counter



Bata-Batuta learning Filipino martial arts in Israel August 28, 2008

## **Modifications in Lightning Scientific Arnis**

The question was asked by the FMA Informative have you had to modify your art. And Master Escudero had this to say: In some ways yes, in the Philippines change is usually in flow, but in Israel it is best to be more direct, because of the size of the individuals. If it is a small individual one finds that they are able to maneuver around the opponent, but with a bigger sized individual they may not be able to move with the speed that a smaller individual can. So it is taught to be aggressive and get directly to the point in the attack or counter attack. In the Philippines a practitioner *looks for the opportunity* for attack or counter attack, however in Israel it is thought better to *create and make the opportunity* for attack or counter attack. The point attack, put pressure on the opponent and finish the encounter.

This is put in the beginning, then as time goes by the stylistic and aesthetic apect is inserted to refine all the motions that have been taught, the basics that are studied such as the strikes, the methods. This is used to clean up the fighting methodology.

This is so important for it is the mechanics that are used to develop the motor-programming, power development and angling.

is, in teaching in Israel no matter the size, create the opportunity and follow through.

Also it must be demonstrated that there is a transition to all the stick, knife, bolo etc., that must be understood. It has been found that the best way is if they see it and experience it they understand it.

# LSAI Original

- Espada y daga entry in close range
  Krus strike to groin
- **3**. Follow up horizontal strike to ribs



## LSAI Modified Israel



# LSAI Original



- **1**. Espada y daga entry into close range.
- 2. Krus strike to groin.
- When counter attack is interrupted by an overhead strike- counter with "payong" overhead block.
  Guide and redirect weapon hand if it is within range.
  Counter attack to head.



- 1. Espada y daga entry in close range.

 2. Krus strike to groin.
 3. Follow up horizontl strike to rib.
 4. Modification begins here - using the check to set up entry into close range.

## LSAI Modified Israel



1. Use "payong" to block overhead strike but return stick to shoulder. 2. Guide and redirect weapon hand counter clockwise. 3. Enter into "banda y banda" to suppress weapon hand. 4. Shift to power stance with knee to opponents leg. 5. Counter attack with punyo at close range.

## LSAI Original



1. Versus backhand strike to head - counter with "rolling block". 2. Proceed to "krus" on weapon hand or elbow to neutralize. 3. Escalate to "banda y banda" to suppress weapon hand. 4. Shift to "power stance", check, push, shove to break opponents balance and counter attack. 5. Follow up with finishing strikes from the blind side.

#### LSAI Modified Israel



1. Versus backhand strike to head - counter with "rolling block" 2. Proceed to "krus" on weapon hand or elbow to neutralize 3. Guide and redirect his stick clockwise to trap his wrist 4. Punch with stick hand 5. Strike with punyo 6. Release and strike to the head

## Is the Filipino Martial Arts Catching on in Israel?

Yes the Filipino martial arts has been in Israel for some time and will continue to be there. Basically it started with a good friend of Master Escudero, Grandmaster Guy Rafaeli, a local citizen who's Filipino martial arts roots are through CSSD. So Grandmaster Rafaeli takes the credit as well as the blame for starting and promoting the Filipino martial arts in

Israel for he promoted the Filipino martial arts as a knife art. Actually he is correct for part of the Filipino martial arts is a knife art.

It also seems that the karambit is becoming very popular in Israel, now it must be understood the in Lightning Scientific Arnis the karambit is not in the weapon arsenal, however it can be adapted into the art with the principles of Serrada for it is similar to the knife but used in reverse, with some extra thrills.

In Israel Master Escudero has gained the respect of the other local martial artists, and they him as an authority of FMA as well as the recognition of being a topnotch professional teacher.

## **Final Thoughts about Teaching in Israel**

A final note about teaching in Israel if one is a weak teacher of their art, the practitioners there will definitely know it, and that teacher will never make it teaching in Israel. One is going to be tested and will have to prove themselves to get the respect due to a professional Filipino martial artist. Basically expect some to come forward to test your skills and will be up front and tell you what will work and what will not work, which if the teacher does not have the answers or the skill to prove them wrong, they will never get

the respect or the students. And this can be fully understood with the people in Israel if one knows the history and what the country has and is going through in their daily lives.

Note: Lightning Scientific Arnis is a very highly respected art throughout the world. But with all organizations there are some within the organization that can bring about dissention and unrest. A basic thought is to promote the main idea of Lightning Scientific Arnis, find a common ground within the community, and get off the high horse as one would say. Listen more - talk less, lead by example, be practical, and definitely get rid of the ego that you are better than others for it is a waste of time and just bring bad karma to the organization.

There are many in Lightning Scientific Arnis that wish to assist in any way possible those who need it, however it must be remembered, "that it is hard to help a person, when one cannot sit at the same table."



Master Jon Escudero and Neta 'Shermister' Escudero



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# 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.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - Click Here

# **Event Submission**

Submit your event whether - Seminar, Workshop, Training Camp, tournament, or Gathering - Click Here

# Advertisement Submission

Advertising in the FMA Informative Website is FREE.

An Ad in the FMA Informative can create Business. Your Advertisement for Filipino martial arts forums, blogs etc, can be included in the FMA Informative. Advertisment is for the Filipino Martial Arts and the Philippines.

To submit Forums Click Here. To submit advertisement for products and/or Services Click Here

# Article Submission

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.