

LAMECO ESKRIMA



LAMECO ESKRIMA

THE LEGACY OF EDGAR SULITE



DAVID E. GOULD



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DEDICATION

We, the members of the “Sulite Orehenal Group” (SOG), would like to dedicate this body of work to the loving memory of our Founder, Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite (1957-1997) and to Master Cristopher N. Ricketts (1955-2010), both of whom died far too young. May they now and forever rest in peace.

We who were students under Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite and Master Christopher N. Ricketts were extremely fortunate in our association with these two great masters. We remain thankful and appreciative of everything they shared with us, and for their enduring friendships and outstanding examples, which both established for us by living lives epitomizing what each man represented and demanded of us, their students.

Both of these masters continue to be missed dearly by us, as a group and as individuals. They were incredible teachers, mentors and friends. Without their direct influence, many of us would still be trying to find our ways through life, lost if you will, in search of greatness that we may have never found otherwise, but longed for nonetheless.

We would also like to dedicate this book to the Sulite family and the Ricketts family. They have sacrificed and endured much by having these great men spend so much time away with their students when they might otherwise have spent more “quality time” with their respective families.

May both of these great men rest in peace. Each will be remembered with much fondness, love and appreciation from, not just those of us who trained directly under them and knew them best, but also by the tens-of-thousands around the world who hold them in the highest regard but may have never had the opportunity to meet them or to train with them directly.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank all of my Lameco Eskrima brothers who make up the “Sulite Orehenal Group” (SOG) for their comradeship throughout our training together during those early days in the “backyard” of Punong Guro Sulite’s home in Los Angeles, California. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge Hospecio “Bud” Balani, Jr., Roger Agbulos, Steve Grody, Dino Flores, Arnold A. Noche, and Gary Quan for their respective contributions to this book.

I would like to offer a sincere gesture of appreciation to Master Jun Pueblos and GM Alexander L. Co for their respective contributions to this work. Master Jun Pueblos was one of Punong Guro Sulite’s earliest students and training partners as well as one of his sparring partners for many years in the Philippines. He now resides in Glasgow, Scotland. Sifu Alexander L. Co was the one responsible for funding and publishing all three of Edgar’s books, in addition to providing Edgar with money to travel and conduct his research.

By collectively adding all of our individual insights and experiences to this book, we hope the reader will get a more complete image of who Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite was as an instructor, as a mentor, and as a friend. We want to convey him to you as a complete human being, not just his reflection as seen through one source. Punong Guro Sulite used to tell me that, in order to get a more complete image of someone, you need to glimpse that person through more than just one lens. He would say all of us who trained under him carried a different piece of who he was and what his art of Lameco Eskrima was intended to be. He said that we were all like individual pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and the more of us who were placed together, collectively the more complete the image of himself and his Lameco Eskrima system would become.

Punong Guro Sulite explained that if you see his image through only one perspective you will only see a small part of who he is in his entirety. But if you can see his image through many individual experiences and perspectives collectively, especially through those who know him best, you would get a more complete representation of who he was, what he represented, and what he desired to convey.

The same is true with training in the Lameco Eskrima System. We all carried something different, catered to our own individual inherent strengths and interests. Anybody training under several members of our very select group will experience the Lameco Eskrima system more thoroughly than by training under any one of us and only being able to view who Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite was from a single perspective.

I would also like to acknowledge all of our recognized official Lameco Eskrima training groups and students positioned in numerous countries around the world. Without their hard work, dedication, and commitment, it would be very difficult to continue spreading the legacy of Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite, and the Lameco Eskrima system to the next generation of

enthusiasts. We are doing our best to ensure that both the man and his art will continue to be acknowledged and appreciated for many generations to come.

I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to Dr. Mark V. Wiley and Tambuli Media for giving me the opportunity to publish this body of work. From the very beginning I expressed to all involved with this long overdue project my intent and greatest desire to preserve the rich lineage and legacy of Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite and the Lameco Eskrima System over any personal ambitions which I may have for myself.

This project has always been about memorializing Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite and Master Christopher N. Ricketts for their lifetime of experience, critical contributions and countless sacrifices which resulted in the Lameco Eskrima System that we all know and appreciate today. This was a project of endurance to the nth degree towards cementing the memories of those two great men for countless generations to come and my end goal was to have their names and good reputations eternally kept in the forefront of the Filipino warrior arts community where they rightfully belong.

I have much gratitude for Dr. Mark V. Wiley for all that he has had to endure throughout this project which required dedicating countless hours of editing in an effort to get the best possible product to the reader. He has taken what I wrote and shaped it into an excellent book which now expresses exactly what I was trying to convey to the reader in allowing them to come to know Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite through my eyes and how I knew him, not only as a teacher but more importantly as a mentor and one of my best friends.

If this book even remotely helps to maintain the good reputation and assists in continuing the rich legacy of Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite and the Lameco Eskrima System for numerous generations of enthusiasts to come, I will consider it a huge success. I look forward to working more with Dr. Mark V. Wiley and Tambuli Media again in the future.

Mabuhay ang Lameco Eskrima!

FOREWORD

Edgar Sulite and I went to high school together. In the 1970s, Tuhon Leo T. Gaje, Jr. came from the United States to Ozamis City, Philippines to vacation with his family. It was then that he began training me and my brothers Elben and Lowell in the art of Eskrima. Gaje told us to invite some of our friends into the class, which we did, and this included Edgar Sulite. Our group became organized and then known as Pekiti Tirsia International in Ozamis.

One of our other instructors was Marcelino Ancheta. Ancheta then introduced us to Manong Jose Caballero, whom he said was one of the best Eskrima instructors around. Edgar continued to study the Caballero system and I was his sparring partner.

In 1979, the Peketi Tersia group went to attend the first National Eskrima Tournament held at the Cebu Coliseum, in Cebu City. It was on that day that Arnis Philippines Pres. Chief of Staff Gen. Fabian C. Ver officially give the honor to be called “Grand Master” to masters including Tuhon Leo Gaje, and late Tatang Marcelino Ancheta and others. That’s our big experience with the group. In the 1980s, Edgar and his family moved to Manila, and after a year Lowell followed him there and I soon followed.

Tuhon Gaje asked us to teach Arnis at the University of Life. So we meet some exclusive students and two years later Edgar had his own private students. Then we meet Tatang Ilustrisimo in Luneta Park, and also Yuli Romo and Tony Diego, who helped us to analyze the



Jun Pueblos and Yuli Romo



Jun Pueblos and Tony Diego



Anthony Lim, Jorge Pineda III, Edgar Sulite, Lou Vallarta-Shih, Jun Pueblos.



Group with Tatang Ilustrisimo

Ilustrisimo system. Edgar then met up with Alex Co, who financed Edgar's first book. Lowell then moved to Los Angeles, CA and many years afterward Edgar followed. I remained in Manila. In Los Angeles, Lowell and Edgar used their backyards as an Arnis training ground. Edgar was soon introduced by my brother to Guro Dan Inosanto and then began to travel across America to teach the Lameco System. And the rest is history.



—Jun Pueblos
Glasgow, Scotland
October 20, 2014



Edgar Sulite and Jun Pueblos



*Henry Espera, Mark Wiley, Andy Abrian,
Jun Pueblos*

FOREWORD

I first met Edgar Sulite in the early 1980s under very unique circumstances. I was invited by Yuli Romo, an Arnis grandmaster, to attend a tournament sponsored by Master Picate. Yuli told me that the grandmaster considered the “King of Kings” in the field of Arnis, named Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo, shall be present in the tournament. Usually, I don’t attend tournaments because I find them boring, as I am already used to their routines. But this time, curiosity got the better of me; I desired to meet the grand master touted to be the king of Arnis. Ironically, as even in kung-fu events, which is my field, I am hardly present; but in this event, with its system then alien to me, I was very visible.

I asked my best buddy, Topher Ricketts, to come along with me. It was when we reached the tournament site that we found out that Yuli will challenge and fight a young master from Cagayan de Oro, one of the provinces of the Mindanao region. Their fight will be the main highlight of the event, using live sticks and without the use of body armor. Unfortunately, their anticipated fight did not push through, as Master Picate failed to come up with the prize money. Considering that the renowned masters were already in the venue, it was decided that there would be a demonstration where each master would be presented. In the event, I was introduced by Yuli to the great “Tatang” Ilustrisimo. I cannot remember the other demonstrators, but what I vividly remembered were the ones presented by Grandmaster “Tatang” Ilustrisimo and Ka Piryong Lanada of the Lanada Style. “Tatang” did the single baston, and Ka Piryong did the double baston. The reason why I singled out these two was simply because they were the ones I knew; “Tatang” having been introduced to me there by Yuli, and Lanada, who had been featured in *Inside Kung-Fu* magazine through the workings of his students in the U.S. So basically, knowledge wise at that time, I could not distinguish the versatility and salient points of their different styles.

After the tournament, Yuli introduced me to Edgar Sulite, whom I noticed to be very well-mannered, respectful and who projected an aura of self-confidence, though still younger than most masters. I had just finished publication of my first book on Ngo Cho Kun, and I was aware that there as a demand for reference materials for the ever-growing market of Arnis practitioners. During those times, the only available book on Arnis was the one published by Remy Presas.

In the course of our conversation, publishing a book on Arnis came up. I thought a book on the art would be a great idea as the art of Arnis, though well-known in the Visayas and Mindanao regions, was then not so well-known in the metropolis of Manila and its neighboring cities. In fact, it was widely believed that Arnis was personified and represented only by the style of Remy Presas, who had established quite a name in this field, by virtue of his book.

I found the young Edgar Sulite very skilled, educated and very passionate about Arnis. I gave my business card to him to pay me a visit, and sure enough, the following week, he appeared at my

doorstep, presented me with a manuscript of his work, and was indeed looking for a publisher. This started our business and personal relationship, and together with Topher Ricketts, we three established a lifelong friendship. Edgar would come to my office almost every day to discuss his book and demonstrate his Arnis knowledge to us. I would in turn expose him to the field of kung-fu, sharing my knowledge of Ngo Cho, Hung-gar, Praying Mantis, internal strength training, while Topher would delve into full-contact, pugilistic fighting with boxing basics and scientific training methods. So, in essence, we three became brothers in the martial arts, and at nighttime, would regularly practice at the penthouse of my residence in Makati.

Since the three of us were in constant company, I got to introduce Edgar and Topher to the different kung-fu masters, and Edgar also utilized some internal kung-fu techniques in his Lameco Eskrima, which explains his seemingly internal strength. I also learned Edgar's Arnis style: Lameco. So the three of us each had knowledge in Arnis, Kung-fu, pugilistic fighting with specific strength on our own individual systems.

The publication of Edgar Sulite's book was a great challenge to me. First, we had to change his original manuscript to be able to appeal to the readers. As I was more experienced in the field of book publishing I suggested we incorporate many items to make the book attractive enough to the readers, like putting its history, calisthenics, basics and fundamentals, strides, attack and defense techniques, closed inter-relations between a stick and dagger, plus introduction to some well-known masters. The latter was to expose these masters so their students would like to have their own copies, like a sort of marketing strategy. I published his first book with the title *Secrets of Arnis*.

During those times, I normally traveled back and forth to Hong Kong, to buy stuff for my store, a hobby shop which specialized in model kits and radio control items from Japan and the U.S. Hong Kong, being an Asian free port, was much cheaper to buy goods than to import from their sources. I tried to find a distributor for Edgar Sulite's Arnis book, but unfortunately I was told the market was not yet ripe for that kind of book, and instead was advised to come up with a book on knife techniques, which can be more profitable. I was able to find a worldwide distributor for a book on knife techniques, so after Edgar's first book, we immediately came up with his second book, a book on knife techniques titled *Advanced Balisong*. Both books were distributed and well-received locally, and got positive reviews from practitioners.

Unfortunately, the Hong Kong distributor I got for the knife book encountered domestic problems, and was forced to close his business, so the worldwide distribution of the book was thwarted, and instead we relied on National Bookstore, the Philippine's primary book seller and distributor.

As a martial arts practitioner and publisher, I was greatly intrigued and mystified by the art of Arnis, with this style having no definitive roots. Where did this style originate? From what particular place? Although nobody can specifically say something very definite, I noticed that all styles have three similar movement concepts, although there are certain variations. These three are always present in any Arnis system, so there might be only one origin. These three are

the concepts of doce pares, singko teros and siete pares. All Arnis styles rotate on these three concepts, although by now, there might already be numerous deductions and additions, as normally any martial arts system is accorded different adaptations by the master to make it particularly unique and his very own. Arnis styles are commonly defined and named after its master, so we have the Ilustrisimo style, the Lanada style, the Presas style, etc. while some still retain their 'generic' names like Lameco style, Balintawak style, Modern Arnis, etc.

Because of the many questions in my mind regarding Arnis, I told Edgar to go to the different provinces and meet the prominent masters, interview them, get whatever knowledge is available, and delve deeper. With all provinces scattered around, I financed Edgar's odyssey to these local destinations. He compiled all the data, which became the contents for our third book, *Masters of Arnis*. In this book was the very first time these masters were heard about, as most were obscure and secretive.

As Edgar's name rose to prominence since the publication of his first book, he dreamt of hitting it big in the U.S., but the difficulty of getting a U.S. visa even for a short stint seemed impossible. When Topher went to the U.S. to conduct some clinics and seminars, he brought with him copies of Edgar's book *Secrets of Arnis*. At that time (I cannot remember the exact year), Topher conducted a seminar for Richard Bustillo, and gave him a copy of the book. Somehow, Dan Inosanto got a hold of the book, and called the Philippines for Edgar Sulite. Edgar could not believe his ears when he received the call. Dan Inosanto expressed willingness to meet him, which all the more stoked Edgar's desire to try his luck in the U.S., having an extended family which relied on him for support.

After numerous attempts to secure a U.S. visa, Edgar finally got one but with a big letdown: his visa was only a single entry visa, good for 30 days, and in this short time, he cannot come up with the sufficient finances to fund his travels and expenses abroad, so in true blue brotherly passion, I advanced his royalties to pay for his tickets, and advised him to solicit contributions from his students to raise money for his living expenses. He was able to land in the U.S., the fabled land of milk and honey, and in no time, with his skills and dedication, carved a niche for himself in the field of Arnis, and as they say, the rest is history.

With Edgar's knowledge and determination, in no time, he became well-known for his style, and was able to secure his place in the U.S., bringing his whole family from the Philippines to settle in the U.S. With his prominence came the desire to pay back, to help all Arnis masters in the Philippines. He planned to come back every now and then to bring U.S. enthusiasts to study under Filipino masters and meet them personally, and giving income to these native masters, who by then were already old and have passed on their knowledge to their younger generations. But fate intervened and cut short this dream. In one of his homecoming seminars, he suffered an excruciating headache and dizziness during the session, sat down, and collapsed in the arms of Topher Ricketts, while I, at home, was scheduled to see him at the gym in the afternoon.

He died of aneurysm in his late thirties, so young and accomplished. Perhaps the books we published, all three of them (*Secrets of Arnis*, *Advanced Balisong*, *Masters of Arnis*), all happened for a reason: they would serve as his legacy, a reminder to all Arnis practitioners of his unequalled passion for the arts. Constant reminders that although he is already gone, his legacy will forever live on in his books. Fate willed us to meet each other, so we could work as a team to publish his works. We were brothers in the martial arts, and it gave me great joy to know that some of his students pay homage to him by continuing his legacy, the Edgar Sulite Lameco style of Eskrima (the Visayan preferred term for Arnis). As the founder/forerunner of the Lameco style, Edgar Sulite's name and memory shall forever be remembered for all lifetimes. Here is one person who has shown unequalled, exemplary passion and dedication to his craft. Not that he and our brother Topher have both passed on, I am saddened that my brothers and our penthouse training will have to wait for our eventual reunion.



Sifu Alexander L. Co
June 27, 2014
Beng Kiam Makati Branch

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CHAPTER 1

TACLOBAN CITY, LEYTE AND VISAYAS, PHILIPPINES

From the Very Beginning

Edgar G. Sulite was born to Helacrio L. Sulite and Cristita G. Sulite on September 25, 1957 in Tacloban City. Tacloban is a rugged barrio on the isle of Leyte in the Visayan region of the Philippines, where it was commonplace to see skirmishes and deadly brawls play out with machetes or knives. Here, in this less than ideal part of the world, is where Edgar grew up fast, learning and enduring life's most important lessons as he began his initial training in the Filipino warrior arts.

When Edgar spoke later of his training during those early days of his development, he emphasized the reality of training in Eskrima for survival more than for sport. He would often speak of the many dangers involved in growing up in the Philippines and the necessity of being able to defend oneself and one's family from troublemakers whom lurked

in every shadow. He would often say there are no guarantees in combat, only opportunities, and either you will take advantage of those opportunities as they reveal themselves to you in real-time, or you will not, and possibly be left for dead as a direct result of a failure to act. Edgar lived a hard life in the Philippines, and he wanted to convey to students, not just the Filipino warrior arts, about which he was extremely passionate, but also the culture which brought forth this rich heritage of indigenous Philippine combatives.

Circa 1974, before his 17th birthday, Edgar and his family moved from Tacloban City to Ozamis City, Mindanao, Southern Philippines. It was there that he really began to develop and grow in the indigenous warrior arts, which would eventually help establish him as one of the most well-known and influential ambassadors of Eskrima the world over.

On April 10, 1997, Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite, at the early age of thirty-nine, died from a stroke which he had suffered weeks before while training in the Philippines. His demise was primarily due to complications of an enlarged heart exacerbated by a lifetime of high blood pressure.



Edgar G. Sulite circa 1995

The impact that he had on the Filipino warrior arts community as a whole, in such a short lifespan, was profound to say the least and, in that realm of existence, Edgar G. Sulite was a deeply respected warrior who stood firmly on the shoulders of giants. His loss is felt deeply by many around the world but by none more-so than his personal “backyard” students and members, known affectionately as the “Sulite Orehenal Group,” of which I am honored to be one of his handpicked students and member of that prestigious group, in addition to being a long time private student and appointed Standard Bearer of the Lameco Eskrima system.

Helacrio L. Sulite, Sr. and the Sulite-Rapelon System

Edgar Sulite recalled that the very first time he was made aware of his ancestral warrior arts was around 1962. At the age of five he and his father were visiting Edgar’s Grandfather, Mateo Sulite, at his home in Tacloban City. It was here that Edgar recalled hearing the clacking of sticks and went to investigate the noise. He saw his father and his grandfather apparently fighting with sticks, not understanding at such an early age that they were just training. Edgar said that this scared him because he thought that they were angry with each other, and he did not want to see either one get hurt. As the sticks would violently meet each other, they made a very loud noise which made Edgar feel uneasy, as he had never witnessed such a thing before. He was struggling to understand what his father and grandfather were fighting about. They calmed Edgar down by explaining that they were not fighting but rather only training to fight. This first image of them training together never left him and was burned profoundly into the deepest recesses of his young mind.



Edgar G. Sulite and Helacrio L. Sulite Sr.

Edgar recalled that it was about seven months later when he received his very first lesson in Eskrima from his father, Helacrio L. Sulite Sr. Edgar’s earliest memories regarding training were not fond ones but instead filled with much pain and dislike for his ancestral arts. With a wince on his face Edgar, often talked about his initial early “bad” impressions of Eskrima. At this time Edgar was only six years old, and his first lessons were given at his father’s convenience, done as a kind of experiment. When his father came home from work, and after eating and relaxing for a bit, Edgar dreaded hearing the call to him and his three brothers for Eskrima lessons. The lessons would be long, torturous, and painful. His father was very “strict” and “rigid” in his teachings, and often the manner of teaching would be “heavily laced with discipline,” Edgar recalled.

Edgar told how his father taught him and his brothers using a bamboo stick he had himself cut from his backyard. He ordered them to parry and counter his strikes as he randomly struck at each one of them individually. Most of the time, his father struck at them along awkward and

unexpected angles designed to confuse and deceive them, slipping his attacks just past their best attempts at a defense. Edgar recounted how he and his brothers “suffered” greatly during these early training sessions, receiving their fair share of bruises and sometimes even boils which formed on their hands and on the top of their heads from their father’s heavy strikes. Edgar was hit in the mouth, on occasions, with the rough tip of freshly cut bamboo, making his mouth bleed. This was one of his father’s favorite targets while utilizing a thrusting attack or counter attack towards the face of his opponent.

Regardless of what Edgar was told to do during those early training sessions, he recalled his father would counter immediately, hitting him in numerous places on his body, most often on top of his head, on his hands, arms, and shins. Many lessons were held outside in the dark of evening, with the only light coming from either the stars or the moon. He often spoke of his father placing him on three tortoise shells as a way to train his footwork while also forcing him to defend against random attacks from his father, who would hit him with the freshly cut bamboo sticks when Edgar would fail to block or deflect appropriately. As a direct result of those early experiences, Edgar said that, as a small child, he did not care much for his ancestral warrior arts since all they meant to him were the pain and discomfort associated with those early lessons. He had no choice early-on but to train in his family’s Rapelon Eskrima system, but his heart was not yet in the training. Simply put, he could not go against the wishes of his father.

Edgar did develop an interest in one form of fighting, but it was not Filipino in origin. Western boxing and Japanese Karate are what captured his earliest interest. His father was a reputable ten-round boxer, which initiated an interest in that discipline, and so Edgar asked his father if he could train him to box, which he did. Edgar also developed a keen interest in Karate after reading a book written by Mas Oyama (circa 1967) titled *Vital Karate*. This led Edgar to taking a local Karate class offered close by his school. He was also influenced by his eldest brother, Helacrio Sulite Jr., under whom he received much of his Karate training. After seriously training in both disciplines for a while, and doing a comparison analysis, Edgar eventually began to see more clearly the advantages which his ancestral Filipino arts may have possessed and could offer him as a young warrior in training. It was around the age of 12 (circa 1969) that Edgar developed his genuine interest in learning Eskrima. From this point forward it was no longer a forced activity, but rather a passion and way of life for him.

The Sulite family style was called Sulite-Rapelon, which was first created a couple of generations ago by Edgar’s grand uncle, Luis Sulite, the brother of his grandfather, Mateo Sulite. Edgar’s father, Helacrio L. Sulite Sr., began his training primarily under the tutelage of his father, Mateo Sulite, during the 1930s, but also received training from his uncle, Luis Sulite. As Edgar began to immerse himself in his Eskrima lessons under his father’s watchful eyes, he developed more of an interest in Eskrima, which eventually opened up doors for him to more formal training under some of the most prominent masters of the Ozamis City region of Mindanao, which went well beyond the scope and size of his family system and of his father’s tutelage.

Edgar was fortunate that many of the local masters from the region would often drop by his family home and train with his father and eldest brother, who, around their community, were both known to be effective fighters. Because of his local fame, from time to time various masters would show up to “test” the elder brother, Helacrio Sulite Jr. This became an opportunity for the young and hungry Edgar to associate with these masters and provided him an “in” should he wish to pursue training with them at a future time. And Edgar did eventually go on to train under some of these local masters, and the result of that involvement would be pivotal in his development of the Lameco Eskrima system, which he would develop decades later.

Aside from everything, Edgar was always highly impressed by his father’s prowess in Eskrima. He did, however, have one concern, which was how his father appeared to others while doing it. Edgar would often say, with a smile on his face, that his father was quite fond of the “unorthodox” approach in fighting, and a lot of the techniques looked “made up.” That did not diminish the fact that these techniques were effective in combat! Unorthodox looking or not, they still hurt when they struck their mark, and numerous bumps and bruises left on Edgar’s hands, arms, shins, and head were the proof. Edgar would say that his father’s signature strike, which he would call *pintok*, would unexpectedly come hard and fast directly from overhead, as if he were attempting a hook shot in basketball. It would hit Edgar square on the top of his head every time because it was so awkward and unusual that it was hard to recognize and defend against. Helacrio was also very good at disarming his opponents so quickly, they would not notice what was happening until their weapon was gone from their grasp.

The Sulite-Rapelon system was named after a specific training device which Edgar’s grandfather Mateo, and his granduncle Luis often used. The *rapelon* (meaning, “propeller”) was a stick perfectly balanced and tied in the center by a string and then hung at different levels from a tree limb. It primarily developed alertness, hand, eye, and body coordination, deflections, blocking, and the ability to pass the weapon, as well as footwork and proper body mechanics. Hitting one end of the *rapelon* forced the other end to swing around, and the harder they struck the one end, the faster and more erratic the other end would swing back around at them.

The longer and heavier the hanging stick, the slower it would move about when hit. The shorter and lighter the stick, the quicker and more erratic its response, greatly increasing the level of difficulty in executing defenses against it. In the beginning levels of the Sulite-Rapelon system, the student used a heavier and longer stick, and as the student improved his ability to locate the stick as it moved around faster and faster, the shorter and lighter the hanging stick would become. At the level that Luis, Mateo, Helacrio Sr., and Edgar were training, they would hang a much lighter and shorter stick with both ends sharply pointed, forcing them to use *praksyon* techniques to be able to intercept the *rapelon* as it would spin almost out of control at lightning speed. *Praksyon* are off-timing movements and techniques found in advanced Eskrima training.

Years later as Punong Guro Edgar Sulite was training me with this device, he told me that I would be well advised to wear head gear in the beginning, until I had adjusted to the much quicker spin of the stick coming toward me as compared with a person’s strike. That was sound

advice, as the harder I hit the *rapelon*, the quicker it would spin around, often striking me in the head, well before I was able to locate the threat and adequately respond to it.

Another primary characteristic associated with the Sulite-Rapelon style is the movement concept known as *praksyon*. Meaning “fraction,” this is the method of countering an opponent and intercepting him before he can execute his initial line of attack, and thereby reducing the threat early before collateral damage could be done to self. According to Edgar’s grandfather Mateo, *praksyon* is a very efficient and highly effective concept considered by many to be one of the most advanced levels of the indigenous Filipino warrior arts. It forces you to strike first and strike last, even when your opponent initiates the attack. Edgar used this concept to his advantage often in later years after he had founded the Lameco Eskrima system. The concept allowed him to end a fight before it could begin. He would later see *praksyon* also used years later by Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo, under whom Edgar studied Kalis Ilustrisimo in Manila from 1982-1989. This is interesting because Edgar’s father Helacrio had trained under Melicio Ilustrisimo, the uncle and a teacher of Tatang. Maybe there is a connection there, or, I suppose, it might just be happenstance.

One thing that Edgar specifically recalled was, as a teenager, being made to feel slightly embarrassed by his father’s inability to twirl sticks well as he warmed up. He would regale us with stories of his father performing public demonstrations, and, as his father’s accomplishments and status as a well-respected *eskrimador* were being introduced to the spectators, Helacrio began to warm up by twirling his *garotes* (sticks). Edgar would say, with a huge smile on his face, and just a hint of stifled laughter, that it looked as if he were a beginner because of the rough un-coordinated appearance of the two sticks “jutting” out from all positions in a jerky awkward manner when his father twirled them around. After the warm up was over Edgar felt relieved because he knew that his father would then impress the crowd with his combative effect and movement.

Edgar loved his father beyond what words could express, and, over the years, he did come to understand why the early training was so demanding. However, from the perspective of a young child, regardless of effective combative movement, pain was pain, and it took the fun out of the experience. As a young adult, however, Edgar came to understand perfectly why he was challenged so soon in his training. Fighting is not an enjoyable thing to experience; nor was it ever intended to be. So, why should we train to contend with it as if it were? Besides, this laid a realistic functional foundation under what would come – Edgar would simply call it “fighting form” – when he began his first formal training in De Campo Uno-Dos-Tres Orehenal, under the expert eyes of Jose D. Caballero, the longtime undefeated *juego todo* (“anything goes”) champion fighter from the region in which Edgar spent his teen years. Later on, Manong Caballero began building on the foundation that Edgar’s father had created. Edgar said that, at the very least, his father bequeathed to him and his three brothers a rich legacy and heritage in indigenous martial arts. That was his father’s gift to his four sons and Edgar was proud to receive such a gift.

The Sulite-Rapelon system is one of the five major influences on Lameco Eskrima – and with good reason. Many have found how effective developing broken rhythm in a combative context can be. Most “polished” practitioners have a difficult time adjusting and countering against an ugly, awkward attack coming from unexpected angles with broken timing. Since the passing of Helacrio L. Sulite Sr. the system is now headed by Helacrio “Jun” Sulite Jr., who is well-known in his community for his fighting ability. Some of the more notable qualities and characteristics of the system are *pangilog* (disarms), *praksyon* (fractioning), *pintok* (wrist snap) – overhead wrist snap strikes to the top of the head, or a quick snap to the shin bone – and, of course, the namesake of the system: the propeller-like *rapelon*.

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING WITH MASTERS OF OZAMIS CITY, MINDANAO

GM Jose Diaz Caballero and De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal

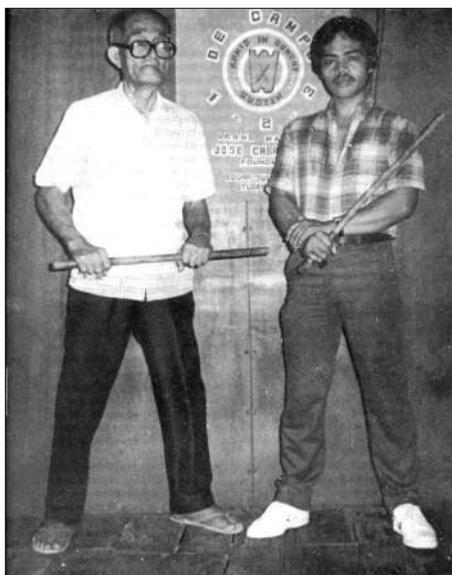
Punong Guro Sulite told me many times that even though he began his training under his father and his eldest brother (in his father's absence), his first real "formal" training in Eskrima came from Jose D. Caballero in the De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal system. Mang Caballero and his system were absolutely essential to the future creation, founding, and eventual worldwide popularity of Lameco Eskrima.

The views of Jose Caballero regarding fighting were simply this: you are only as effective in fighting as you are in training. You will fight the way you train; hence, one of his favorite sayings: "Suffer during training, not during a fight." Simply put, if you fight with weakness and compromise, it is because you have trained with weakness and compromise, and so, to alleviate this, you must remove both elements, and allow yourself to train as you would expect to fight. Permit your training to brush up against reality. Mang Caballero never allowed his students to rest on their haunches while training in De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal. He would push them until their hands bled from striking so much with their *garotes*. He expected students to improve after their first tries, one hard strike behind another, all done with full intention for two or three hours straight, without being given a chance to rest.

De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal is truly combat effective, having been created to win fights and nothing more. It is definitely one of the most effective systems in which I have had the privilege to train, as its foundation is anchored in reality and governed by combative truth. Cause and effect seem to dictate response and counter response as opposed to some orchestra of speculation which may or may not ever come to pass. You are truly effective only when you are in the moment, as it were, on any given day. Punong Guro Sulite used to say: "An ounce of reality is worth a pound of speculation." In other words, combative truth speaks loudest when based on actual experience and rings more valid than arts whose techniques are based on mere speculation.



GM Jose D. Caballero



GM Jose D. Caballero and Edgar G. Sulite posing in front of the De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal Banner which Edgar had made and presented to his teacher. The garote which Jose D. Caballero is holding in this photo is now in the authors private collection.

Nong Otek, as Manong Caballero was known to his family and closest friends, formed De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal in 1925. It is based on his observations of local masters in Barrio Ibo, Toledo City, Cebu, as they would “play” with one another with sticks, knives, and swords during local fiestas, duels, and challenge matches. Since Mang Caballero didn’t have formal instruction, he would go to tournaments, watch street fights evolve, and observe challenges played out, sometimes to the death, during his childhood and adolescence. The techniques of De Campo are based on the actions and reactions which Caballero saw in these fights, and he would teach himself to duplicate their movements. Even as a young man, he noticed the smallest curiosities while these masters fought, and he made mental note as they were revealed to him.

One of the things that he noticed right away, Edgar told us, was that, when the matches would start, both fighters typically walked around each other, watching the other’s movements, analyzing

and waiting for the other to strike first. Sometimes there would be no action at all for the first minute or so of the fight, and Nong Otek saw a lot of advantage in acting to the contrary. So, he established a series of three-second rules for initiating a fight. He usually waited for his opponent to strike first, as he was a counter fighter by nature. However, at the start of the fight, he counted to three, and if his opponent was not ready and had not thrown his first strike within three seconds, then Nong Otek launched his own attack with lightning speed and with strong purpose, catching his opponent by surprise and either break his head or his hand: the two primary targets in De Campo. As his opponent reacted to the damage inflicted, Nong Otek would back just outside of his reach, to see if the opponent could continue or not, but always at the ready to counter attack should the fight continue. In most cases, the fight would be over in mere seconds as few of his opponents could recover and continue fighting, thereby accepting defeat.

Nong Otek would constantly get into trouble as a young boy because he never made it to school on time. As he walked to school, he would see a stick laying on the ground, cut a piece of rattan out of a stalk, or else break a tree branch hanging down low. He just could not resist the temptation to practice Eskrima, resulting in his losing track of time and making him late for school, if he made it there at all. The young Jose Caballero used to get much grief from his father since he wanted only the best for his son and thought education was a necessity that would give him a chance to lift himself out of poverty one day and have a better life than that

of his father. However, young Jose had other interests and fighting was at the top of the list. In 1925, when he was eighteen years old, Caballero formally formed, founded, and named his own system, “De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal Combat Arnis,” and started fighting in tournaments and playing with local masters at fiestas. Based on his successes or failures in these matches, he would update and expand his system appropriately.

Nong Otek always sought to strike two primary targets: the head and the hands. These essential targets were both simple and effective because one or the other would always be made available to him during a match. Nong Otek felt there was an additional advantage to striking to the hands in training sessions: it really developed a high sense of awareness and accuracy, which involved location and relocation principles while busy perceiving a moving threat. He often said the hands were faster, three times smaller, and had four times the mobility of the head; so, if you could locate and strike the hands at will in real-time speed, then you would have no problem striking the head, with all of its restricting limitations of movement. He would go on to explain that if you had problems locating and hitting the hands in a fight, you should instead target the elbows, saying: “If you find the weapon hand hard to hit, target the elbows since they travel within a much narrower radius.” In this way, he looked at things others made difficult and make them simple and achievable.

I have to admit that it is the secondary targets of Manong Caballero which peak my interest the most. They are, in my opinion, nothing short of absolutely brilliant! There were times when Caballero could not hit the head or hands, and so he would, out of necessity, choose to strike at less than ideal targets in order to manufacture opportunity where none readily existed. In utilizing these more painful secondary targets, a distraction was created and, once a reaction was committed to by his opponent, he could then easily break the head of his opponent with finality and claim victory.

In utilizing these secondary targets, the intent was to strike to “maim” or “injure” the opponent. In doing this, Manong Caballero would use the first inch or so of the tip of his *garote* to inflict painful yet “less-than-lethal” wounds. By using the first inch or so of the *garote*, the very edge of the tip, he could choose to create a distraction by breaking the smaller bones of the opponent’s hand, the fingers, thumb, wrist, tip of the elbow, or knock out the knee cap, break and knock the bridge of the nose loose from the face, tear off a piece of an ear, tear off a lip, or tear chunks of tissue from either the forearm or biceps. I think any of these secondary targets more than qualify as a major distraction! Imagine seeing a piece of your biceps dangling from the tip of your opponent’s *garote* as he stands before you awaiting an opportunity to break your head and bring you to the ground in agonizing pain, while securing your defeat and his victory.

If a more serious outcome were sought with intent to produce “lethal” results, Nong Otek would utilize the upper six inches of the *garrote*, targeting the opponent’s temples to – as Manong Caballero would say – “Strike through the eyes.” By striking this far up the *garote*, even striking the hand or wrist can have a devastating effect, more than enough to distract and create an opportunity to strike and break the opponent’s skull. Regardless of whether one chooses to use the tip or the upper six inches of the *garote* to strike the intended target, precision

and intent are required. “Every strike that you throw has to be able to break the head of your opponent, or you should not throw a strike at all,” Caballero warned, “as a strike thrown in weakness and without intention can only invite defeat from a skilled and determined enemy.”

I think it also important to note that, when Manong Caballero fought, he did not look directly at the weapon hand or the head of his opponent. Instead, he used his peripheral vision and would pick a spot located just above the shoulder of the weapon-holding hand, almost as if he were looking off into the distance. By doing this, he would say that he could notice even the slightest movement of his opponent’s weapon. He would explain that peripheral vision creates an appearance that the opponent’s strikes are slower than they really are, allowing you to perceive the threat much more quickly because you are reacting to general movement as opposed to specific movement. By using his peripheral vision, Nong Otek could follow the weapon hand of his opponent wherever it went, and be able to hit it at will with power and focus.

Jose Caballero believed that when an opportunity revealed itself in a fight, it was split equally between you and your opponent. As such, the first one of you to recognize it and take advantage of it will gain the advantage. He used to warn his students that there were no guarantees in combat, only opportunities. Either you take advantage of those fleeting opportunities at the very moment they are presented, or you hesitate, and the same opportunity can be seized by your opponent to break your head. In other words, your failure to act in the moment can cost you the match or your life. Caballero also warned his students not to wait for the opportunity they desired but instead to take the first opportunity that presented itself, and work off of that advantage to end the fight. In any fight, very few opportunities will present themselves in any form, and if you allow even one to pass without seizing it, another may not come along at all; so take any and all opportunities and use them to your advantage. If you do not, your opponent will.

Caballero’s De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal system focused on only two weapon categories: *solo garote* (single stick) and *doble garote* (double sticks). It is said that he fought challenges against opponents brandishing knives, bolos, and swords, and still he maimed, defeated, and sometimes killed them by using only medium weight rattan sticks. Caballero was the undefeated *juego todo* (“anything goes”) champion of his region, which gained him much notoriety and respect from his fellow *eskrimadors*. He would often go to tournaments during local fiestas and place his name on the list of fighters, only to find many who had previously enlisted to fight, rushing to withdraw their names for fear of fighting him. Caballero would then withdraw his own name and watch the other fighters run back to the table to get back on the list. Nong Otek was fond of doing this, for no other reason than just to gauge the response. He enjoyed the profound respect of his peers as well as from all of the battle-hardened *eskrimadors* in his region. In fact, sometimes, when he would walk down the road, people crossed to the other side to greet him out of respect, leaving Caballero to ask: “When are we going to play?” To which they would respond: “Joe, mine is only for playing. Yours is for killing. So, you and I will not be playing

Certificate of Authenticity

Issued to

DAVE GOULD

Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero memorabilia items:

One wooden bolo
Two sticks
Three wooden knives

This certifies that the memorabilia items are original handcraft of the late Grandmaster Jose D. Caballero.

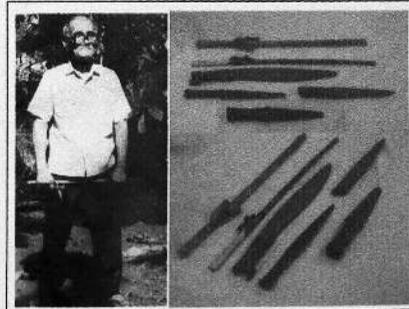
Notes:

Stick one was used during the photo session with PG Edgar Sulite and can be seen in his book "Masters of Arnis, Kali and Eskrima".
Stick two was used while sparring with his number one protégé Ireneo "Eric" Olavides.

Authenticated by:

Amparo Lebumfacil Caballero
Amparo Lebumfacil Caballero
Eric Olavides
Eric Olavides

Edilberta Caballero Liawao
Edilberta Caballero Liawao



Certificate of Authenticity for several weapons in the authors private collection which belonged too and were hand carved by GM Jose D. Caballero over 70 years ago. The certificate is signed by: Mrs. Amparo Lebumfacil Caballero, the widow of Manong Caballero, his Daughter, Edilberta Caballero Liawao and Manong Eric Olavides.

anytime soon.” To which Nong Otek replied: “If yours is not for killing then why waste your time training?”

De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal is classified as a “largo-medio” (long to medium) range fighting system with close range implications. It has only seven strikes, three double stick patterns, no blocks, no hand contact between players, no disarms, no *punyos* (butt strikes), only three types of footwork, 10 striking groups, a plethora of group mixing, three finishing strikes, alertness training, and specialization of grouping/striking, and thousands of hours of sparring against single and multi-person scenarios. It is simply a system of a continuous series of hard destructive strikes, counter strikes, and strike combinations designed to work well against chaos and uncertainty, which are all too commonly found in a street fight as it dynamically evolves from second to second. Even though the system was designed to be most effective in the “medio-largo” range, it is also quite effective in the close range as well. Caballero said that he would shorten the path of his strike to accommodate the strengths of his system at that distance by drawing the *punyo* closer to his body while striking, thereby decreasing the radius of his strikes but not sacrificing his power or lightning-quick hand speed.

Caballero was a counter fighter by nature. When attacked, he would retreat to just within an inch of *largo* range while striking to break the hand of his opponent. Once the tip of his

opponent's weapon barely passed his nose, Caballero would immediately charge forward to strike his opponent's head. Anticipating a counter attack, Caballero would then retreat back into *largo* range, just outside of his opponent's reach; again waiting to attack whatever angle his opponent might counter with. Manong Caballero would say that the perfect fighting range was found "when you could feel the fibers of your opponent's stick brush up against your nose. At this range you cannot possibly get any closer to your opponent without being more in harm's way and you cannot possibly get any further away from your opponent without being found in deficit." The master would gauge the proper fighting distance based on these criteria and, on average, his fights were said to have lasted only three to five seconds each, before his opponent would be on the ground bleeding from the head, unable to continue.

Jose Caballero made his living for several decades traveling from island to island in the Philippines, challenging various masters to a fight for money, bringing along his father-in-law to act as his referee. He would go to an island and challenge the best fighter there, make side bets with the residents of the village, then fight and defeat his opponent. He then returned home to Barrio Ibo, Toledo City, Cebu, and lived off the profits made from the fight. When he ran low of money, once again he would be off to another island for another fight. Caballero



These were all hand carved by GM Jose D. Caballero circa 1940s and were all used often by him during his personal training. The second stick from the top was used by GM Caballero in the books: "Secrets of Arnis" and "Masters of Arnis, Kali and Eskrima" both authored by Edgar G. Sulite. The stick on top was used by both Manong Ireneo "Eric" Olavides and Edgar G. Sulite to spar against Manong Caballero during their private lessons with him at his home in Ozamis City, Mindanao, Philippines in De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal. The bolo and training knives were used by Manong Caballero in training. One of his students would feed him while holding these and he would work his counters with either solo garote or doble garote against a knife wielding or bolo wielding attacker.

did this until he got too old to fight for a living and was forced into teaching. That was when, after hearing of Caballero's reputation, a young and impressionable Edgar Sulite sought him out as a teacher.

From the onset it was quite difficult for Edgar to gain the confidence of the "old man," as Edgar would fondly refer to him. In fact, it would take one full year of "courting" him with much patience and determination, in addition to providing him with poultry and dairy products when Edgar had collected enough money to purchase such things. All of this was done in an honest attempt to convince the master of his sincere desire to be accepted as an earnest student seeking only combative knowledge and not presenting himself as a "spy" out to steal his secrets, as was the belief of old warriors back in the day.

In order to gain the confidence of Caballero, Edgar would go by his house almost every day and inquire if he could train with the "old man," yet day after day he would be denied and told to go away. When Edgar could get a small amount of money together he would buy small gifts of chicken, eggs, or milk and place these items on the doorstep of Caballero's house, as a good will gesture. He hoped these would gain him a small measure of influence with the very sought out and highly respected Eskrima master. Edgar's persistence and dedication were unwavering, and soon Caballero came to recognize this. After almost a year of this "courting" the "old man" gave in and accepted Edgar as a student of De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal, several months before Edgar's 18th birthday in 1975, and an odyssey began.

The problem from the beginning was that Jose Caballero felt that, if you had trained in any other system, the only goal you could possibly achieve by training under him was to "steal his secrets" and teach them to your group or clan. It was feared that one day those "secrets" might be used in combat against him or his best students. This was a common way of thinking among the "old warriors" of that time, and for good reason; at one point in time it was true. Indeed, many systems were violated in this manner during the turn of the 20th century when Caballero was raised, and the mistrust of anyone not of one's family or clan was quite common. Since Edgar was neither of the Caballero family nor of his clan, naturally, he was met initially with suspicion and was much scrutinized. However, Jose Caballero, by then feeble and old and not able to fight challenges for a living any longer, had little choice but to offer himself as a teacher to try and make a little money to help pay his bills and provide sustenance for his family.

Edgar told me several times that when he was learning De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal from Manong Caballero, it was the training itself he initially hated most because it was so demanding and challenging to him physically. But in only a short time he came to appreciate fully the combative value being laid at his feet by training in this system under such a great and experienced warrior. Because there are no blocks or disarms in De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal, and there are only two types of strikes (one to kill and one to maim), it was sometimes very difficult to train because you would repeat the same grouping and finishing strikes again and again, thousands of times per training session. That said, the results were highly effective, and that fact could not be argued.



The author posing with two of the hand carved garotes which belonged to GM Jose D. Caballero and are now in the authors private collection

Because training and sparring sessions were conducted without protective equipment, Edgar got hit thousands of times on the hands, wrists, and forearms, making each strike painful beyond belief. This is what forced him to further develop his hand evasions revealed in Caballero's well thought-out progression of *kaabtik*, or "alertness" training. In *largo* range, even though the body and head are kept just out of the opponent's reach, the hands, wrists, and forearms can still be struck. In order to stay close enough to one's opponent to take advantage of opportunities as they revealed themselves during the fight, one had to master hand evasions for those times when one's opponent tried to target those extremities of the body.

At the earliest stages of their student-teacher relationship, Edgar felt that Caballero was being stingy with his teachings as he kept forcing Edgar to repeat the same thing every time. What he eventually came to understand was that Caballero was trying to get him to master the basics against

all situations and probable scenarios, and to learn all that each had to offer in street combat. To learn them so well, that he not only learned the strength of the technique, concept, or principle, but also gleaned the inherent weakness which was the opposite side of the strength itself. Only when he fully understood the weakness of what he did could he then assess fair value to the strength. Only then could he come to depend on it, as sometimes the weakest part of a technique proves to be greater than the strength, and, therefore, becomes ill-advised to use under certain conditions or circumstances. De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal became the confidence system of Edgar Sulite in regard to impact weapons, and every time he was forced to defend life and limb, fight a challenge, or spar, he reverted back to the lessons learned and combative abilities instilled during his time under the tutelage of Jose Caballero. In the words of Jose D. Caballero: "You train to live, not die."

De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal utilizes one hard strike thrown after another. You strike until your hand bleeds, and then you strike some more. Caballero's requirement was that you strike as hard and as fast as you could for 15 minutes without slowing or stopping. Then you did two minutes of hard aggressive footwork followed by 15 more minutes of striking without resting, continuously, for three hours a day. He would have you break small coconuts, hit tires, and the daily sparring was rough – no head gear or padding. The rules of training were such that, if the head were open, you were required to take the shot. The only way that you could truly protect your head and weapon hand was to constantly keep both just outside of your opponent's reach, all while staying highly aware of your opponent's every move and maintaining the ability to act



A closer look at two of the hand carved garotes which belonged to and were used by GM Jose D. Caballero.

on any additional opportunities as they reveal themselves to you in real-time, until the fight has been won. Another of GM Caballeros favorite sayings regarding this concept was: “Strike first and strike last, even when your opponent initiates the attack.” Even though his opponent might try to throw the initial strike, GM Caballero beat him to it and then strike last, as well, ending the fight to his advantage.

It got so bad at times during his training sessions that often Edgar, being absolutely exhausted, would pretend that he had to relieve himself just to be able to get away from the “old man’s” critical eyes for only a few minutes, so he could catch his breath enough to continue training. Edgar recalled GM Caballero thinking he had a faulty bladder because he needed to “relieve” himself so many times in a three-hour session. Edgar would excuse himself, head for the bushes, and, bent over, resting on his knees and catching his breath, he would think to himself: “Surely, this old man will be the death of me!” Trying to steal one more minute to recoup from his exhaustion, then came the words he hated to hear the most from the “old man”: “Gar! Back!”

Edgar went to the home of GM Caballero for training whether or not he had the money to do so, because he really wanted to train, and he hoped the “old man” might make an exception due to Edgar’s poverty. As he arrived at the house, GM Caballero would approach him and ask if he had any money. Edgar replied with a “yes” or “no,” depending on his circumstances. If the answer was “no,” GM Caballero went into his home and got his receipt book showing the receipt for the student who had just trained before Edgar, that day, and say: “You see? ‘So and

so' was just here, and he paid this much.” Then he told Edgar that, without money, he would not be able to train today. Edgar always hung his head in disappointment, as he truly desired to train.

I remember a situation where Edgar told me that he did not have any money to pay and Manong Caballero refused to teach him for the day. He was told that, since he was there already, he should go into the back yard and train by himself, swinging his garote. GM Caballero went and sat on the porch with his back turned to Edgar and looked off into the distance. If Edgar began to relax in the execution of his strikes, the “old man” shouted, “More sound!” Although still sitting with his back turned, he was actively teaching Edgar, if only by audible sound. Edgar would then start striking his garote with gusto at the prospect of GM Caballero offering something more for his efforts. Manong Caballero used to demand that each strike which you threw in training had to have enough power to break the head of your opponent, or, he said, you should not throw the strike at all. If he did not hear the wind swishing across the tip of the garote as each strike cut the air with full intention, he would quickly say: “No sound!”, “Wrong sound!”, or “More sound!” He taught Edgar that, when his stick was silent, his capacity to fight was diminished.

It was hard training, but Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite realized how blessed he was for being given the chance to train and learn from GM Caballero, and he valued their friendship and all that GM Caballero shared with him. It is funny because later Edgar told me he first thought GM Caballero to be his stingiest teacher because he taught so few techniques and made him repeat tens of thousands of times what he did teach him. Where some of Edgar's other Instructors overwhelmed him with techniques, sometimes showing him hundreds of different techniques per training session, even though Edgar said he walked away from those training sessions remembering only about 10 techniques if he were lucky and forgetting the rest. Yet, he remembered 100% of what he was required to do in each session with GM Caballero. Hence, one of Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite's favorite sayings: “Repetition is the mother of all skills.” This reference was made specifically regarding how GM Caballero taught his students, and what was required of each of those who trained under him in De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal.

When Edgar looked back on his previous training, he realized most of the things he had received from some of his other Masters, he did not truly master because he spent so little time evaluating each technique, concept, or principle to the point where he fully understood them. Whereas, GM Caballero forced him to truly master each strike, counter strike, and counter-to-counter strike as well as forcing him to verify each one every time they faced one another in hard sparring. By forcing Edgar to repeat those same strikes and combinations of strikes against an unexpected random attack or counter attack in real-time by literally hundreds of thousands of repetitions and countless hours of sparring, Edgar had no choice but to master the combative equation itself, the “art of fighting,” if you will. He came to realize that GM Caballero was not the stingiest of his Teachers but rather the most generous because he cared enough to force Edgar, not to become a master of meaningless techniques and countless series of redundant drills, but rather to master combative movement and the fight itself.

De Campo Uno-Dos-Tres Orehenal is one of the five major influences of the Lameco Eskrima System, and, since the passing of GM Jose Diaz Caballero in 1987, the system has passed on to his number-one protégé; Master Ireneo L. Olavides, who resides, and can be contacted, in Cagayan do Oro, Mindanao, Philippines. For anyone who truly wants to connect with the true combative essence of Lameco Eskrima, it is essential to investigate further into De Campo 1-2-3 Orehenal. A few years ago, Mang Eric Olavides transferred full authority back to the Caballero family when he announced GM Manuel “Mawe” Caballero as the head of the system; and both Mang “Mawe” and his son can be reached in Toledo, Cebu, Philippines for training and further information regarding the system.

Tuhon Leo T. Gaje, Jr. and Pekiti-Tirsia Kali

Edgar G. Sulite first met Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje, Jr. of Pekiti-Tirsia Kali fame through two of Gaje’s nephews, Lowell and Jun Pueblos. Both of these men were good friends, training partners, and early sparring partners of Edgar. Leo Gaje is a living legend, having been one of the first Filipinos to introduce their ancestral warrior arts to the world, first in New York circa 1970 and eventually in Europe and beyond in the decades to follow.



Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje Jr. taken in March 1996 at Mambukal, Negros, Visayas, Philippines during a trip where the author was training with him in the Kali Pekiti-Tirsia System.

According to Leo Gaje, he was first taught Pekiti-Tirsia by his Grandfather, Conrado Tortal, who is credited with formally founding the system in 1898. However, Tortal family history recorded the system being taught by the family as many as four generations before, but not in the same form as the now-recognized system with its rich curriculum and identifiable moves, known today as Pekiti-Tirsia Kali. Tuhon Gaje was well-known in the Philippines at the time Edgar met and trained with him. In fact, Gaje had political clout at the highest levels of the Philippine Government, all the way to President Marcos, General Estrada, and General Ver, all of whom he would eventually introduce to Edgar. This was fortunate because, years later, he would be in need of employment when he relocated to the Metro Manila around 1981.

Edgar would recall Gaje’s ability to speak with such eloquence that he could convince a man to do anything with nothing more than his words. Edgar once said of Gaje, “As well as having *anting-anting* for fighting, he must also have had a buried amulet for the art of speaking,



Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje Jr. and the Author taken in March 1996 at Mambukal Resort, Visayas, Philippines during a training session in Kali Pekiti-Tirsia.



Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje Jr. and his Nephew, Master Jun Pueblos who in addition to being a practitioner of Kali Pekiti-Tirsia was also the training partner, sparring partner and long time student of Edgar G. Sulite in the Lameco Eskrima System.

because he could speak as if he had a silver tongue.” I found this to be true in my own training under Tuhon Gaje; he can be quite convincing, and he is indeed a very eloquent speaker. Even so, he speaks loudest and with greatest clarity when he moves, since he allows his movement and abilities bespeak his combative capability and effect. Tuhon Gaje was one of Edgar’s favorite and most respected teachers.

Edgar would say that the most important lesson which he received from Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. was to always go straight to the top. Never waste your time with anyone who answers to someone else, but rather go to the very person who has complete authority, and then everyone below him will bend to you and your demands. This is true in all aspects of life and business in general, as well. This philosophy did Tuhon Gaje well in his years of doing business since, eventually, he met with Heads of States and other people of power in order to perpetuate his trade. Edgar learned much of business through his association with Tuhon Gaje and, through their interactions, he witnessed the advantages and disadvantages which politics bring to any situation, and the added risks associated with that activity.

Out of all of the Masters under whom Edgar trained in the Philippines, he said, more-so than any other, it was probably Tuhon Gaje who had prepared and placed him on the long road to success. He was the first to bring Edgar to Manila and put him up in a nice hotel when he relocated there in 1981 from Ozamis City, Mindanao, Philippines. Tuhon Gaje created the opportunity for Edgar to get a job in personal protection for both General Estrada and General Ver, who, as Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense in the Philippine Government at that time, were both only answerable to President Marcos. It was also Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. who created the environment for Edgar to meet and subsequently become the Eskrima teacher of Roland Dantes, a huge action star in Filipino Cinema. This opened up many essential doors for Edgar to pass through on the way to propagating the Lameco Eskrima System as we know

it today. That pivotal meeting set the stage for Edgar to eventually meet GM Antonio “Tatang” Ilustrisimo and the rest of the Bakbakan group, who later played a critical role in the exposure of Lameco Eskrima, both in book form and through opportunities for Edgar to share his

teachings internationally, for the first time, and so to establish long-lasting friendships and bonds with people he met as a direct result.

Tuhon Gaje was indeed a very important component in Edgar's future, and regardless of how the waters of history may become muddy on this particular subject, when the waters eventually become clear, people will see the influence that Tuhon Gaje really had on Edgar and the Lameco Eskrima System since it was the logistics pertaining to the Pekiti-Tirsia Kali system which became the model for how Edgar formulated and organized his own system of Lameco Eskrima's infrastructure and propagation. Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. never saw himself simply as an Instructor of the Filipino Warrior Arts who limited himself to the Philippines, exclusively. Rather, he felt himself to be an Ambassador of the Filipino warrior arts and culture, and so he took both to the world and did not wait for the world to come to either him or the Philippines. This, then, was the seed also planted in the mind of Edgar G. Sulite when he was training under Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr., as it gave him a world view of what Lameco Eskrima could become and a determination not to wait on others to act on his behalf but rather to go out and act on behalf of himself; and that is exactly what Edgar went on to do in propagating the Lameco Eskrima System throughout the world.

Edgar said of Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. that he was probably the most versatile of all of the Masters under whom he had trained, that he was one of the few who possessed all three qualities required of a great Master: 1) he knows his discipline inside and out, not just the strengths



Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje Jr. in Visayas, Philippines (1996) training with the author along with one of his students, Mr. Brian Lane who also was a student of PG Edgar G. Sulite in Lameco Eskrima.



Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. teaching at the Mambukal Resort Pekiti-Tirsia Kali Training Camp in Visayas, Philippines in March 1996.



Tom Sotis (AMOK! Founder), David E. Gould and Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr while the three were training together in Bacolod City, Visayas, Philippines.

but also any weakness' which also exist in the system; 2) he has the ability to teach his progression with pristine clarity in a manner by which a student could learn his system thoroughly, and; 3) he has the ability to fight with effect and to apply all that has been learned in a realistic environment. Tuhon Gaje was the “whole package,” Edgar would say.

Training in Pekiti-Tirsia Kali was not easy for Edgar as Tuhon Gaje was a very demanding instructor. He

would have Edgar get up really early in the morning, long before the sun came up, and drill him in hard aggressive footwork and strikes for hours before entering into the core of their lesson for the day. Edgar used to say that Tuhon Gaje made him get up so early, he had turned the roosters against him because he woke them up long before even they wanted to get up and announce to the world the morning sun. Edgar recalled, at one point, he would try and get up before Tuhon Gaje (a rare thing indeed!), then quickly go out and begin his footwork, so he could tell Tuhon Gaje he had already completed it, so they could skip it and move right into the lesson. Tuhon Gaje would not have this and always made Edgar repeat the footwork again under his observation, which was a grueling task in and of itself. Since hours of exhausting footwork are one of the essential elements of Pekiti-Tirsia Kali, you were required to do it, and a lot of it, under the tutelage of Tuhon Gaje.



Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. teaching Espada-y-Daga during a training session with the author in Bacolod City, Visayas, Philippines.

Edgar remained a dedicated and loyal student of Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. and, at one point, was rewarded by becoming the head representative for the Pekiti-Tirsia Kali Organization in the Philippines, answering only to Tuhon Leo T. Gaje, Jr. and Tuhon Jerson “Nene” Tortal, and to no one else below them, making Edgar G. Sulite the third highest-ranking person in Pekiti-Tirsia Kali during that period. At this time, people

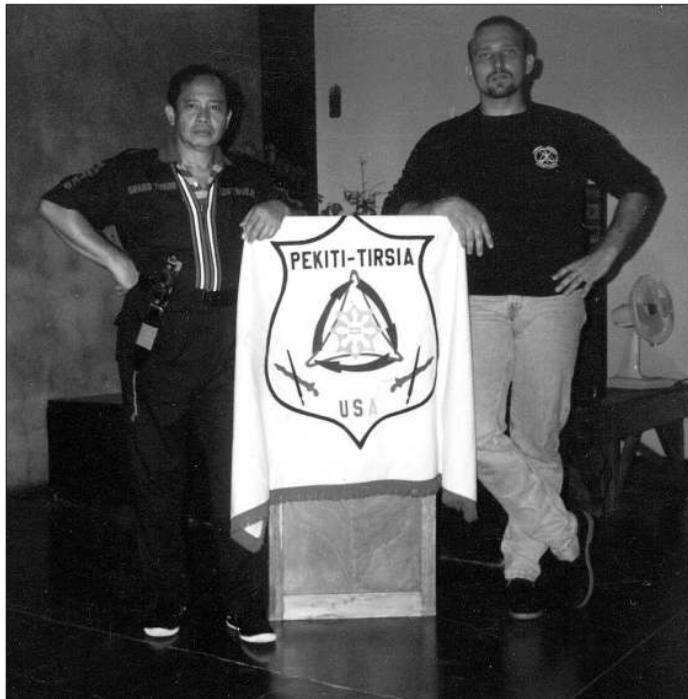
were even calling Edgar “Little Gaje” because the two men were inseparable, spending so much time together, and had become such good friends. In those days, whenever you saw Tuhon Gaje, Edgar was never far behind.

In addition, it was Tuhon Gaje who first introduced Edgar to Guro Dan Inosanto, in the United States of America, during the Indian Creek, Tennessee Camp in 1989. This was a pivotal meeting which began a mutually beneficial relationship lasting until Punong Guro Edgar G. Sulite passed away on April 10, 1997. Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. was also the one that recommended that Guro Dan Inosanto accept Edgar as his instructor and begin training in the Lameco Eskrima System under him, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Pekiti-Tirsia Kali is one of the five major influences of the Lameco Eskrima System, which is still headed by Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr., who, to this day, actively propagates the system worldwide, based out of his hometown of Bacolod City, Negros, Philippines. Anyone wishing to further explore into the origins of Lameco Eskrima, or simply interested in expanding his or her knowledge of the Filipino Ancestral Warrior Arts would do well to contact him for training.



The author and one of his students in Lameco Eskrima, Mr. Brian Lane training during the Mambukal Resort Pekiti-Tirsia Kali Training Camp in Visayas, Philippines in March 1996 under the tutelage of Tuhon Leo T. Gaje Jr. and Tuhon Jerson “Nene” Tortal.



Tuhon Leo Tortal Gaje Jr. and the Author taken in March 1996 at Mambukal Resort, Visayas, Philippines during training in the Pekiti-Tirsia Kali System.

CHAPTER 10:

THE LAMECO ESKRIMA SYSTEM IN APPLICATION

Hospecio "Bud" Balani Jr. Photo Sequence



Hospecio "Bud" Balani Jr. and Johnathan Balani square off with their blades drawn and at the ready in the "bukas" (open) position.



JB initiates a high forehand strike against HBB who steps forward and intercepts with "panipis" which is an immediate counter strike meaning to "slice thinly", down the center line of JB.



HBB then continues to pass the blade of JB with "waslik" (throwing the hand) as he positions to counter to center.



As HBB clears center by fully passing the blade of JB he then begins his counter using "bagsak" which is a vertical strike along the centerline.



JB reacts by intercepting the attack with his safety hand and checks the weapon hand of HBB as he attempts to counter with "bagsak".



HBB reacts quickly to clear the obstruction with "patibong" (trapping) by pulling the safety hand of JB from his own weapon hand.



HBB then pulls the hand of JB forward in an attempt to imbalance him as he prepares to counter.



As HBB initiates his counter attack to the head, JB recognizes and counters the attempt by straightening his arm forward thereby jamming his forearm into the pathway of HBB as he attempts to counter, creating another obstruction.



HBB clears the obstruction with a technique known as "dukot" which allows him to drop the butt of his weapon allowing it to dip down and to the inside of JB which will allow him the opportunity to re-engage with a counter strike.



HBB then moves forward with the left leg as he breaches into close range and grabs for the back of the head of JB.



Hospicio "Bud" Balani Jr. forces the head of Johnathan Balani down driving him into the tip of his "pinute" to end the situation.

Steve Grody Photo Sequence

Application of Lameco Eskrima Drill #3



Steve Grody and Petar Sardelich square off with one another in the open position.



PS steps forward to strike, and SG drops back with Illustrisimo Retirada foot work while dropping his weight into his strike down to Petar's weapon hand.



As PS follows through with his strike, SG retracts his stick back and up while he prepares to advance forward.



Steve Grody advances forward and follows up with a circular strike (paikot) striking Petar Sardelich in the top of the head. Note that even though Steve is doing a strike early (before Petar's extension) that he is still moving back to the farthest distance from which he can strike.

Notes from Steve Grody regarding his photo sequences: Though I am illustrating “techniques” here, they are meaningless without the training process through which choices are made on the fly and fluidly changing from moment to moment. It is crucial that each individual works to “own” the material and know what he or she can do in real time.

Application of Lameco Eskrima Drill #3



Steve Grody and Petar Sardelich square off with one another in the open position.



SG feints a strike (enganyo) to PS to draw a counter-strike from him.



PS takes the bait and strikes for the hand. SG stops his feint short to allow the strike of PS to pass missing his hand.



Steve Grody then advances forward before Petar Sardelich can recover his missed strike and Steve hits him in the hand with a circular strike (paikot). The important points here are to fake with conviction but without moving in too close, and then to strike at the earliest point after his strike passes. Additionally, Steve has to take into account the reach of the opponent, which in this case is considerable.

David E. Gould Photo Sequence



David E. Gould and Michael Frazier square off with one another in the "bukas" (open) position.



MF throws a high forehand strike and DEG responds simultaneously with "panipis", which is an immediate counter strike meaning to "slice thinly", down the center line of MF.



DEG completes his narrow counter strike following it all the way down the center line of MF.



DEG then continues to push the weapon hand of MF until it has past his own centerline and simultaneously counters again with a vertical strike to the center mass of MF cutting deep into his head.



Then DEG continues the narrow vertical strike downward as he cuts the arm of MF in an attempt to keep him from coming back with a counter strike.



David E. Gould then closes distance while checking the back of the arm as he thrusts deeply with the tip of his "pinute" into the side of Michael Frazier to end the situation.



David E. Gould and Michael Frazier square off with one another in the "bukas" (open) position.



MF throws a high forehand strike and DEG responds simultaneously with "cruzada" which is a counter strike resembling a "Cross" when completed. DEG intercepts the weapon hand and as he repositions himself he strikes a horizontal strike to the stomach of MF.



MF follows through with his initial strike and then sets himself up for a counter strike as DEG recognizes what is happening and moves his blade upward to intercept the counter strike once it is thrown.



MF comes back with a high back hand counter strike and DEG intercepts it with a vertical strike down center cutting into the arm of MF as he simultaneously checks the back of the arm to prevent the strike to follow through.



DEG then passes the weapon hand of MF as he repositions himself more to the inside and thrusts deep into the heart of MF with his "pinute".



DEG then cuts upward with his blade, "hiwang paakyat" catching MF in the center of his jaw.



DEG follows through with his upward cut, "hiwang paakyat" forcing the head of MF to be lifted up.



Then David E. Gould checks the inside of the weapon hand as he simultaneously counters deep into the heart of Michael Frazier thereby finishing the situation.

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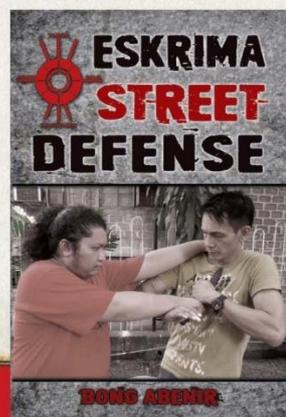
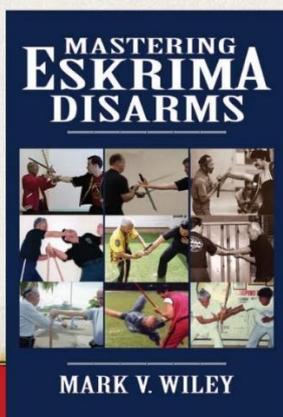
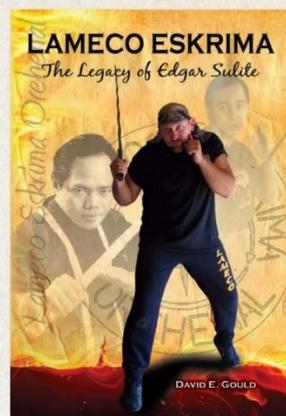
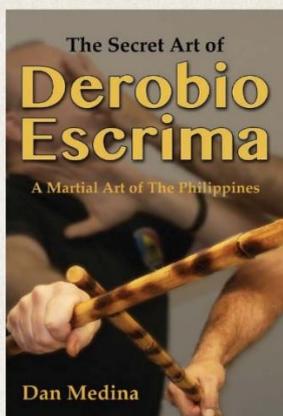
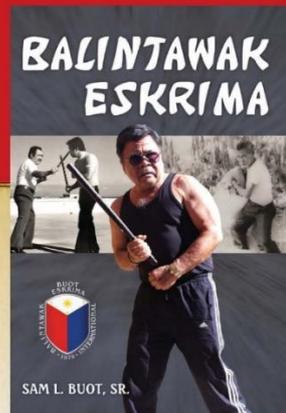


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