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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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The Society of American Fight Directors

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THE CUTTING EDGE

Volume II, Issue 5

Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

September/October, 1991

F. Y. I.

The Library of Congress

There are 273 entries pertaining to swords in the computerized Library of Congress Catalog.

You can review all 273 titles in an hour (There aren't that many books—some are duplicate entries). The computer will display three titles at once. Detailed descriptions of individual books takes longer.

The rare book room contains original copies of Meyer, Marozzo, Agrippa, and Thibault. When opened, the double-paged prints of Thibault measure 32 x 42"! It takes around an hour to obtain a book. This room is open Mon.-Fri.

Highlights of the main reading room include Blakeslee's *Swordplay for Actors and Schools and Masters of Fence*. Any fencing manual in the main reading room can be conveniently copied (self-service). The main reading room, an architectural gem, is also open on Saturdays.

Laundry

SAFD member and native Texan Steven Earl Edwards takes exception to the Spring *Fight Master*, where it was reported that *Giant* was filmed in Arizona because the producers couldn't find any place in Texas that looked like Texas.

... Well, it seems that much of *Giant* was shot in Marfa, Texas, near the Mexican border. The frame of the "big house" still stands. And the local hotel still proudly displays pictures of Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, James Dean, etc. Many locals were extras, as were their cattle. Call off the posse, Steve—we surrender!

More Laundry

Michael Jerome Johnson and Jennifer Collins recommended in *four* weapons at their Folger fight test—rapier/dagger, unarmed, broadsword and quarterstaff.

Once More With Feeling . . . 1992 NSCW Returns to Vegas

The best-laid plans of mice and men . . . you know the rest. The July/August *Cutting Edges* sitting about in stacks, further cluttering up the Rather household. Its cover story told of the NSCW's move to Boston. Unfortunately, negotiations with the Brandeis Special Events Office ran into some complications.

"The theatre department there is still very supportive and we may still be able to work everything out for a future workshop," reports Workshop Coordinator David Leong.

So . . . the 1992 National Stage Combat Workshop will be hosted by the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. SAFD stalwart Linda McCollum will again act as on-site coordinator.

For the first time since 1989, a teacher certification workshop will be held at the NSCW. Openings in this program are limited; interested parties should contact David Leong.

Teaching staff for the 1992 NSCW is as follows:

David Boushey	Rapier/Dagger
Erik Fredricksen	Broadsword
J.R. Beardsley	Quarterstaff
David Leong	Smallsword
Richard Raether	Unarmed
J. Allen Suddeth	} Teacher Workshop
Drew Fracher	



Certified teachers interested in acting as assistant instructors in 1992 should apply in writing to David Leong.

★★★

1991 Officers' Meetings: A Report

Following is a brief summary of SAFD business covered in the 1991 officers' meetings in Las Vegas.

GRANT APPLICATION

Our grant application to American Express was turned down; we are still pursuing a grant from Apple computers.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The current SAFD Glossary of Terms pertains only to swordplay. A glossary of stage combat terms will be compiled to include both unarmed and quarterstaff.

CORPORATE CREDIT CARD

To increase SAFD's financial credibility and establish a credit record, a corporate MasterCard has been obtained.

WEAPONS PURCHASE

The SAFD weapons purchase came in at \$6,243.53—24 new broadswords, seven new rapiers, 18 shields, and 18 new quarterstaves, as well as new blades and parts to refurbish existing stock. Although this was a major expenditure, it will mean a significant savings in annual weapons rental.

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How does a Chicago street kid end up as a rodeo rider, a mountain man living in a tepee, and the sinister dictator of a Latin-American country? No problem for an enthusiastic adventurer like Martino N. Pistone. "I'm busy living life—I'll read books about it when I'm old."

Marty credits his father with encouraging his adventurous streak—he permitted Marty to do whatever he took the notion to—provided Marty earned the money to cover the expenses. Starting in high school, Marty spent the school year saving up money to finance the summer's travel. He traveled alone to San Francisco when he was sixteen. Years later Marty would return as an actor enrolled in the American Conservatory Theatre. (The stints with the rodeo and as a mountain man came in between.)

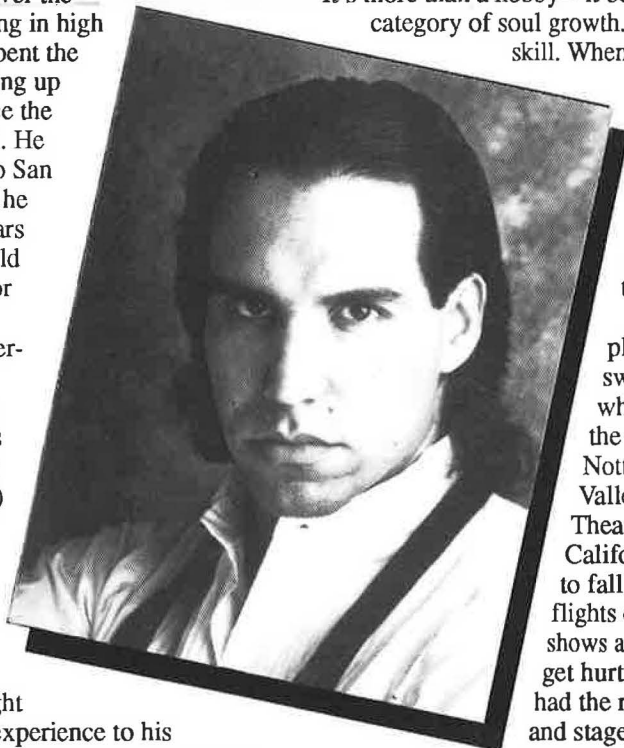
At A.C.T., Marty began stage combat classes with J. Stephen White.

Marty brought hands-on fight experience to his stage combat training. "I was a Chicago street kid. I grew up in a tough neighborhood and I got beat up regularly. Then I found I could do the same stuff non-violently. And not get hurt!"

Besides real-life brawling, Marty had

a wealth of physical training prior to his stage combat training: boxing, wrestling, football, competitive fencing at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, and Tae-Kwon-Do. "I took Tae-Kwon-Do for eight years. Now I take Akito. You know, it's the old man thing. Akito is for guys who are tired of being kicked in the face; they just want to get out of the way."

Stage combat was love-at-first-thrust. "This is something I do because I love it. It's more than a hobby—it belongs in the category of soul growth. It's an acting



skill. When I returned to A.C.T. as a teacher, I'd ask my acting students, 'Is that line a parry or a thrust?'"

Marty got in plenty of swordplay in when he played the Sheriff of Nottingham at the Valley Institute of Theatre Arts in California. "I used to fall down two flights of stairs, eight shows a week. I didn't get hurt because I had the right padding and staged the fall for those stairs."

The experience was valuable later when Marty was called in on *Sleuth* with Stacy Keach and Maxwell Caulfield. "I taught Max how to fall down those stairs wearing 29-inch clown shoes."

On the west coast, Marty worked with J.R. Beardsley and Richard Lane at Touché Unlimited, then attended his first SAFD National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis in '88.

In 1990 Marty moved to New York to focus on acting. "In San Francisco, I was falling more and more out of acting. People were constantly hiring me to choreograph. I staged fights for the San Francisco Opera, ACT, Berkeley Rep., a couple of movies, stuntwork for television." Increasingly, Marty felt pigeonholed as a "fight guy" and decided to change coasts and images.

*"the first job I got
—right out of the chute—
was choreographing
. . . it scared me."*

"I moved to New York and the first job I got—right out of the chute—was choreographing *Richard III* for the Public Theatre. It scared me." Although he'd been submitted as an actor, the director offered him the fight direction. Marty had a great time with Denzel Washington as Richard and SAFD member Army Schultz as Richmond, but worried about being seen once more as a "fight guy."

Fortunately for his peace of mind, Marty was immediately hired—as an actor—by the Studio Arena Theatre in Buffalo to do *A Flea in Her Ear*.

Then followed a two-month stint on NBC's *Loving*. "I played Francisco Ramirez, dictator of a Latin-American country. He wore Armani suits and was very suave and casual about everything. And that's the way he would kill you!" Marty says his fight training was a major help in portraying Ramirez, even though he was never directly involved in violent action. "That menace, the killer instinct you learn, was in everything I did."

More recently Marty played Rudolph in a theatrical adaptation of *Madame Bovary* in New York. "It was great to play a well-bred, well-spoken character. Usually I get cast as a street tough or a drug lord."

Marty draws on a colorful background when he is acting. "Any experience is life-enriching." So stay tuned for further episodes in the life of Martino N. Pistone—actor, swordsman, adventurer.

★ ★ ★

Officers's Mtgs

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SHAKESPEARE THEATRE ASSOC.

The officers discussed the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America, a new organization whose mission statement is, "To provide a forum for the artistic and managerial leadership whose central activity is the production of Shakespeare's plays; to discuss issues and share methods of work, resources and information; and to act as an advocate for Shakespearean productions and training in the United States."

The SAFD will join the STAA as a non-voting member organization and offer any help or assistance we can.

PATRICK CREAN LIBRARY

A home for the Patrick Crean Stage Combat Library is still being sought. A public-access library willing to house and administer the collection is needed. Forward suggestions to J. Allen Suddeth

FIGHT SCENES GUIDELINES

More specific guidelines were set for scenes to be used in the actor/combatant fight test. Following are the amended SAFD fight test rules and regulations:

Part one of the test is the performance of the test choreography in the context of a scene that is both safe and dramatically effective.

- ★ The scene must establish character and a cause for the fight, as well as demonstrate an appropriate level of emotional commitment to the violence.
- ★ The choice of scene and character should not interfere with the combatant's ability to perform the required techniques in a realistic manner, either for comedic or dramatic affect; but there must be a sense of tension and potential danger in the fight.
- ★ Dialogue within the choreography of the fight should be restricted to lines which enhance and relate to the action, and be kept to a minimum.
- ★ The combatants will perform the test fight at performance speed and with acting beats, actions and objectives carefully worked out.
- ★ Fight test performance is not to exceed seven minutes in length for three weapons. An additional two minutes is allowed for each additional discipline.
- ★ Test material may be performed in any order.
- ★ Candidates for actor/combatant certification in five weapons may elect to split the fights into two separate scenes. Candidates certifying in six weapons must perform their fights in two separate scenes.

The first scene must include rapier/dagger and unarmed and one additional weapon. The second scene will include the additional weapons.

TEACHER MEMBERSHIP

In the past, the SAFD has adjudicated anyone's students. Effective now, anyone wishing to have students adjudicated by the SAFD must first be a member.

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What's Happening?

Steven Earl Edwards is not only handy with a sword, he also has a busy musical career. Taking a summer break from his doctoral studies, Steve played Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* at the Park Playhouse in Albany, NY.

David Engle choreographed and acted in *Richard III* this summer in Chicago. Next up for him is directing *Romeo and Juliet* this winter.

Charles Conwell has been promoted to Associate Professor at University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He directs *Macbeth* for the Philadelphia Drama Guild in Sept.

Richard Lane recently choreographed (get set for the list) *Romeo and Juliet*, *MacBeth* (twice), *Orphans*, *Angel City*, *La Finta Semplice*, *Faust*, *Showbout*, *Don Giovanni*, *Otello*, *Romeo and Juliet* (twice) and *The Three Musketeers* at theatres and schools all over the Bay area.

Mark Ransom Eis both acted and directed this summer at the Young Writers for the Theatre New Play Festival in Richmond, VA. In August, he attended University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill's Professional Actor Training Program.

Tina Hansen reports from Denmark where she has been teaching class at a stunt school. She worked as trainer/stunt double in a Danish film this past winter, taught a workshop in Sweden, and is busy drumming up enthusiasm and support for a Scandinavian fight organization.

J. Allen Suddeth is back home after touting the virtues of the SAFD at the ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) convention in Seattle.

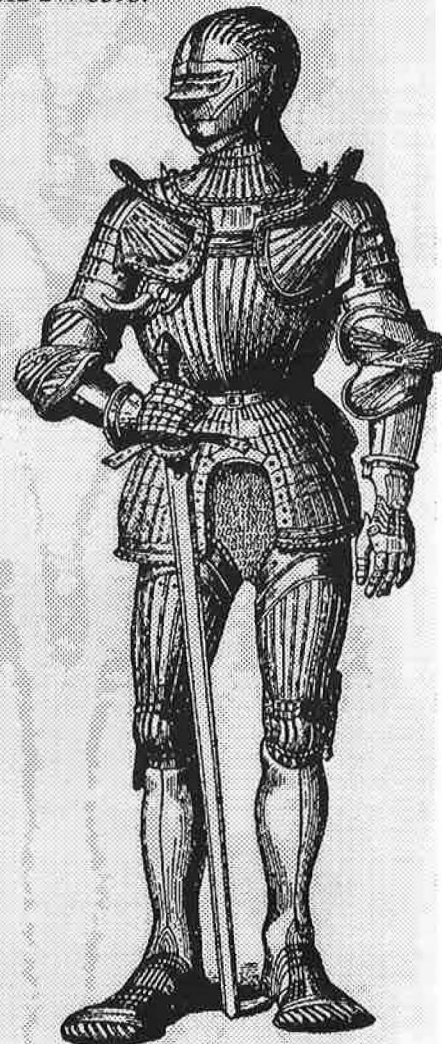
Trampas Thompson and **Payson Burt** spent their summer working with fight master Chris Villa at the Penn. Ren. Faire. In addition to performing, Payson acted as head armorer and taught combat.

John David Brimmer was back at the New York Renaissance Faire this season, staging the 30something fights contained therein.

News Flash! Mark "Rat" Guinn has quit his gypsy life as a roadie for rock stars (Farewell, Madonna!). He'll be a professor of design (*Professor Rat!*) at Louisiana Tech. University in Ruston, LA. In addition to design, Mark will be teaching stage combat.

Jeff Sudakov wants all his NSCW friends to know there was no structural damage to his knee. He'll have orthoscopic surgery as an outpatient in Sept.

Actors in Action President **Ralph Anderson** extends a welcome to any SAFD members in or visiting NYC. Come and work out with the group. Call 212-247-5393.



Officers Meetings Reported

continued from page 3

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Officers wish to encourage all persons regularly teaching stage combat classes and holding certification tests to become SAFD certified teachers.

Any non-certified teacher wishing to have his/her students adjudicated by the SAFD will be given a three-year grace period to pursue teacher certification. If, at the end of three years, said teacher has made no effort to certify, the SAFD will cease certifying that teacher's students.

This policy is not meant to be punitive or exclusionary, but to ensure quality instruction. The mere act of adjudicating a teacher's students is viewed by some as an endorsement of the teacher by the SAFD.

EQUITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Actors' Equity Association has created a standing safety committee. J. Allen Suddeth has contacted them and offered SAFD's assistance and support.

SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP

To encourage more schools and organizations to join SAFD, the Friend category has been expanded to include groups. Member groups pay their \$25 dues and, after three years, receive a 10% discount on SAFD workshops, to be used by any individual representing said organization.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

The safety committee is still working on safety guidelines for stage combat that we hope to publish later this year.

ASSISTANTS & JOURNEYMEN

NSCW assistants and journeymen may request that their class work be reviewed for recertification, as this work far exceeds current recertification standards.

SAFD'S 15th ANNIVERSARY

1992 marks the 15th anniversary of the SAFD. Plans are in motion to make it the best year ever!

★★★

THE CUTTING EDGE

The Cutting Edge is concocted bimonthly by Margaret and Richard Raether (with sporadic help from Brian Anderson) and is a publication of the Society of American Fight Directors.

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

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