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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Cutting Edge, March/April 1990, Vol. 1 Issue 2**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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# THE CUTTING EDGE

Volume 1, Issue 2

Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

March/April, 1990



## Teacher Update

1. Recertification for Teachers—Teacher recertification procedure has been simplified. Policies and Procedures *now* reads as follows:

### 1.03 Certified Teachers

4) All Certified Teachers must renew their certification every three years by sending to the Vice Pres.:

- a) A letter of intention
- b) A \$50 non-refundable fee
- c) An updated resume showing that the Teacher has continued to work and hone his/her skills
- d) *Information on, and results of, any & all certification fight tests they have held during the 3 yrs., including adjudicator and date.* OR – a half-inch unedited VHS video (from stationary camera) of candidate teaching 2 students a piece of fight choreography from a certification test of their own (not to exceed 7 minutes).

## Membership Cards

Many of you have inquired about membership cards. Others are asking, "... what cards?"

In the past, there has been a sporadic, inconsistent policy of sending out membership cards to members as they pay yearly dues. For several years, only members who specifically requested cards received them, which is why so many have never heard of them.

The problem is simple: Time & Money. SAFD Officers volunteer their time & receive no pay. Also, the SAFD budget is very tight.

The officers can't come up with a compelling reason to put more time & money into cards. Maybe some day we can have it all, but for now, we must choose. For the time, membership cards are out.

## 10% Discount Announced for SAFD Members

Membership has its privilege! Effective now, members who are paid up and in good standing for three or more years are entitled to a 10% discount on all future SAFD-sponsored workshops.

Members can take advantage of this discount at the National Stage Combat Workshop, the Advanced Actor/Combatant Workshop, and any other national or regional workshops sponsored by SAFD.

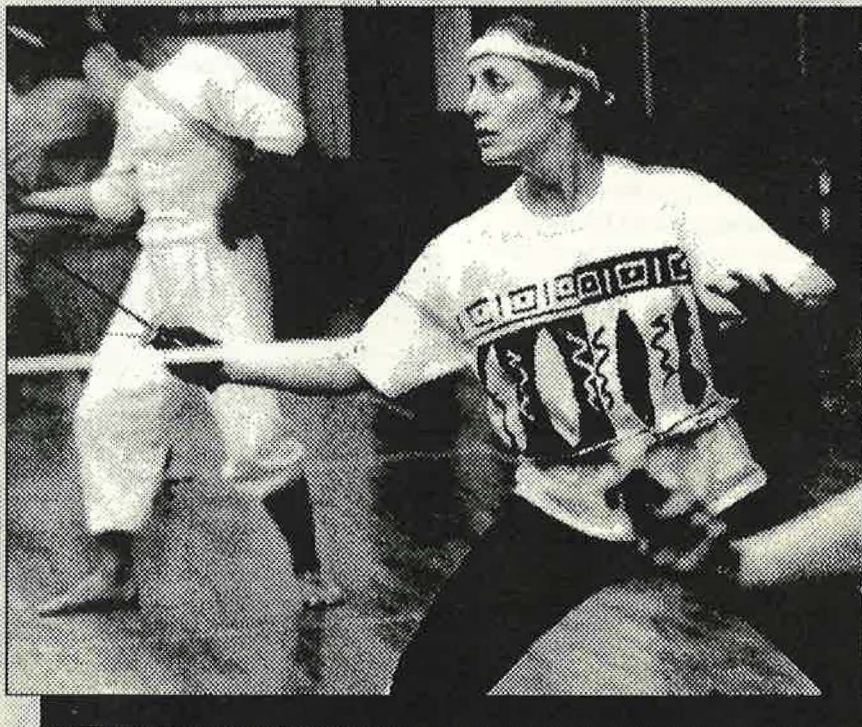
"This was conceived as a small thank you to the faithful," says SAFD

President J.Allen Suddeth. "The future should bring more good news for the membership in the form of grants, corporate sponsorship, scholarships and more."

So, those of you who dutifully paid their dues in '88, '89 and 1990—take advantage of your discount to pay a visit to the national workshop in Las Vegas!

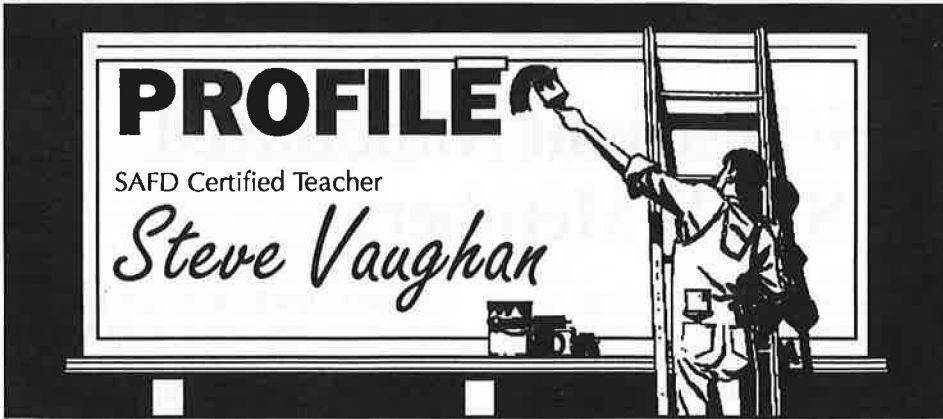
Keep your eye on future issues of *The Cutting Edge* for updates on more perks in the works.

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*Women of the SAFD—that's right, you—the 34 certified female Actor Combatants, and you—our one and only female Certified Teacher, The Cutting Edge wants to hear from you. How's it going? What are your experiences working with teachers, directors and choreographers in a primarily male-dominated area? Are you working? When you do, are you taken seriously?*

*As a choreographer, a teacher, and an officer of the SAFD I want to know how you are doing out there. Tell your story—your point of view, your problems, your anecdotes, and your suggestions for change. Let the SAFD know what's going on with you and how the Society can best respond to your needs.*



*Profiles will be a regular feature in The Cutting Edge saluting SAFD members across the country.*

Steve Vaughan is fighting the good fight in an unlikely locale—his home base is an 80 year old farmhouse in rural upstate New York. He and his wife (long time SAFD member Emily Conable) forsook the Big Apple several years ago for country life and haven't looked back.

Currently teaching stage combat at no less than six schools, Steve squeezes time to choreograph for the area LORT theatres, and finds his calendar booked well into 1991.

Steve's interest in combat dates from childhood roughhousing with his three younger brothers on the family farm in Maryland. "We cut quarterstaffs in the woods and had Robin Hood battles," he recalls. Later, in college, he was cast in a restoration play containing a duel. "They handed us cavalry sabres," he moans. No one got killed, but I got hooked."

In New York, Steve studied theatrical fencing with Joe Daley at HB Studios and got a job performing at the New York Renaissance Faire. It was there he first heard Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth's name recommended and there also that he began his jousting career.

A five year jousting veteran, Steve retired his lance when he and Em moved to the farm. But he's kept his gauntlet in (so to speak) by training others. He's coordinating the four-man joust for this year's Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire.

Steve first studied with, and later taught with Allen Suddeth at A.C.T.S. (Actors Combat Training School) in New York, as well as choreographing for the stage, the soaps and some 40 fights at the NY Renfest.

He and Emily were among the founding members of New York stunt group, Fights R Us. Indeed, that's how they met—at swordpoint.

Steve teaches at Niagara University, University of Rochester, State University of NY-Brockport, West Side Rochester Academy of Performing Arts, Eastman School of Music and the National Technical Institute of the Deaf.

Called to N.T.I.D. to choreograph their production of *Macbeth*, Steve found himself forced to improvise a method for his actors to sign while holding onto their weapons. "It was either that or stage a double disarm every time Macduff and

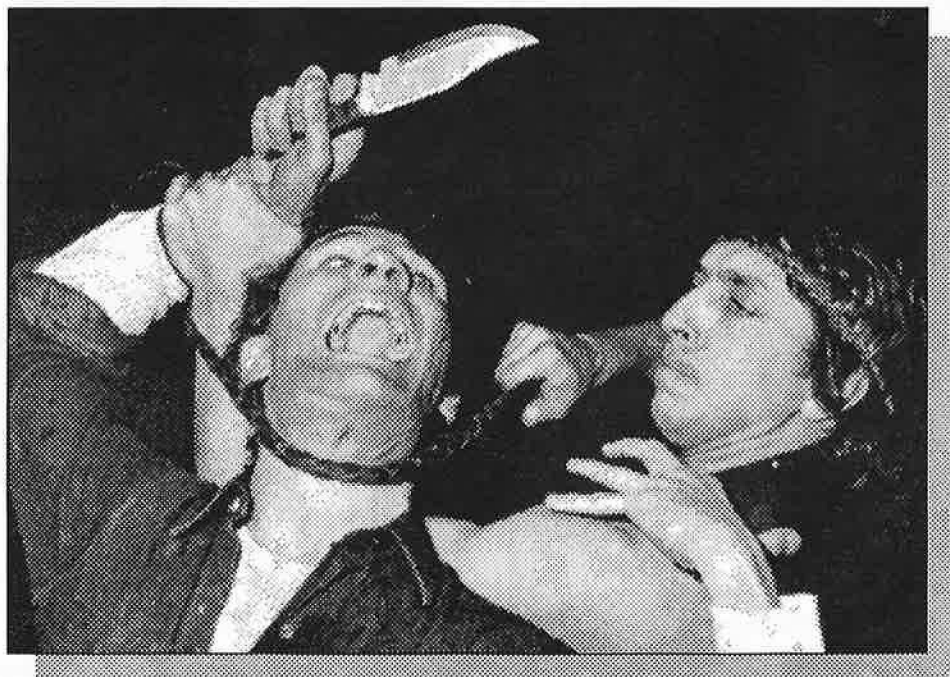


*Buckaroos Will & Steve. After this photo, Steve taught class all day, unaware he was still wearing the pencil moustache. He's yet to live it down.*

Macbeth exchange lines!" he laughs.

Presently, Steve is choreographing *Servant of Two Masters*, *La Boheme*, *West Side Story*, and working with Fight Masters Chris Villa and David Leong on the Penn. Ren. Faire. Spare time, if any, is spent making his own theatrical weapons in his basement, renovating the farmhouse and helping Emily ride herd on junior jousters Will (nearly 3) and Zachary (nine months). Life on the Vaughnderosa couldn't be better.

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*Steve Vaughan takes a really good look at Fight Master Richard Raether's molars in a tender scene from SAFD President J. Allen Suddeth's off-Broadway show *A Night At the Fights*.*



## AEA Improves Combat Regulations in Chicago

Congratulations and thanks to David Wooley (SAFD Chicago Regional Rep.) for helping Actors Equity improve the Chicago Off Loop contract.

### AEA COLT Contract Revisions

#### 55. STAGE FIGHTING / VIOLENCE

The following regulations shall be followed whenever a production requires physical violence with or without weapons.

A. The Actor shall agree at the time of the signing of the contract in a rider to participate in stage fighting /violence. Following the signing of the contract and upon the request of the Producer and the permission of Actors' Equity, the Actor may agree to participate in stage fighting/violence upon the signing of an additional rider.

B. If the production does not employ a Fight Director/Choreographer for the duration of the production, and the production has three or more actors who participate in stage fighting/violence, a qualified\* Fight Captain shall be assigned by agreement with the Producer and the Fight Director/Choreographer by either the first rehearsal or the week prior to the departure of the Fight Director/Choreographer. Equity shall be notified of said assignment within one (1) week. ( See Rules 51.B.3.-SALARIES --ADDITIONAL DUTIES, Rule \_\_\_\_\_ EXTRAORDINARY RISK. )

\*A Fight Captain shall be deemed qualified when he/she has, through experience and/or training proven his/her ability to perform and supervise the maintenance of safe theatrical fighting/violence.

C. All Actors who participate in stage fighting/violence shall run through the routine before each performance. When a Fight Captain is employed, such run through shall be under his/her supervision. Any exception to the rule shall be at the express discretion of the Fight Director/Choreographer or the Fight Captain. Such run-throughs shall not be deducted from regular rehearsal hours.

D. Understudies and replacements shall be coached by the Fight Director/Choreographer or Fight Captain. Performing members of the company shall rehearse stage fighting/violence with understudies and replacements during regular rehearsal hours under the direction of the Fight Director/Choreographer or Fight Captain at least once prior to the understudy or replacement actor's performance in any role.

E. Proper first aid information and equipment (including ice packs ) shall be made available at any rehearsal or performance site where stage fighting/ violence occurs.

F. The Fight Director/Choreographer and/or Fight Captain shall consult with all other artistic personnel prior to the first rehearsal in order to achieve the optimum degree of safety.

3. FIGHT CAPTAIN. A Fight Captain shall receive no less than Fifteen Dollars ( \$15.00 ) per week in addition to his/her weekly salary. Said payment shall begin with the week in which the Fight Captain assignment is made. Provision for payment shall be included in a rider to the Fight Captain's Contract.

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# What's Happening?

McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, have signed a contract with Joseph D. Martinez to publish his manuscript, *The Swords of Shakespeare*. The completed book, which presents choreography for all of the major armed conflicts in the plays of Shakespeare, is expected to appear early in 1992.

Erik Frederickson has accepted the Chair of the Theatre Department of University of Michigan.

Charles Conwell has announced that The University of the Arts is offering a BFA Theatre Arts degree, Emphasis Stage Combat—the first degree of its kind in the country.

Jack Young gets Weirdest Fight of the Month award for his assignment to choreograph the violence in *An Earful of Lickings*, a farce that called for a "swash-buckling" fight with a vibrator, a pair of scissors, an inflatable sex doll, and a giant chocolate bar . . .

Fight Master J.R. Beardsley has parted amicably from the Academy of the Sword to pursue his own career. SAFD Regional Rep. Richard Lane continues as President of the Academy. Richard also keeps busy teaching combat at the American Conservatory Theatre and San Francisco State University.

Drew Fracher staged the *Les Liaisons* duel twice recently, staged a small riot for *Children of the Sun* at Actor's Theatre of Louisville, and both choreographed and acted in a new adaptation of *Treasure Island* at Cincinnati Playhouse. He's now teaching private classes at the Abiding Grace School of Movement and Theatre Arts, located at his Kentucky farm.

Thanks to Susan Vagedes-Eviston for talking up SAFD at the combat workshop she conducted for the 1989 Kentucky Theatre Association Convention.

It's a girl! Lloyd Caldwell's baby daughter, Lizzie, arrived January 11, 1990!

J. Allen Suddeth taught a workshop on Combat for the Camera at SETC (Southeastern Theatre Conference) to an enthusiastic audience. He covered safety, technique, scheduling and showed clips of some of his work. Then he demonstrated a rehearsal, camera block and a "take." Well done and well received was the word from SETC. Allen managed to work in a big plug for the SAFD and what we're about.

Ralph Anderson recently choreographed *Macbeth* for Fordham University and continues to teach rapier/dagger in Manhattan.

Payson Burt continues to teach combat at Temple University and has, of late, choreographed *Ubu Roi*, *Scapinol*, *Cloud 9*, *Don Giovanni*, *Peter Pan*, and *A Cry of Players*.

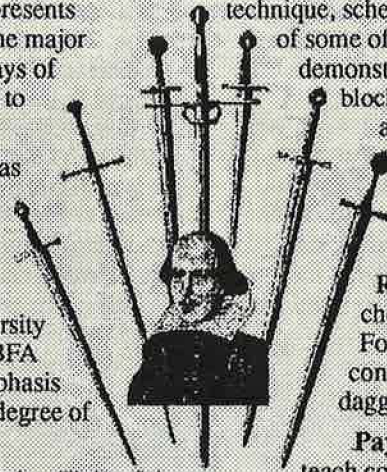
David Leong staged what he laughingly refers to as "my Brian DePalma salute" in the horrific climax to *Tis Pity She's a Whore* at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. *[I saw it—blood for days and stunning work by David!—Ed.]*

T.J. Glenn continues teaching at Montclair College and has launched a promotional tour for a new comic book *Actionmaster*, with stage combat shows at comic book and SF conventions all over the East Coast.

News from abroad—Lori Leshin is in Paris, France for two years of study at Jacques Lecoq's École Internationale de Theatre. She loves mail! Reach her at 34 Rue des Petits Hôtels 75010 Paris, France.

Richard Buckingham-Clark is in Denmark teaching at "Drama Skaten" (Drama School).

Richard Raether (besides cranking out this newsletter with Margaret) just staged fights for *McCarthy* at the Milwaukee Rep. and *Henry V* for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



**A long overdue word about long overdue dues**

One of the nastier aspects of being SAFD Treasurer is dunning your friends for money. But— **PAY YOUR DUES!** “Why should I?” you ask. Because *anyone* who has not paid their dues by May 1st. will be taken off the roster and mailing list. You don’t want to miss the issue in which we profile *you!*

A better reason to pay your dues though is because, by paying your dues you are supporting an organization whose sole purpose is to support “you” —the performer, the teacher, the director, the choreographer—in your day to day pursuit of both safety and excellence in staged violence.

Your dues pay for the publication and mailing of *The Fight Master*, the publication and mailing of *The Cutting*

*Edge*, the publication and mailing of the SAFD information brochure, the travel of officers to major educational and professional conventions and conferences so that our voice can be heard

Dues also pay for the day to day running of a n on-profit organization: stamps, envelopes, stationery, the printing of certificates and forms—the list goes on and on.

This does not take into account the National Stage Combat Workshop. It is true that, most years, NSCW pays for itself, but let me assure you that it does not create a major source of revenue for the SAFD. The NSCW is a *very* costly undertaking. Some say too costly; it doesn't need to be that good. But we believe there is still a place for excellence.

If we continue to advocate safe and effective stage violence then we must lead the way in achieving it.

The officers of the SAFD want to do more for the members, but everything costs money.

I am pleased to announce that we have 23 new members since Jan. 1, 1990 bringing our membership roster to 348.

I am sorry to announce that only 145 of SAFD members have so far paid their 1990 dues.

Richard Raether, Secretary-Treasurer

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**THE CUTTING EDGE**

*The Cutting Edge* is concocted bimonthly by Richard and Margaret Raether and is a publication of the Society of American Fight Directors.

Submissions to *The Cutting Edge* should be sent to:

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