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Fight Master Magazine

The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Fight Master, July 1979, Vol. 2 Issue 3**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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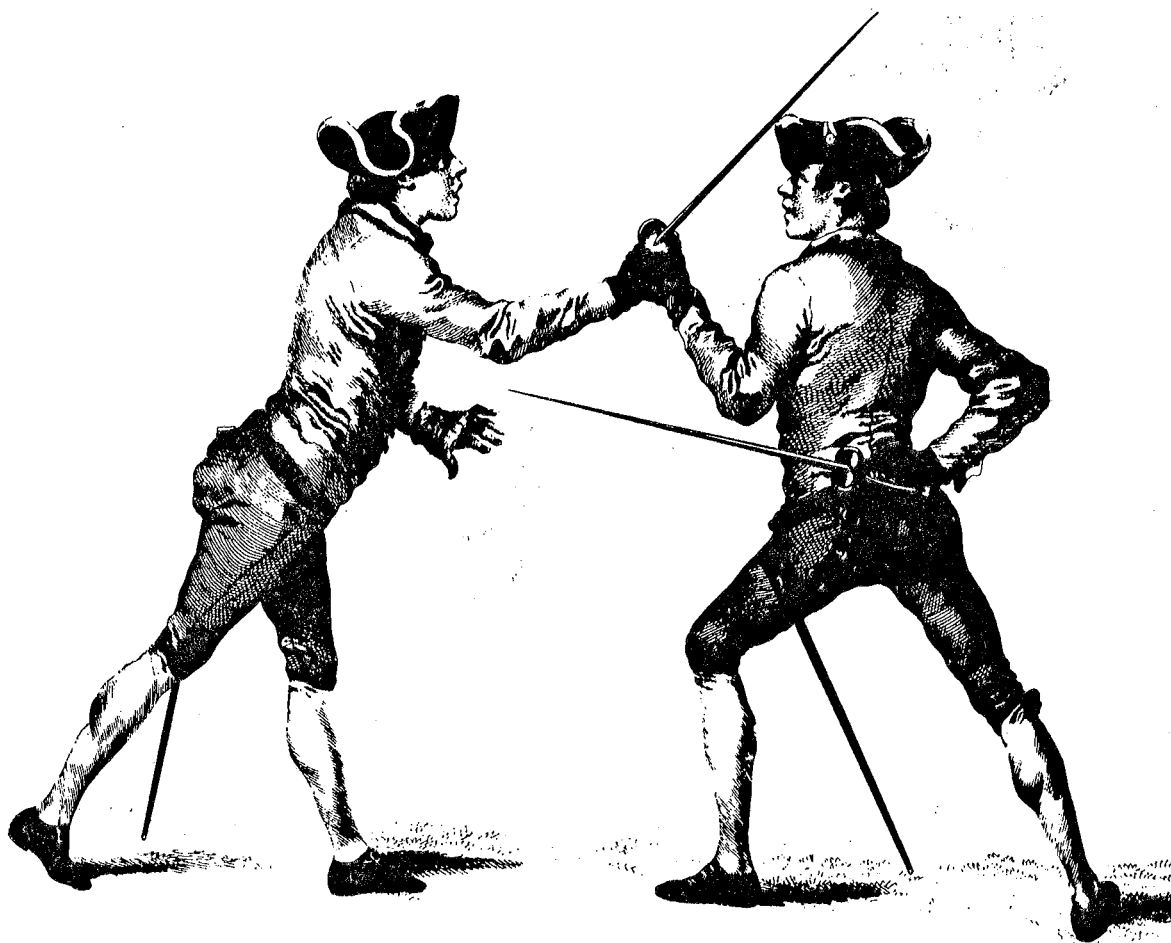
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# the fight master

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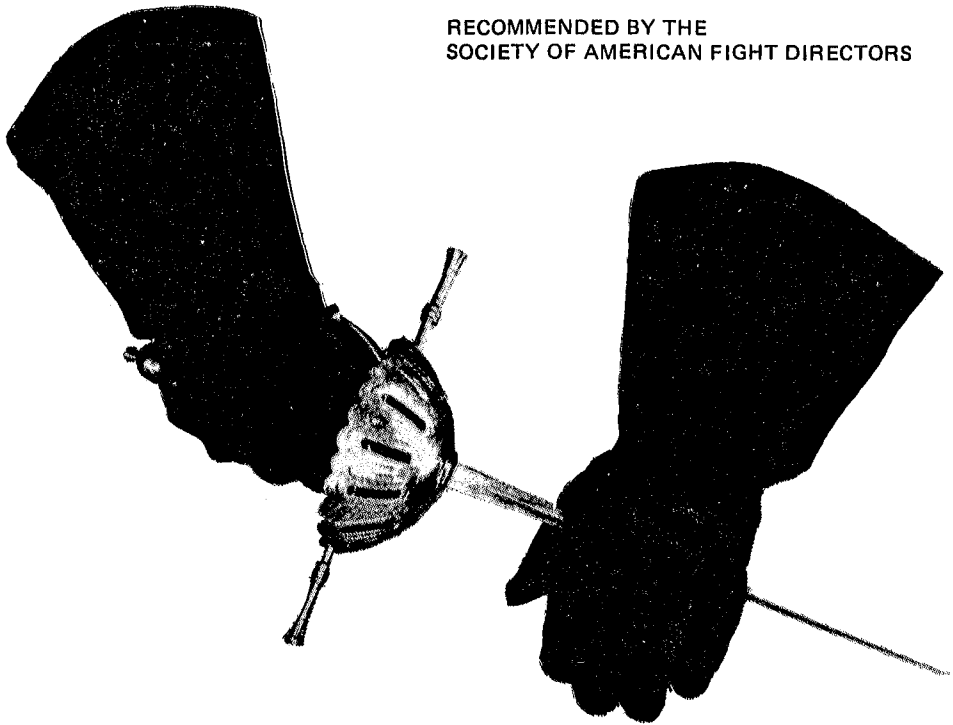
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## THE FIGHT MASTER

The Magazine of the Society of American Fight Directors

NO. 6

JULY 1979

Editor - Mike McGraw

Lay-out - David L. Boushey

Typed and Duplicated by Mike McGraw

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## SOCIETY of AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded by David Boushey and incorporated in Seattle, Washington in May 1977.

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## THE AGGRESSIVE FIGHT DIRECTOR

The Society of American Fight Directors must become more Visible. This can be accomplished only by aggressive action on the part of the membership. I believe it would be beneficial to offer some suggestions to the Society's membership. We must filter ourselves out across the country. Whenever possible, we should conduct either fight workshops at college/universities, regional theatre meetings or seek employment as fight choreographers. Next, we need standards! It is becoming more and more imperative that professional standards be established for the mutual benefit and protection of the Society's membership against the fight charlatans. We must encourage Theatre schools to include in their program of study, course work in Choreographed Dueling. It must be recognized as an important component in the training of the total performer. Finally, we must instill in the membership the highest regard and respect for our craft.

Recently, I attended the 1979 Southeastern Theatre Conference Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. This particular regional conference attracts the largest attendance of any single convention outside of the annual August meeting of the American Theatre Association. This year the attendance exceeded two thousand. Of course, much of the credit must go to its ideal central location. Atlanta remains the capital of the South and easy access in and out of the city made attendance this year more affordable for many delegates and student auditionees. Besides the many excellent workshops in every aspect of the theatre, auditions were held for over a hundred different Summer and Fall Acting and Technical positions available in the South and around the country.

With the increased interest in Choreographed Dueling, two different fight workshops were scheduled on the convention program. I was pleased with the prospect of attending the first session since I was

scheduled to preside at the second workshop. Besides, you can always learn something new from a fellow colleague; it's very healthy for fight teachers and choreographers to share dueling skills. This also allows conventioners the opportunity to observe a specific area of performance technique from more than one perspective.

The first workshop was entitled : How to be Killed with a Broadsword and Live to do it again Tomorrow Night. Since the crowd was so large, the workshop leader explained that there was only time to briefly talk about the weapons he brought along and then see a demonstration by his students. The weapons used in the first demonstration were broadswords and shields constructed at a steel foundry near his school. He recommended these weapons as a cheap, durable alternative to the more expensive models offered at several fencing supply manufacturers. This cavalier manner began to disturb me for I could plainly see the heavy weapons were awkward and slightly bent from the force of improper use during combat exercises.

After watching the students demonstrate their dueling skill, I became even more suspicious of his general fight knowledge. The exchange of blows between combatants were delivered with full force to either the opponents' blade or shield causing a loud crashing, clanging sound. Also, they were precariously close to each other, I thought either one or the other would catch a blade on the head and, even worse, the face! All of this took place under the approving eye of the workshop leader. Next, two more students engaged in a duel with competitive Epées. This weapon is unbalanced, awkward, and an inadequate substitute for a more practical rapier available from several fencing supply manufacturers. Throughout this demonstration, the combatants again hit each other with several hard, ringing blows. They were completely unaware of placement, distance, character and easing

the audience's fear for their safety. One had the distinct feeling only the he-man stereotype could handle the weapons. From first to last, the workshop focused attention on entertainment rather than instruction.

The major problem of the leader was his general lack of specificity. Absolutely no mention was made of the importance of weapon placement, and the choreography lacked theatrical excitement. The combatants were too close to each other to react in character. All of our attention was focused on the clanging sound of the weapons instead of the dramatic relationship between the performers. The complete lack of focus on the handling of weapons, while in character, places the fight skills of the leader into question. This leaves the novice to speculate and wonder how the art and craft of Acting and Stage Dueling can ever come together. I left the session convinced the leader of this fight workshop was unprepared, misleading and frivolous in his presentation.

The following day I had my opportunity to preside over a fight workshop entitled: Stage Dueling and Combat. The workshop began slowly and methodically, and I was impressed at the participants' eager and serious attitude. The overall purpose of my workshop was to provide instruction in the correct use of practical stage weapons and to disseminate as much information as possible on our Society and its services. First, I placed a strong emphasis on the importance of safety. Since the weapons are capable of causing great harm, I recommended specific protective clothes, gloves and footwear. Physical conditioning and preparation were discussed and demonstrated. Next, I talked about the correlation between character analysis and effective fight choreography. Demonstrations placed special emphasis on correct placement while maintaining a safe distance between partners. Also, we discussed and I demonstrated reverse pressure as a method for maximizing the dramatic conflict and

minimizing the possibility of harm to the performers. Finally, I recommended a reputable organization which manufactured and sold the correct weapons for the stage. The above outline, I felt, provided enough information and instruction on effective Stage Dueling for each participant. The variety of talent at the workshop was encouraging and I was excited by the participants' penetrating questions on Stage Dueling.

It is time we take the initiative and begin to make more people aware of our Society and the valuable services we offer to the performing arts profession. Without aggressive action by the membership, our Society can expect very little support and interest in our many and varied activities. Let us all accept the challenge.

John R. Tobinski



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\* THE DIRECTOR  
AND  
THE FIGHT DIRECTOR  
by  
Henry Marshall

How many times have we silently cursed the Director of a show for being unclear in his intentions for the fight, difficult to please, changing his mind and, above all, for giving us too little rehearsal time? An experience of actually directing a show, using myself as Fight Director, was salutary. One saw things from the other side of the fence.

To begin with, the Director is responsible for overseeing everything, a fact one only realizes when one does the job. Everything includes trying to keep within the budget, getting the make-up expert's and the tumbling master's name on the program, and arranging acknowledgement of the orchestra's contributions from the stage during one of the curtain calls. I must admit to having failed in all these departments. The overall responsibility is hair-raising, or would be if I had more hair to raise!

The fight itself was mechanically complicated. To begin with, it involved a Giant who was erected on large double boots, imported from an operatic production in Manchester. He was therefore bound to be comparatively static, so movement had to come from the girl playing Principal Boy. This is a general problem in all fights in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. But I was lucky in my actors, both of whom had Recommended certificates, and both had been Prize Fight winners. For this reason and, because time was at a premium, as usual, I allotted myself only three half-hour sessions to set the strokes and moves. Using a previous fight routine I had employed in this show, we worked out between us various variations and additions without much bother. To be truthful, there was actually one bit of bother when Jack

got a swipe on the nose from the Giant's club. "Can you get me some ice?" she demanded of the stage manager, who rushed to oblige. "Don't touch me," she winced when I offered a consoling cuddle. However, we got through this problem and arrived at the technical rehearsal. The set had been designed by an excellent designer, who had incorporated nearly all the scenic tricks I wanted, plus one or two of his own invention. In fact we had the following mechanical marvels. Before the fight the Wicked Wizard caused the Giant's huge table to sink miraculously into the floor. Later on he also causes a barrel to rise miraculously from another part of the floor. The girl playing Jack hides in the barrel. The Giant hits the barrel with his club. The barrel literally splits asunder and Jack tumbles out, but also without his sword. Then came the really exciting tricks.

On Jack's appeal to the Fairy to help him, the Fairy appears complete with Jack's sword behind a gauze in the large painting of the Giant which dominates the set. The gauze slides down. Jack rushes to the Fairy who drops the scabbarded sword to Jack, who draws the weapon, turns to face the Giant, and the fight begins. Meanwhile the remains of the barrel have disappeared into the floor. As well as including the more usual moves, this time the fight climaxed as follows. Jack is on the floor, having ducked the Giant's sideways swipe with his club. The Fairy 'magics' the floor below Jack. Lo and behold, up comes Jack on the Giant's table till he is above his opponent and, for the first time, can really dominate the fight. The kill follows soon afterwards.

Following my usual practice, I rehearsed the fight at the technical rehearsal as soon as the set was up, before launching the rehearsal of the whole scene. All the tricks worked and were practiced several times, as they needed to be, since the barrel and table were not on lifts but were pushed up and down manually by three sweating crew members below

stage. One problem we had was the dropping of Jack's scabbarded sword by the Fairy into Jack's awaiting hands. The drop was quite a few feet and the distance precluded the simple handing down I had planned. Rather foolishly, as it turned out, I attempted to catch the sword myself to demonstrate to the Principal Boy how easy it was. I am sorry to record that I missed completely. So, hastily putting on my Director's hat and doffing my Fight Director's bonnet, I let the Tumbling Master handle this, which he did at once and with great skill. The Tumbling Master, incidentally, had been engaged to demonstrate the various rolls and jumps required of the comics and assorted witches through trap doors and trick entrances and exits during the chase sequence, which preceded the fight. He was, I thought, remarkably quick and expert and very professional. Looking at one trick, which turned an actor literally upside down and upended him off the set, he said, "Well, this is what Fight Directors are paid for" and did the trick himself immediately, imparting great confidence. His name was Ian Barber.

After the 'technical' it became clear that all was not well with the execution of the fight. It was the usual story - the parries were there before the attacks arrived. As so often happens, it was difficult to find time, from the Director's point of view, to fix a rehearsal of the fight on the actual set, since the crew were naturally keen to rehearse the scene changes which preceded and succeeded this scene, and were both difficult ones. The whole dress rehearsal process would have been nullified by stopping the proceedings to insert a fight rehearsal. Instead, I planned a rehearsal of the fight strokes themselves, without the set or tricks, on another set, after we had done a different scene change during the interval. We then found that there was not room on the other set to rehearse the fight at all. Also the Giant was not yet transformed from his Act I make-up and costume, when he played a different part, into his Giant's outfit. So this fight rehearsal had to be scrapped. Had I been

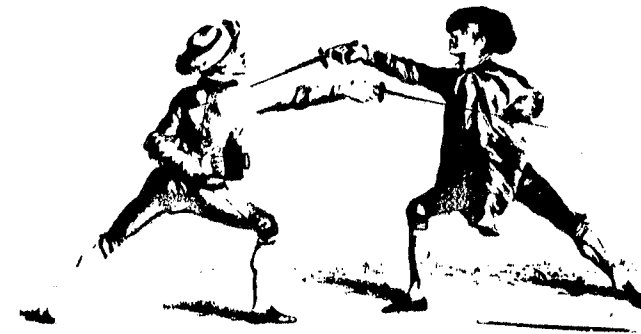
the Fight Director without other responsibilities, I would have been in despair. But with an overall responsibility for staging an elaborate and complex show, the state of the fight was only one of many headaches and, I am sorry to say, a minor though vital one.

The advantage of having two skilled actors whom I had known and instructed for some time now became apparent. I had told them exactly what was wrong with the fight and, at the next dress rehearsal, they put it right in performance. It was, after all, a question of timing.

Looking back on the experience of directing both show and fight, I can see the following picture. If you are directing a musical, your choreographer and musical director are nearly equal partners and must be consulted at all stages. Your Fight Director is only one piece in a large jigsaw (unless it is one of those rare all-fighting shows). I could have got someone else to do the fight. At one point in planning I almost did. But I knew this show and its combat backwards, and could do the fight the way I wanted it better than anyone else. Anyway, if you are going to be the ship's captain, why not be the carpenter as well - if you can find the time, that is.

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\* Reprinted from The Fight Director, the magazine of the Society of British Fight Directors, by permission of the Editor.



## COMBAT IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES

(Excerpt from the Master's Thesis of Michael Hood - Affiliate member to the society and professor at the University of Alaska, Anchorage.)

KING JOHN

King John has little to offer in the way of specific descriptions of combat. It does serve to introduce a common anachronism employed by the Bard: the use of weapons totally removed from the play's historical settings. In Act I, 1, reference is made to cannon, a late addition to military weaponry whose first recorded use in Europe came in 1314, nearly one hundred years after the events depicted in King John (1199-1216). This is an example of Shakespeare's willingness to arm his soldiers with weapons whose historical context is different from that of the play. Indeed, the only other reference to weapons in King John also raises the question of historical consistency. In Act II, 1, mention is made of "unhacked swords", then later in the same scene to their use "bloody point to point". "Bloody points" could be interpreted as referring to the sixteenth-century rapier, a weapon devoted almost exclusively to the thrust; yet thrusting weapons are not likely to be "hacked". The implication here is that Shakespeare is referring to a cutting weapon, such as the cruciform-hilted knightly sword which is popularly pictured as being too heavy to deliver a thrust with any great effect. Of course, as was shown in Chapter One, the knightly sword was capable of both thrust and cut and, as such, is probably the weapon in question.

In Act II, 1, the stage directions call for "excursions", as do scenes 2 and 3 of Act III. Excurs-

ions play a continuing and important role in almost all the plays to be examined here and it is perhaps important that they be defined at this time. Excursions are actions upon the stage "in which a few men from either side symbolize the course of the battle". The number of those taking part need be predicated only on the director's taste and the limitations of the playing space. As such, the call for excursions is likely to bring to mind visions of confused supernumeraries running blindly about the stage, making a few exchanges with unfamiliar weapons, then galloping blindly off with "little tragic or dramatic force". Such need not be the case. The very vagueness of the direction may be its strongest point, especially in a situation such as that posed in King John, where neither stage direction nor dialogue describe specific activity within the excursion. The director is free to stage this type of activity in any way he chooses, and Shakespeare is generally very generous with clues which may provide needed focus and suspense. Watkins demonstrates that many excursions are preceded by what he calls a "match-card"; a listing of the chief combatants. Further, many excursions are succeeded by descriptions of individual feats of bravery or, at the very least, casualty lists. It seems obvious that, given such information, a careful director can people his excursions with one, two, or several of the characters thus mentioned in addition to more anonymous soldiers; characters familiar to the audience, thereby producing a combat sequence possessing the tragic or dramatic force found lacking above while at the same time supplementing visually the account given. The importance of this visual and kinetic contribution has been too often underestimated. The depiction of violence is too often decried

"...without examining its nature as an undeniable aspect of life. Certainly, any examination of the nature of drama will discover conflict at its core. Violence



is this core of drama given physical manifestation." (Wise, Weapons in the Theatre.)

The excursions which occur in Act II, 1, of King John do not follow the "match-card" or casualty list pattern, perhaps because neither side gains a clear advantage in the conflict. The fight before Angiers is without victory or defeat. The Citizen of Angiers answers the Heralds of the opposing armies:

Heralds, from off our towers we might behold,  
 From first to last, the onset and retire  
 Of both your armies; whose equality  
 By our best eyes cannot be censured:  
 Blood hath bought blood and blows have answer'd  
 blows;  
 Strength match'd with strength, and power con-  
 fronted power;  
 Both are alike; and both alike we like.

The inconclusive nature of the exchange of arms before Angiers need not be given credence by inconclusive staging. Though Shakespeare makes no direct comment on characters or actions within the excursions, a careful reading of the play can provide the director with a possible means of providing that emphasis as well as furthering character and plot development. A rivalry develops during the course of the play between Richard Plantagenet (the "Bastard") and Lymoges, Archduke of Austria. After the excursions in Act III, 2, Richard enters apparently bearing Lymoges' head. It is clear that they have fought, and it is not unlikely that their fight can be made the central action of the excursion. More important, both Richard and Lymoges are recognizably warlike characters prior to Act II, 1, and may be included in that excursion; if both can demonstrate a high level of prowess in that action, without actually meeting each other, a great amount of suspense can be generated prior to their actual combat in Act III.

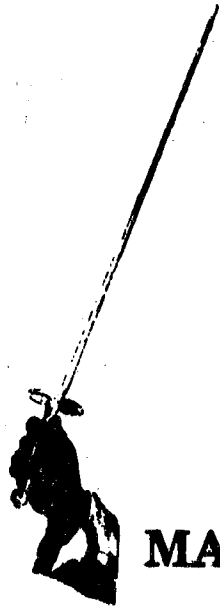
### SWASHBUCKER

There is a terrific book out on Errol Flynn called 'The Films of Errol Flynn'. There are some great shots in it of fight sequences throughout Flynn's career. A picture of Flynn in The Master of Ballantrae appeared in the last edition of The Fight Master. More will appear in future editions. For you members who are swashbuckling film buffs, you will find the book a real treat. It is by Tony Thomas, Rudy Behlmer and Clifford McCarty.



ERROL FLYNN

THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN, 1949



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## A NIGHT AT THE FIGHTS

A Night at the Fights was produced this past May by A.C. Weary (a new member to The Society of American Fight Directors) in conjunction with the ATA Theatre in New York. It had a large cast of which four are members of the society: Erik Fredricksen, David Lancaster, Allen Suddeth, and A.C. Weary. The show was received with much enthusiasm and has strong possibilities of going to an off-Broadway production at some point in the near future. The reviews quoted below might give you some idea of how well it was received.

- The Soho Weekly News - May 31, 1979 (Donald R. Wilson). "A Night at the Fights is a swashbuckling pageant which is possibly the most satisfying spectacle now in performance on or off Broadway...It is all a considerable accomplishment. Directors Weary and Suddeth blend the skills of several different Fight Directors into a unique variety show. Cynthia Hawkins' lighting enhances each sequence and often establishes a mood that makes the swordplay seem uncomfortably authentic. Often, flying bodies and swooping swords come right to the verge of a delighted audience...A Night at the Fights is not only an energetic, breathless entertainment, it is a dazzling exposition of acrobatic and balletic precision, the marvels of which will exclude neither age nor taste. It is a mesmerizing, mystifying show for its purely technical reasons, of course; but also for the unself-conscious thrills and laughter it constantly gives us - commodities difficult to find so generously these days."

-Other Stages- May 31, 1979 (Curt Davis). "A Night at the Fights is a riot on two counts - as exciting as it is funny...The entire evening recalls so many other evenings spent lovingly

(Continued)

SIGNATUREWHY DO PEOPLE FIGHT? FIGHT.

Choreographers Turner/Weary

Ring 1 - Mr. Needlebaum.....Allen Suddeth

Mrs. Needlebaum.....Nancy Sigworth

Wheezer Needlebaum...Esther Schooler

choreographer Jan Kirk

Ring 2- Muggers.....Kirk van der Swaagh

Robert Walsh

Joe Mark.....Jay Fernandez

choreographer A. C. Weary \*

Ring 3- Boxer 1.....A. C. Weary

Boxer 2.....Robin Wood

DEATH AT DAWN - choreographer - Erik Fredricksen \*

Officer.....Erik Fredricksen

His Lady.....Diana Stagner

The Lover.....David Lancaster

Officer's Seconds....R. Kovitz

K. Shelton

Lover's Seconds.....J. Monitor

K. van der Swaagh

Surgeon.....Allen Suddeth

FIGHT OF THE WEEK

Derby - choreographer - Jan Kirk

Butch Bratowski.....Kim Zimmer

Shirley Star.....Nancy Sigworth

Lola.....Kathleen Salamone

Scharlene May.....Barbara Bratt

Disco - choreographer - Jerri Garner Lines

Angela Santini.....Leona Cyphers

Frank Murphy.....Robert Walsh

Slo-Mo = originally conceived by Jewel Walker

Randy Kovitz

James Monitor

COWBOYS - choreographer - Jake Turner

Virgil.....Robert Walsh

Gabby.....James Monitor

Leon.....Khin Maung

Bad Bob.....Leona Cyphers

Barkeep.....Kirk van der Swaagh

The Company

ZORRO - choreographer - Allen Suddeth \*

Don Diego.....A.C. Weary

Governor.....Elisha Ignatoff

Capt. Estaban.....Allen Suddeth

Guards.....Robert Walsh, Kirk van der

Swaagh, James Monitor

BOAR'S HEAD INN - choreographers - Lancaster/Kovitz/Sud.

Randy Kovitz

David Lancaster\*

\*\*\*\*\*INTERMISSION\*\*\*\*\*

KARATE - choreographer - Steve Fletcher

Usher.....Robin Wood

Man.....Steve Fletcher

FIGHTING AS DANCE or THE MUSIC IN THE BLADES

choreographers B.H. Barry/Weary/Maung

original music by Peter Kallish

Jazz Fight.....Kim Zimmer

A.C. Weary

Robert Walsh

Jay Fernandez

Kirk van der Swaagh

Agrippa Ladies.....Barbara Bratt

Diana Stagner

Iaido.....Khin Kyaw Maung

Chambara.....Company &amp; Khin Kyaw Maung

RENAISSANCE ROBBERY - choreographer - Allen Suddeth

Dominique.....David Lancaster

Jeanine.....Kathleen Salamone

Jusac.....Allen Suddeth

Robbers.....Randy Kovitz, Robin Wood,

Kirk van der Swaagh

Waif.....Esther Schooler

ESCAPE ON THE HIGH SEAS - choreographer - A.C. Weary

Entire Company

A NIGHT AT THE FIGHTS was first presented with the co-operation of the Westbeth Theatre Centre.  
All original music compositions copywrite 1979 Peter Kallish.

\* Member of THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

and open-mouthed in darkened movie houses or in front of the boob tube, disbelief willingly suspended, pirates and gangsters as real as popcorn."

As you can gather, the era of the swashbuckler and the enthusiasm that accompanied it is not dead, merely resting. I produced a night similar to this at a college where I had taken a temporary teaching position and it, too, was most successful. It is quite obvious to me that this format can be expanded to include other cities where there are people who still enjoy all the charm and gallantry that went along with the swashbuckling era of Hollywood. I am very proud of my colleagues who put forth so much effort and talent to make the show the success it was. I imagine there were those sceptics who said it would never work because swashbuckling is "out" and psycho-drama is "in". Well, once again they were proved wrong. Now on to Broadway!

I might add that it was nice to see so many women in the cast. Many people are under the illusion that only men engage in stage fights. This certainly was not the case at the ATA Playhouse. We have two women members of the society who have had a number of occasions to choreograph a nifty swashbuckler.

I would suggest that any members wanting more information about A Night at the Fights should contact Mr. Weary or Mr. Suddeth. Perhaps they could provide a format that was successful for them. If any members do pursue this idea, let the society know of the results. Included in this article is the program and cast for the show. It will give you a better idea as to what was performed and just how much hard work it took to put the whole evening together. AGAIN, WELL DONE MEN AND WOMEN!

D. L. Boushey

A reminder that the first meeting of The Society of American Fight Directors will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Manhattan on August 15th. An exact time for our afternoon meeting will be given after the fight workshop to be conducted by Joe Martinez, Erik Fredricksen, and David Boushey at 8:30 A.M. on the 15th. Many important issues will be discussed and many decisions made that will affect the direction of the Society. You should be a part of that decision-making process. Also, a note will be left on the main message board and information desk for those who might not be able to attend the morning workshop. SEE YOU IN NEW YORK!

\*\*\*\*\*

The society welcome three new members:

MS. KIMBERLY DeLONG (Affiliate)  
3819 Young St. #1  
Anchorage, Alaska  
99504

MR. ALLEN G. WEARY (Full)  
31 W. 75th.  
New York, N.Y.  
10023

MR. ALLEN SULDETH (Affiliate)  
310 W. 97th. #44  
New York, N.Y.  
10025

It is a pleasure to have the above new members added to our growing register. We hope our new colleagues will contribute to the society to make it even better.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 'POINTS' OF INTEREST

(Cont.)

I have tried out that new swept-hilt rapier the Armoury has issued and have found it to be a good fighting weapon. The only problem with it is that the blade (epee) looks a little too small for the hilt. A bit larger blade would work marvelously. It is certainly worth obtaining for future productions set around the 16th and 17th centuries. Also, the broadswords I used in 4 different Shakespeare Festivals were built by Mark Haney and have held up terrifically! I used the 1 1/4 inch blade and found it to be just the right weight for a hand-and-a-half sword. I strongly recommend Mark's work. It is a versatile interchangeable broadsword which doesn't break down. I have yet to find a better broadsword being built on a commercial basis.

D. L. Boushey

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Arthur Wise, the author of 'Weapons in the Theatre' and 'The History and Art of Personal Combat' (the latter considered by many including myself as the most detailed and comprehensive piece of writing on the subject) is now residing in New York, where he intends to become an American citizen. What a treat it is to have Arthur on our side of the Atlantic!

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Joe Martinez came up with an interesting slogan or by-line for the Society:

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS  
HAS DETERMINED THAT  
STAGE VIOLENCE  
MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

BE SURE YOUR FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER  
IS RECOGNIZED BY THE S.A.F.D. AS  
A FULL MEMBER

## PART III

## DUELS IN FRANCE

From The Duel:  
A History of Duelling  
by Robert Baldick

If it was to Germany that France, like the rest of Europe, was indebted for the trial by combat, it was from Italy that she derived the practice of the duel of honour. During Charles VIII's Italian expeditions at the end of the fifteenth century, and Louis XII's fresh Italian campaigns in the early years of the sixteenth century, the southern vogue for duelling spread to the French army, strongly encouraged by the Duc de Nemours, and Francois I did nothing to repress the fashion when he came to the throne. On the contrary, he himself issued a bombastic challenge to Charles V, and in a country as accustomed as France to following any example set by its leader - witness the success enjoyed by the hitherto despised potato once Louis XIV had sported a nosegay of its flowers in his buttonhole - this was enough to incite every French nobleman to draw his sword in defence of his honour on the slightest pretext.

Francois's successor Henri II, whose reign was ushered in by the famous duel between Jarnac and La Chastaigneraye and concluded by the monarch's own death in a tournament, was too weak a monarch to impose any check on duelling, which obtained greater currency with every year that passed. It was during his reign that a remarkable duel took place between a youth called Chateauneuf and his guardian Lachesnaye, an old gentleman of eighty. The youth, who had challenged his guardian on account of some disrespectful comments he was reported to have made about him, asked Lachesnaye on the duelling-ground whether there was any truth in those reports. The old man asserted on his honour that there was no foundation for them whatever, and his ward accepted his denial; but Lach-

esnaye would not let the matter rest there.

"You may be satisfied," he said, "but I am not; and, since you have given me the trouble of coming here, we must fight. What would all these people who have come here say if they found that we had met here to talk instead of acting? Our honour is at stake, so let us set to."

They had scarcely begun fighting before Lachesnaye exclaimed: "Oh, you scoundrel, you are wearing a cuirass! But I'll do for you all the same.!" He accordingly started cutting and thrusting at his dishonest opponent's face and throat, but Chateauneuf was in no way disconcerted and within a few minutes ran his old guardian through the body.

Though for ever fighting to defend their honour, the young men of this period were anything but honourable, judging by the incident of Chateauneuf's cuirass and Brantome's story of another encounter between youth and age, this time during the reign of Henri III. In the course of a royal stag-hunt in the Bois de Vincennes, the young nephew of Marshal Saint-Andre picked a quarrel with an elderly gentleman called Matas, and the two of them withdrew to a lonely part of the wood to fight it out. Matas quickly disarmed his opponent, and told him in a fatherly voice: "In future, young man, learn to handle a sword better, and take care not to attack a man such as me." However, as he was mounting his horse to ride away, the young man, burning to wipe out the shame of his defeat, stabbed him in the back and killed him. Nothing of this deed transpired, we are told, for the young man was the nephew of Marshal Saint-Andre, whereas the other was only a relation of Madame de Valentinois (the celebrated Diane de Poitiers), who, after the death of Henri II, had lost all her influence at court. Worse still, the unfortunate Matas was actually blamed for having criticized a proud and honourable youth. 'It is wrong,' declared the chronicler, 'for boastful old fencers to abuse their good fortune, and taunt young men - for this grieves God!'

The fighting spirit displayed by the noblemen of

the time was quite remarkable. Thus Brantome tells the story of a duel between a gentleman from Normandy and a chevalier called Refuge, who had taken a boat to cross to the Ile du Palais, in order to fight without witnesses. Noticing that some other boats were following them, they jumped ashore, one of them exclaiming: "For God's sake, let us hurry, for they are coming to separate us!" With these words they set to, and after four lunges they were both dead. The same writer mentions a certain Seigneur de Gensac, who wanted to fight two champion duellists at once; when his friends pointed out that the idea was sheer folly, he merely retorted: "Why, history is full of such deeds, and, mon Dieu, I am determined to have my name recorded."

The most famous duel, however, which was fought during the reign of Henri III, and the one which distressed the King most of all, was the so-called duel des mignons, fought between his favourites Quelus and d'Entragues, who had fallen out over some ladies of the court. With Riberac and Schomberg, who were d'Entrague's seconds, and Maugiron and Livarot, who were Quelus's, they met near the ramparts of the Porte Saint-Antoine, with no one present but 'three or four persons, wretched witnesses of the valour of these worthy men'. The principals had scarcely begun fighting before Riberac said to Maugiron: "I think we ought to reconcile these gentlemen, rather than let them kill each other." To this unworthy proposal the other replied: "Sir, I did not come here to tell beads, but to fight." "But with whom," Riberac asked innocently, "since you are not concerned in this quarrel?" "Why, with you, to be sure," replied Maugiron. "In that case," said Riberac, "Let us pray"; and drawing his sword and dagger and crossing their hilts, he fell on his knees. Maugiron was neither a patient, nor, so it seems, a religious man, for before long he told Riberac that 'he had prayed long enough'. At this the two men fell upon each other, and within a few moments Maugiron was dead and Riberac mortally wounded.

Meanwhile, ashamed of standing by while all this slaughter was going on, Schomberg said to Livarot: "These gentlemen are fighting; what shall we do?" To which Livarot very reasonably replied: We cannot do better than fight, to maintain our honour." Schomberg, who was a German, followed the fighting method of his country and cut off half the left cheek of his opponent, who returned the compliment by running him through the breast, killing him on the spot. Of the two victorious seconds, Ribera died the following day, and Livarot was killed in another duel two years later. As for the principals in the duel des mignons, d'Entragues, though severely wounded, made his escape, while Quelus, who had received nineteen cuts, lingered on for over a month. On his deathbed, he complained bitterly that d'Entragues had been armed with a dagger as well as his sword, and that when he had protested that he had no dagger himself, his opponent had retorted: "So much the worse for you; you ought not to have been such a fool as to have left it at home." But at least Quelus, when dying and dead, was given all the honour that was his due, and more besides. For although he died continually repeating: "Oh, my king!" without saying one word of Almighty God, so that a preacher of the time exclaimed in the pulpit that 'the bodies of these blasphemers should be flung into a ditch', the King visited him every day on his deathbed, and gave him and his fellows a princely funeral, a noble monument, and an epitaph peremptorily calling upon God to receive the disrespectful mignons into his bosom.

NOTES FROM THE ARMOURY

by Christopher Villa

For those of you who have never done business with us before, The Armoury is a branch of the American Fencer's Supply Company and is located at 1180 Folsom Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94103. The Armoury features a large variety of Replica Weapons for stage use and home decoration. Our selection includes almost fifty weapons of various sizes and shapes ranging from small court daggers to large two-handed broadswords. The Armoury also carries a miscellany of related items, such as miniature saber-letter openers and cast metal statuettes of the 4 Musketeers. This article will cover one of our newer items, the Article 52 Swept-Hilt Rapier.

The Swept-Hilt Rapier comes in two models. The Article 52-W is the decorative model with a wide blade priced at \$52.80. The Article 52 is the theatrical model with the 100ES blade priced at \$51.70. This sword is an attractive Spanish-made steel weapon with a graceful guard consisting of curved quillons, pas d'anes, and knucklebow. The grip is wire wrapped, four inches in length, and is topped off with a rounded steel pommel. The entire weapon is approximately 40 inches in length and weighs 3 1/4 pounds with the wide blade and 1 3/4 pounds with the epee blade. The Article 52-W makes a beautiful sword for the hearth but because of its weight it makes an unweildy rapier. Since the Article 52 (theatrical) lends itself to more spectacular blade actions because of its lightness and balance, we recommend it for any stagework. I want to stress that although the Article 52-W is an attractive weapon, it is not intended for prolonged stage use. The jointure of the tang to the blade is rather weak and after a few blows the blade tends to bend to the left or right of the grip and requires straightening. Also, the guard is very open and offers little protection against the heavy blade. The theatrical model, on the other hand, has a strong jointure of

tang to blade. The Article 52 accepts a 100ES Epee blade without any grinding of the tang, which makes it virtually unbreakable at the guard.

There are a couple of minor difficulties in caring for the Article 52. The pommel is rounded, which makes it difficult to tighten with a wrench without scratching the finish. At AFS, we use thick felt pads between wrench and pommel to reduce gouges and scratch marks. There is also a difference in the threading of the tang from that on our other stage weapons. All of the Armoury's Replica Weapons are threaded with a 6 millimeter die, but the Article 52 is threaded with a 1/4 x 20 die. This means that any replacement blades used with this sword must be specifically ordered with the 1/4 x 20 threading. While I'm on the subject of replacement blades, I would like to mention that The Armoury uses the 100ES Prieur Championship Epee Blade (\$19.20 each) as the standard theatrical blade for all of our Replica swords. The only exceptions to this are certain broad-bladed swords which, because of their type, do not accept the 100ES blade.

The Article 52 is a very flashy weapon, ideally suited for stage use, and is our most durable rapier. Made of steel (not cast metal), it is difficult to break and should last many years. It comes in a right-handed guard but it can be converted to left hand use simply by turning the epee blade so that the apex of the triangular blade points towards the left side.

To order the Article 52 or 52-W, write or call American Fencer's Supply Co. (phone: 415-863-7911) and give the following information: your name, address, whether you are right or left-handed, and how you would like to pay for your order. Or, if you're in San Francisco, stop by our store. Summer hours are from 9:00 to 4:30 M-F and 11:00 to 4:30 Saturdays.

The next Notes From The Armoury will cover our collection of Daggers.

FROM THE DESK OF

DAWSON SMITH:

The Sunday Times Magazine (London) of November 26, 1978 quotes Terence Rigby, understudy to Albert Finney in MacBeth at the National:

"If a younger actor ever asked me for any advice about Macker, I would say: Before you learn a word learn the bloody fight. You've finished playing the part of MacBeth and then your fight is so complex that it can undo all the good work you've done before...."

Opera News of February 24, 1979, Metropolitan Opera Guild (NY), page 11:

"Life Imitates Art: Tenor Giorgio Merighi had to withdraw from Miami Opera's January Don Carlo because of continued dizzy spells following an injury incurred during a Tosca last summer in Buenos Aires. The wadding from a blank shell accidentally struck his head, causing serious damage to his right eye. Meanwhile, in Gian Carlo Monaco's rough-and-tumble Pagliacci production in Munich, Teresa Stratas suffered a brain concussion and a crushed lower vertebra when Placido Domingo threw her on the floor in the final struggle. Miss Stratas missed only two performances, then went to Paris to play it safe in Lulu."

Opera News of March 24, 1979. On page 29, in an article on Baritone Cehanovsky, who is now the Met's Russian Coach, Ann M. Lingg writes:

"Cehanovsky recalls the fun he had, too. 'Once in Constantinople, when I was singing Onegin, the Zaretsky, who hands out the guns in the duel scene, got them mixed up - He gave the empty one to me and the loaded one to Lensky. I tried to shoot, and nothing happened, while Lensky shot with a bang and dropped dead. 'He died of a broken heart!' Zaretsky ad-libbed, and the audience, mostly Russian, was in stitches. So were we!"



## CERTIFICATION

It was suggested several months ago that the membership consider the possibility of giving tests of proficiency to various students and actor combatants who train with members of the Society of American Fight Directors. If the students/combatants were to pass the test, they would be given a certificate acknowledging them as worthy combatants (not choreographers) and recognized by our society as such.

It has been decided by the society members that such certification should become a viable part of the society's attempt to make this part of the theater an integral part of the whole theater scene.

The first proficiency test has been administered in New York by Erik Fredricksen, who provides us with the following information:

We are extremely pleased to report that the first proficiency tests for the American Society of Fight Directors were administered July 14, 1979 at the Showcase Studios in New York City. The test consisted of two portions:

- A. A presentation by pairs of individuals of a fight they had been working on for some time, utilizing techniques and skills acquired in recent class work and previous study.
- B. A short fight learned on the spot and taught to them by the examiner. In the interests of producing the reality of a work situation, no member was allowed to perform this sequence with the same partner with whom he or she had performed the prepared portion of the presentation.

I am very happy to report that the work was of a high level and that all twelve (12) individuals taking the test passed with 3 members receiving 'Recommended'.

This means that in the opinion of the examiner these individuals displayed enough initiative and facility that it was felt that they should pursue more work in this area with the possibility of eventually becoming choreographers themselves.

The class that was tested was under the instruction of Mr. Allen Suddeth, a new member of the ASFD and also a director in the recent A NIGHT AT THE FIGHTS presented at the ATA theater in New York City. Many of these individuals are continuing on with Allen and some will be taking the test again in the hopes of obtaining a 'Recommended' rating. The certificate does clearly state, however, that it is not the purpose of the proficiency rating to qualify anyone as a fight choreographer. We do intend, though, to maintain a file of every individual that has received a Passed or Recommended and to make those names available to theaters, (collegiate or professional), directors, and producers who may be in the market for actors trained in stage combat.

The first group of individuals to be awarded proficiency certificates by the ASFD are:

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Anne Giroux                   | 7. Mimi Bessette     |
| 2. Deborah Houston               | 8. Tawnya Pettiford  |
| 3. Randy Kovitz<br>(Recommended) | 9. Peter James Cumba |
| 4. Jim Manley                    | 10. Gary Phillips    |
| 5. Robin Wood                    | 11. Kent Shelton     |
| 6. Elisha Ignatoff               | 12. James W. Monitor |

I am certain that this is only the beginning and look forward to an enthusiastic response from colleges and theaters throughout the country concerning future certification for students of stage combat. I am equally enthusiastic over the possibility of discovering what the very formation of this society is based upon: There is throughout the United States a vast wealth of potential in the teaching, directing, and performing aspects of Stage Combat. It's my sincere hope that the

proficiency test will be one way of discovering these individuals, as well as forming professional friendships and re-affirming mutual interests and goals.

For further information, please contact:

Mr. David Boushey, Pres., or  
Mr. Erik Fredricksen, Sec./Treas.

I wish to extend my congratulations to Allen Suddeth for the success his students accomplished with Erik Fredricksen as examiner. I know Erik's high standards; therefore, I can assume the first proficiency test given by the Society of American Fight Directors was an excellent introduction to this aspect of our growing society.

I personally am pleased to see the certification becoming an integral part of our society. Remember, the certificates do not qualify an individual as a Fight Director. It does qualify him as a competent combatant in the area of armed and unarmed combat. These people will be recognized by the society on the society's fight register as previously mentioned. I welcome any of the individuals examined to join the Society of American Fight Directors.

I hope that other members of the society will follow suit and start to initiate the certification process in their schools. I am speaking especially to those affiliate members who teach combat on a college or university level. I have already heard from Byron Jennings who will be pursuing the certification this year at the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. I too will be following suit at the University of Washington and Cornish Institute of the Arts.

Those instructors opting to pursue certification for their students should keep in mind that the students judged must be examined by a full member of the society. An instructor cannot examine his own students. Also, there will be a minimum fee paid by the students to cover expenses of the examiner. More specific information will be discussed at the society's national meeting Aug. 15.

There will be a copy of the Certificate in the next issue of *The Fight Master*. Congratulations again to Mr. Suddeth and his students for their recent accomplishments.

D. L. Boushey - Pres.

DAVID L. BOUSHEY recently choreographed MacBeth for the Old Globe Theater in San Diego. He is now back in Seattle after a 3 month tour which took him to 5 different states. He will be teaching a summer workshop at the Cornish Institute of the Arts in Seattle. Soon thereafter, he will be teaching the first semester at Cornish and the University of Washington. He has some fight possibilities this fall but nothing is final as yet.

ERIK FREDRICKSEN has recently choreographed Coriolanus for Shakespeare in the Park for Joe Papp. He will be teaching a 2 week workshop in combat with the Stratford Festival theatre in Canada. He was recently awarded the 1979 VILLAGER AWARD for Brand in which he played the lead. He will be assisting Joe Martinez and David Boushey at the national A.T.A convention in New York.

BYRON JENNINGS is acting with the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts in Santa Maria, Ca. He is playing Laertes in Hamlet and choreographing the fights for that production. He also choreographed the wrestling match in As You Like It at P.C.P.A. He will be teaching there this coming year.

JOSEPH MARTINEZ has accepted a full-time teaching position at Western Illinois University this coming fall. He is now acting with the repertory company at the University of Utah through the summer. He will be chairing the workshop at the national A.T.A. convention.

JOHN TOBINSKI (Affiliate) has assumed the position of Director of the Acting Program at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and will be leaving his position at North Carolina Wesleyan College. Unfortunately, John will not be able to attend the N.Y. conference due to his new position.

CHRIS VILLA (Affiliate) is working on a new production involving his fight group Rip's Rangers. He intends to unleash them on the public in the near future.

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ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded in May 1977. Its aims are to promote the art of fight choreography in such a manner that the Fight Director will be accepted as an integral part of the theater and cinema industry. Promoting the aesthetics of well-conceived fight choreography as an integral part of the total production is another aim of the society.

Full members are professional Fight Directors.

Affiliate members are fencing masters in drama schools, overseas members, or Fight Directors of limited experience.

Friends are people interested in stage fighting but who are not necessarily connected with professional fight directing.

Student members are drama students who aspire to become Fight Directors.

Society Rules

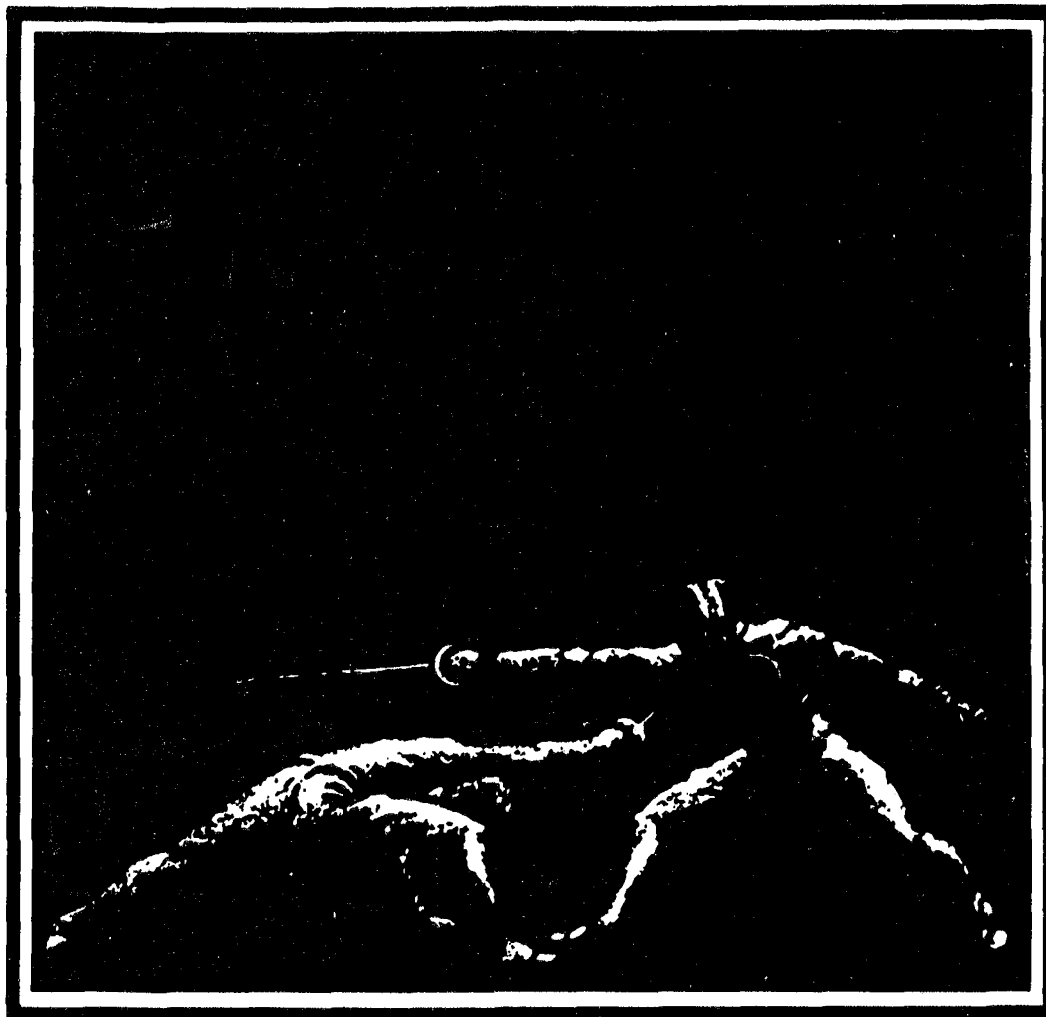
Members are reminded that only full members may use the Society's name to secure employment, however; affiliate and student members may use their status in any capacity other than securing employment.

Inquiries about membership and editorial articles should be mailed to the Society's permanent address:

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS  
4720 38th N.E.  
Seattle, Wa. 98105

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